



The River's Edge

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Important Dates

March 1

- Lunch-N-Learn "Having a Healthy Heart"

March 8

- Advisory Dinner

March 11

- BRTC Foundation Board Meeting

March 15

- BRTC Health Fair

March 16

- PTK Blood Drive
- ECHO

March 21-25

- Spring Break

April 21

- Scholarship Recipient-Donor Luncheon

A Tale of Two Women

For Trella and Jeanna, the past year has been, in the spirit of Charles Dickens, the best of times and the worst of times, though not necessarily in that order.

The two women worked at L. A. Darling Store Fixtures of Paragould. For each it was the only place she had ever worked, Trella for 27 years and Jeanna for 19. Their jobs were demanding and often stressful. Jeanna worked in MIS (Management Information Systems) for the plant, which manufactures store fixtures for the major retail market. "If the computers were down, *nobody* worked," she explains. "That was pressure." She was literally on call "twenty-four-seven."

Trella also felt keenly the demands of her job—up at 4 a.m., at work by 5 a.m., and then a long day in production scheduling.

"Basically, I worked with administration monitoring work orders and doing whatever needed to be done to be sure we met the customer's needs.



Trella Moore and Jeanna Howard finding their niche at BRTC/Paragould

But I loved my job. I had been there so long, and spent so much time there, the people I worked with were like my family," she says, with Jeanna nodding in agreement.

The two women barely knew each other at this time. They might

see each other in passing, but that was the extent of their acquaintance. All they had in common was the fact that they were long-time employees of Darling. But just over a year ago, something happened to Trella Moore of Beech Grove and Jeanna Howard of Marmaduke that would set them on a common course they could never have imagined. The two of them, along with several others, were informed that due to a "downsizing" at Darling, they would no longer have jobs there.

"It was devastating," Trella says, shaking her head in remembrance. "Typically, you would expect to hear rumors that something like this is coming," she explained, "but that was not the case. There was no time to prepare for this. I left there crying that day. I'll admit it. I

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Faculty Taking on Technology



Karen Liebhaber and Courtney Clements

BRTC faculty are increasingly electing to use distance education options in their classroom teaching,

according to V.P. for Academics Jack McCord. "I'm very pleased that so many of our faculty are not only teaching classes online, but using the Blackboard platform to either teach hybrid classes or to support their traditional teaching as well."

According to a report from Distance Ed Coordinator Karen Liebhaber, students are enrolled in a total of 21 different courses this semester, while another seven classes are being offered as "hybrids," or a class which meets traditionally part

of the time, with the balance of instruction delivered online.

Special growth can be seen, Liebhaber noted, in the number of sections of classes—44 this semester—that are "technology enhanced" through the use of Blackboard. This means, Liebhaber explained, that instructors are generally teaching the class in a traditional mode, but have integrated the Blackboard learning platform in a variety of ways:

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A Tale of Two Women

Continued from page 1

was angry, I was bitter. I didn't know what I was going to do."

Jeanna had the same reaction. "I laid around and cried for two months," she said. "I kept asking, What am I supposed to do now?"

Trella said she cried for two days, then threw all her energy into making a quilt. "I hand-sewed, and I mean *totally hand-sewed*, this safari quilt. It was nine by nine and one-half feet, and I cried for days and kept asking, 'Why me?' You just don't go into a place expecting..." she said haltingly, "you expect to grow old and work with those people there until you die."

But contrary to how they felt, January 19, 2004, their last day at Darling, was *not* the end of the world. It would prove to be instead the beginning of something new, something wonderful.

Because their job termination was linked to the impact of foreign trade, the former Darling employees were eligible for re-training paid for by TAA, or Trade Adjustment Assistance under provisions of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). This meant they could receive financial assistance to attend college and complete a two-year degree in approved areas of study.

At first going to college did not seem possible to Trella. In spite of encouragement from her husband and best friend, she lacked the confidence. "I just don't think I can do it," she kept telling her spouse. "You see, I didn't feel I had the knowledge," she explains. "I never applied myself in high school. I was one of ten kids in my family. My father died when I was fifteen, I got married in the eleventh grade—I didn't take the hard classes. There was no way my mother could put us through school. So I was scared I couldn't do it [college work]."

Jeanna was having similar doubts, but had begun to think seriously about taking advantage of the

"benefits" of having lost one job to train for a new career—this time in the field of education. Though she is single and does not have children, she knew from working in her church youth ministry and from being with her nieces and nephew that she loved working with kids, especially those who "need a little something extra."

Both women came to the conclusion that they had given so much of themselves to the factory, it was right that they at least try to take advantage of the benefit being offered them. They were at once surprised and relieved to see a familiar face when they began the monumental task of filling out the necessary paperwork to pursue Associate of Applied Science degrees at BRTC/Paragould.

Trella enrolled in Business Administration, while Jeanna chose Early Childhood Education. Although pursuing different career goals, they scheduled as many classes together as possible. Through a full year of classes, the two have become "like Mutt and Jeff, like salt and pepper," jokes Trella.

"No, really, she (Jeanna) has been my tutor, my support. When I first started, many days I bawled and said 'I'm quitting!'"

"I told her, 'No, you are *not* quitting. You can *do* this,'" noted Jeanna.

The "this" to which Jeanna referred was usually algebra—first Introduction to Algebra and then Intermediate Algebra. Both of them swear that during the month of November, they logged 1800 minutes of phone time—long distance from Beech Grove to Marmaduke—doing their algebra.

"She was my support system," Trella said, nodding toward Jeanna. "I've decided that God put her with me to test her, because if she can

teach me..."

"She's not that hard," Jeanna interrupted laughingly.

"No, really, he [God]'s testing her through me," Trella shot back. "I know there were times when she wanted to slap me," she added teasingly.

"Trella!"

"She even said once, 'If I could reach through this phone...' Nah, she didn't mean it..." Trella said as the two friends cracked up in laughter. "All I can say is if you ever want a teacher, she's a good one."

Jeanna apparently did do a pretty good job with Trella as well as with her own studying: both made a grade of "A" in their algebra classes. And after their first year of studies, Jeanna has a 4.0 cumulative GPA, with Trella posting a 3.5 cumulative GPA.

In addition to accomplishing good grades and making the Dean's List, Trella is also proud to have played a part in encouraging her own daughter to give college study another try. The mother of two (and grandmother of four), Trella at 48 is quick also to credit her husband, Billy Moore, for his help. "I'm not just bragging, but he is...he's my rock. He's always there, telling me 'You're gonna' be fine.' He keeps me motivated. 'If you'll just calm down, it will be all right,' he'll say when I get in a panic about something."

But the bouts of panic are smaller now than the love of learning Trella and Jeanna are experiencing at BRTC/Paragould, where they say the instructors are "great," and the other "traditional" college students seem to enjoy being around the two. "This is such fun," Jeanna says. "I love college!"

Trella chimes in, "Me too. And now I have this vision, and it's the

two of us walking down the aisle at graduation in Pochontas in May, 2006."

"And for that, I have to say I appreciate Darling giving us this chance," Jeanna said. "It was a good place to work, lots of good friends, lots of positive things."

"That's true," Trella said, "I do thank Darling for the good things, and I don't feel bitter any more. I just want others out there like us to know that if I can do this, they can do it."

"Just think," she continues, "we used to moan and groan after we lost our jobs. We'd say, 'What am I going to do with myself when I get up in the mornings? How am I going to fill my days?'" Trella notes. "And now, we get to enjoy our homes and our families, and we get to go to classes a couple of days a week, and we find ourselves saying, 'Wow! What are we gonna' do when we finish [college] and have to go back to work?'"

When the two stop laughing at their transition from the "worst" to the "best" of times, both talk about the time *after* BRTC, when they have every plan to continue to pursue a four-year degree. Jeanna plans to become a teacher, and by now, Trella knows that Business Administration is not really where her heart is. "I'm a *real* hyper person," she admits, as if this fact were not obvious, "and I can't see myself sitting in an office most of the time." She, too, thinks she would like working in some capacity with students. The junior and senior years will be funded with their own resources, as TAA eligibility will end. But they vow somehow they will continue and earn baccalaureate degrees.

"That will be hard, because we won't be in class together then..." Trella begins, looking pitifully at Jeanna.

"But you *can do it*," Jeanna says, and clearly Trella believes her.

"I just want others out there like us to know that if I can do this, they can do it."

Faculty

through discussion boards, and by posting grades, syllabi, and study guides on Blackboard.

Such acceptance bodes well for the future of DE teaching at BRTC, she pointed out, considering the fact that some of the current online instructors first tested the waters by using Blackboard as an enhancement to their traditional classes. This means there is a good probability that at least some of those using Blackboard to enhance traditional classes will move into hybrid and perhaps even online teaching in the future.

Blackboard is also serving the college in a number of other functions, Liebhaber noted. For example, Phi Theta Kappa, the college's honor society, has a site on Blackboard. There is a DE "Student Lounge" and a DE "Faculty Lounge," she noted. Other Blackboard applications around campus include a Wellness Forum, a statewide College Counseling Association Meeting site, and other uses as well.

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Online classes currently offered at BRTC include the following: Business and Professional Presentation Techniques, Business Statistics, Community Nutrition, Freshman English II, and General Psychology.

Also, Intermediate Algebra, Internet/E-Mail Applications, Introduction to Business, Introduction to Computer Concepts, Introduction to Computer Information Systems, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, and Introduction to Psychology.

Also, Introduction to Word/Information Processing, IT Project Management, Legal Environment of Business, Microsoft Windows, and Small Business Management.

Also, Spreadsheets for Managerial Decisions, Technical Writing, Web Page Design Using HTML, and World Civilization to 1660.

Current Hybrid courses are Business Communications, Cisco I, II, III, and IV, Introduction to Computer Concepts, and Professional Development.

PTK Delivers Gift Baskets to Needy

During the Christmas holidays, officers of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society of Black River Technical College headed their second annual drive of delivering gift baskets to needy families in the BRTC service area. This year their efforts assisted four families, whose names were submitted to the group by students and members of the community.

The gift baskets included food, clothing, toys and other items donated by area businesses and students. PTK would like to thank the *Star Herald*, Dress for Less, Premier Video, NAPA, Posie Patch, An-

drew's Agri, Wholesale Family Outlet, S & H Quick Shop, Riverside Express, Foothills Home Entertainment, Autumn Inn, Family Clinic Pharmacy, Hardees of Paragould, Paragould Beauty College, and many other salons and restaurants in Paragould for their contributions to the drive.

"With the help of our community, we have reached out to many families in their time of need," stated Dawn Chitty, PTK president. "We hope that the project will be successful each year and we can continue helping families in need."

**February - Black History Month
Community Potluck**
Eddie Mae Herron Center in Pocahontas
Friday, February 25, 6:30 p.m.
Performance by Kimbrough Chorus Quartet
Panel Discussion on Hoxie School Integration

Funded in part by a grant from Arkansas Humanities Council

TASER Instructor Training Held at LETA

Jason French and Victoria Barkley-Robinette, Law Enforcement Training Academy instructors at Black River Technical College, volunteered to be "shot" by a TASER device during a recent training held February 3-4 on the BRTC campus in Pocahontas. The Instructor Certification Training, presented by Chandler



Jason French

X26 and Advanced TASER M26, potentially the future in weaponry among law enforcement officials.

Although not a mandatory part of the training, it is recommended that

each participant volunteer for a TASER device exposure. French and Robinette were the first among the group of 17 trainees from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennes-

see to volunteer to be "shot" by a TASER device.

The TASER devices are "conducted energy weapons," which use propelled wires to conduct energy that affects the sensory and motor functions of the central nervous system. They use Electro-Muscular Disruption (EMD) Technology where an electrical signal completely overrides the central nervous



Victoria Barkley-Robinette

system and directly controls the skeletal muscles. The EMD effect causes an uncontrollable contraction of the muscle tissue, temporarily incapacitating dangerous, combative or high-risk subjects who pose a risk

to law enforcement officers, innocent citizens or themselves.

As one of 12 Senior Master Instructors in the world, Garrett is in his fourth year of traveling around the country doing the TASER Instructor Certification Training. "We were fortunate to have served as host of the training led by Garrett,"

said French, and an additional highlight is that the training will be featured in an upcoming issue of Details magazine, based in New York. An

Garrett of the Sebastian County Sheriff's Office, featured the TASER

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Black River Technical College

P.O. Box 468
1410 Hwy 304 East
Pocahontas, AR 72455

Phone: 870-248-4000
Fax: 870-248-4100

Website: www.blackrivertech.org

P.O. Box 1565
2402 North 12th Avenue
Paragould, AR 72450

Phone: 870-239-0969
Fax: 870-239-2050

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.

The River's Edge is produced by the Office of Institutional Advancement.

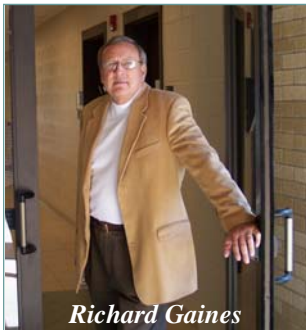
janz@blackrivertech.org
annd@blackrivertech.org
dina.hufstedler@blackrivertech.org

On-line Application address:

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



From the President's Desk



Richard Gaines

Technology is the way of the future. This is a fact we have all heard and read for many years. No one with children who operate sophisticated computer toys with ease would doubt this for one second. The role of technology in education continues to increase in its scope and in its importance. As we take stock each semester of our distance education options and of the number of students and staff who use technology in the learning and teaching process, the growth of what is known as "technology assisted learning" signals a positive movement here at

BRTC. Many of our students are ready and willing to earn credits in "online" classes. Other students prefer "hybrid" classes, those with some of the teaching/learning occurring through computers, and some in a traditional classroom setting. Still other students generally prefer the interaction of traditional classroom settings. Our instructors fall into these same broad categories. But we are seeing an upswing in the number of instructors who have moved toward increased use of technology in the education process. We anticipate that even more online classes will be offered in coming semesters as faculty become more comfortable and skilled in this type of teaching. But we know also that traditional classroom teaching will continue to be a strong part of what we do here at BRTC. We think this blend not only suits the personal preferences of faculty and students, but also serves educationally as a sound practice.



Danny McCandless



James A. Thielemier

New Employees Named

Danny McCandless, a lifelong native of Pocahontas, has been named Custodian Supervisor at Black River Technical College, according to VP for Finance Loretta Williams. McCandless previously held a similar position at L. A. Darling of Corning, where he worked for the past fourteen years. He is assuming a position formerly held by James Menard, who retired earlier this year.

James A. Thielemier, also of Pocahontas, has joined the maintenance staff of BRTC as Building Equipment Maintenance Repairman. Thielemier brings to the position many years of experience, having worked as an independent electrical contractor and more recently as an employee of Pocahontas Water Works.

TASER

extensive photo shoot was conducted during the two-day training by professional photographers who flew in from New York. The feature is a collaborative effort between Details magazine and TASER International,

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manufacturer of the TASER devices.

French and Robinette are now among approximately 150 certified TASER instructors in Arkansas qualified to instruct students in the use of TASER devices.