



# The River's Edge

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**Important Dates**

- September 14**  
Globalization Meeting
- September 25**  
• ACT Test
- October 1**  
• International Tour Enrollment Deadline
- October 2**  
11th Annual FCB/BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament
- October 7**  
• BRTC Board of Trustees Meeting
- October 8**  
• Practical Nursing Sight Visit
- October 23**  
• ACT Test

## Tave Harris Turns to Nursing--Again



Tave Harris

In some ways, BRTC nursing student Tave Harris is going full circle. She completed an RN degree in nursing school in the Netherlands some twenty years ago. But when she eventually achieves her goal, earning RN licensure in this country,

she definitely will be someplace other than where she started. Confusing? It's more than confusing, Harris admits. The situation—being denied the opportunity to use her nursing skills in this country—was for many years downright exasperating and extremely disappointing. But that is all in the past, and Harris has moved far beyond any bitterness and is now making progress on her quest for RN licensure in the United States.

Currently a first-year student in the Practical Nursing program, Harris not only had received a nursing degree, but she had practiced her

profession for some time, including a couple of stints in the 90s in a Saudi Arabia military hospital contracted to provide services for the Saudi military through an American nursing company. Her tours there were interrupted by the Gulf War, but during the second stint, the independent-minded young Dutch nurse met the man she would marry, a diesel mechanic from Tennessee, Jessie Harris, also working under contract. Having decided to settle in Oregon, the couple came to the United States where she encountered the harsh and shocking reality that in

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## Concurrent Classes - "A Win-Win" Situation

Today's students can finish high school with a good start on their college experience, and this is definitely a "win-win" situation, according to BRTC's Priscilla Stillwell, instructor of Social Sciences. A total of 87 students are in the process of doing just that this semester.

They are classified as "concurrent" students, meaning that they are receiving both high school and college credit for certain classes they are taking. In some instances these classes are taught by high school teachers with master's degrees who follow a college curricu-



Zack Lane, Priscilla Stillwell, & Derrick Clements

lum, and in some instances students enroll on the BRTC campus in classes taught by college instructors.

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## Enrollment Stats Released

The 2004 Fall semester enrollment at BRTC reflects a decline of 162 students overall, according to figures released by Vice President for Student Services Mike Sullens. The total headcount now stands at 1675. This figure compares to 1837 students enrolled in Fall 2003, repre-

senting a decrease of approximately 8.8 percent. At the Paragould campus, however, BRTC posted a gain of approximately 11 percent, increasing from 292 students in Fall 2003 to 325 this fall. This year's enrollment figure is almost the same as in Fall 2002, prompting college officials to

suggest BRTC's enrollment may have "leveled out." The college has been anticipating this for some time now. "We have long believed that our days of unprecedented growth could not go on forever," said BRTC Richard President Gaines. "In fact,

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## FCB/Foundation Golf Event Nearing Goal of \$25,000



BRTC Foundation members Mike Miller and Carol Belford-Lewallen review a list of donations to the First Community Bank/BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament scheduled for October 2. Donations to date have pushed the total close to the Foundation's goal of \$25,000, an all-time record for the annual event designed to support the college's programs and scholarships. The tournament's co-sponsor, First Community Bank, has given \$10,000. Other corporate, business, and individual donors have provided the balance. Tournament Coordinator Jim Ulmer of BRTC said he is "elated" with the level of donations, and feels confident the event will exceed its goal for this year. For information regarding entry fees or to become one of the tournament sponsors, contact Vickie French at 870-248-4070.

## Concurrent Classes

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High school students sometimes enroll in concurrent classes on the BRTC campus during the school day, with permission from high school officials. They may also enroll in evening or online classes to receive concurrent credits.

Stillwell, who also serves as BRTC's Concurrent Classes Coordinator, is currently working with nine area high schools: students from five of them, Pocahontas, Hillcrest (formerly Strawberry and Lynn), Maynard, Black Rock and Naylor, Missouri, are concurrently enrolled this semester. Another four, Corning, Biggers-Reyno, Sloan-Hendrix, and Hoxie, will come on board next semester in cases where the high school class extends over a period of two semesters.

Stillwell pointed out that these college credits are transferable to any public college or university in Arkansas, and to many out-of-state institutions as well. She noted that it is even possible, theoretically at least, for a student to graduate from high school with an Associate of Arts degree from BRTC. This is rare, Stillwell explained, because of schedule conflicts. But in this event,

the student would be able to complete a four-year degree in only two years after high school graduation. Far more typical for busy high school students are those instances when high schoolers graduate with a full semester's worth of college credits (about 15 hours).

Students generally must satisfy certain criteria to ensure they are ready for college level studies. These criteria include certain scores on standardized tests, a specified GPA, or approval by high school

officials.

Those whose concurrent classes are taught on the high school campus by a high school teacher pay only fifty percent of the applicable tuition rate, since those instructors receive no additional pay. Students who enroll for concurrent credit by taking classes taught by BRTC faculty on campus, however, pay the full applicable tuition rate.

Concurrent courses this semester include College Algebra, U. S. History to 1876, Freshman English I and

Introduction to Psychology. Others planned for the spring semester include Sociology, Trigonometry, Freshman English II, Introduction to Computer Concepts, Biology and Lab, Introduction to Chemistry and U.S. History Since 1876.

Stillwell hopes to continue expanding the educational options offered through the concurrent class program at BRTC. She is available to work with interested school representatives and others who can contact her at the college at 870-248-4000.

## Student 'Begins' College with 23 Credits

Jessica Bowers took advantage of the concurrent credit option in addition to attending summer college classes for the past two years. As a result, the May, 2004, Pocahontas High School graduate enrolled this fall at BRTC with 23 credits under her belt, well on her way to being a college sophomore straight out of high school.

"I loved it!" she said of her concurrent class experience. "I espe-

cially liked that it wasn't as stressful. You don't have to be there like you do in high school classes—you are there because you want to be. And I found the classes very interesting and more laid back than in the high school setting. I would definitely recommend concurrent enrollment to anyone."

Bowers said she plans to work toward a bachelor's degree in nursing, and ultimately to become a

pediatrician.



Jessica Bowers  
2004 PHS Graduate

# Tave Harris

spite of her credentials and nursing experience in the modern, westernized Saudi hospital, Harris was denied approval to sit for the exam required for state licensure as an RN. The reason: she did not have enough college hours.

“Oh, I was ticked off,” she admits. “I thought, fine, I’ll just do something else.” That was about ten years ago. For five of those years, Harris traded her stethoscope and thermometer for storybooks and toys, working in the child care industry. She eventually opened her own in-home child care center.

But the couple sought opportunity to purchase a bit of land, relocating to Arkansas. It was then she says she gradually began thinking about the need to prepare herself for the future, for the time she would want to be able to retire. She also said, “I started feeling guilty—with all my education, which I wasn’t using, and with the shortage of nurses I kept hearing about.” She looked first at the RN program at ASU, but then learned of BRTC’s three-semester PN program and the college’s intention, pending approval of the Arkansas Board of Nursing and Arkansas Department of Education, to offer a transition RN program.

No longer angry about the earlier denial, Harris decided to do whatever was necessary to return to nursing. She knew she had been out of education for quite some time, and although she was not required to attain a G.E.D., she opted to do just that through BRTC’s Adult Education program just to acclimate herself to doing academic work once again, especially mathematics, in preparation for taking the ASSET (standardized college placement exam). She said she also spent a great deal of time while working on her G.E.D. in study of American History. “You don’t want to go to college and not know what all the others know,” she pointed out. Three months after beginning, Harris

completed her G.E.D. in December, 2003, and then enrolled in the spring semester in the required prerequisites for the P.N. program. Accepted into the Fall 2004 nursing class, Tave Harris is busy along side the other twenty-plus P.N. students, learning to give high quality patient care while using high-tech equipment. It is the high-tech advancements that distinguish nursing training in 2005 from Harris’s training in the 1980s.

“Nurses just do so much more now than when I was working in the field,” she said. “When I was in nursing school before, the main thing the P.N.s did was personal care of patients. It’s not at all like now. So I am learning so many new things, using new technology. I don’t feel at all like I know everything I need to know. So this is great. I know when I’m done, I’ll have a much broader base than before.”

Harris also has no regrets about the ten years or so out of nursing because, in many ways, she explained, life is a trade-off. She may have temporarily traded in a career, but in exchange she gained valuable time at home rearing the couple’s two children, Jane and Amber. She also gained valuable experience in child care and in operating her own business. She believes those years were time well spent, and has no regrets for the past.

As for the future, when her studies are over and the elusive U. S. nursing licensure is hers, Harris knows exactly what she wants to do with her nursing degree. “I want to work in Home Health,” she said. “I think I will enjoy nursing in a situation where people need care beyond what we can give in a hospital setting.” She said she has worked previously with HIV patients, and she enjoys working with the elderly and others whose medical needs can best be addressed at home.

The plan is a good reflection of Tave Harris and her own values and

preferences. “I’m not a ‘crowd’ person,” Harris said. “I really like living in a small town.” Though she deeply misses the vibrance and cultural variety of her native Amsterdam with its museum, and bustling streets, Harris said she is amazed at the many opportunities that exist for her children here through the various programs at BRTC. “That gives me

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hope that when my children get older, they will have lots of educational options,” she concluded. “There is so much available right here, or there is the possibility to start here and grow outward, if you choose to.” In her case, it is the opportunity to “grow” back to where she began that makes a world of difference.

# Choir Selects Attire

When the Kimbrough Choir presents its first scheduled public concert on December 14, it will do so in elegant style. The ladies will be decked out in floor-length black dresses, while the men will don black tuxedos, white dress shirts and black bow ties. They are in the process of making the final selection as sample attire from various companies arrives.

“I know the students will make a wonderful choice,” said Choir Director Joniece Trammel. “We are so appreciative to [benefactor] Dexter Kimbrough for making this opportunity possible.”

Kimbrough’s gift earlier this year was earmarked for the development of a choral

music program at BRTC. This is the first semester the college has offered choral music. Plans are to expand the program next year to include a second choral group, the Kimbrough Singers, for more extensive performances.



# Enrollment

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we have been attracting an uncharacteristically high number of people, given our total population base, according to AATYC (Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges) information,” he added.

Another factor in the lower number, Sullens noted, is the absence of some sixty “off-schedule” students whose class start-up dates allowed them to be in the fall count last year, but who will be included in the Spring 2005 count this year. Also a factor is an improving employment

picture in the four counties served by BRTC. Historically, college enrollment increases in times of increasing economic hardship, and the reverse is true as well.

The primary decrease in enrollment apparently lies in the number of part-time, non-traditional students, or those age 25 and over. This and other enrollment data will be examined in the coming weeks to better understand BRTC’s enrollment trends and projections.

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## Mission Statement

*Black River Technical College is an institution of higher learning committed to a partnership with the individual and the global community to provide lifelong learning experiences, seeking always to empower those it serves to achieve their academic, vocational, and personal development goals.*

**On-line Application address:**

<http://connect.blackrivertech.org/nappadm.html>

## From the President's Desk



*Richard Gaines*

Everyone likes to hear of growth, and we here at BRTC are no exception. We have been pleased with the amazing growth of this institution from just a few hundred students—less than 500 when we became a two-year college in 1991—to more than three times that amount today. But given the relatively stable population base in the counties we serve, I have long believed we were approaching the point of leveling off with possibly slower sustained growth in the coming years. It may be that we have reached that milestone, as indicated by this year's

headcount. In fact, at 1675 students, we are slightly over the number enrolled in the Fall 2002 semester.

Ironically, we know that when local economies do poorly, college enrollment goes up, and in times of economic recoveries, college enrollments typically decrease. All four counties in our service area do, in fact, have lower jobless rates this fall than last fall, so the enrollment decrease may be a signal of better economic health.

Sustained but slower growth can be a very positive thing, allowing greater opportunity to mature as an institution, refine our programs, and plan our future rather than reacting to ever-changing needs for facilities and staffing. We will be considering our student make-up in detail in the coming weeks and months, working to ensure that whatever our overall enrollment, students are provided the services and resources they need in order to succeed.

## BRTC Students Post Good CAAP Scores

Students at BRTC who took the CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) during the past academic year scored above the national average in three categories, and just missed the national mark in one area. Academic Counselor Jim Ulmer released the results of the test this week.

A total of ninety students were tested through the ACT Educational Services CAAP test between August 1, 2003 and July 31, 2004. This is a nationally recognized "rising junior" exam given after students have completed 45 hours of freshman and sophomore courses.

Test results show BRTC students slightly outscored the national average score in writing skills (usage, mechanics and rhetorical), essay writing, reading (arts/literature and social sciences), and science, but fell

slightly below the national average in mathematics. Ulmer noted that BRTC students typically delay math classes until their final semester, and may not have completed math requirements at the time of the CAAP. This could affect the math score, he said.

Administration of the CAAP is one of the means of assessment of student academic achievement at BRTC.



**Jim Ulmer**  
Academic Counselor