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The River's Edge

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Important Dates

- March 10
 - ASSET Test
- March 11
 - BRTC Foundation Board Meeting
- March 14
 - Summer In-House Registration
- March 15
 - BRTC Health Fair
- March 16
 - PTK Blood Drive
 - ECHO
- March 21
 - Summer Registration
- March 21-25
 - Spring Break
- April 21
 - Scholarship Recipient-Donor Luncheon

Community Potluck Is Finale to Black History Month

“A full house” describes the crowd at the Community Potluck held February 25 at the Eddie Mae Herron Center in Pocahontas. This event was the culmination of the February observance of Black History month with the EMH Board and Black River Technical College partnering for the entire event.

Highlights of the evening included a panel presentation on the

Hoxie School integration and a performance by a sextet of the BRTC



Performers from the BRTC Kimbrough Chorus who performed at the Eddie Mae Herron Center Community Potluck are, from left, John Dalton, Alvin Lewis, Adam Miles, Laura Alderson, Maggie Doles, and Kim Chastain. Directed by Joniece Trammel of BRTC, the sextet was accompanied by pianist Glenda Blasini on one selection, and sang another selection acapella.

Kimbrough Choir performing spiritual selections.

The panel, introduced by Gary

Buxton, instructor of English and Literature at BRTC, included two of the Hoxie students involved in the 1955 integration, as well as the wife of a school board member at the time. Dr. Gloria Gibson, Dean of Humanities and Sciences at Arkansas State University, moderated the panel. Ethel Tompkins of Walnut Ridge and Fayth Hill Washington of Little Rock, former Hoxie students, told of their recollections of the integration. Eunice Robert of Pocahontas told the audience of the time when she and

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Chitty Elected Regional PTK Officer



Dawn Chitty

Dawn Chitty of Pocahontas was elected Regional Vice President of the Eastern District of Phi Theta Kappa, announced her chapter advisor, Dr. Linda Moss of BRTC. Chitty, along with Moss, Business instructor and chapter advisor Ruth Schaa, and student Debra Halford, traveled to Tulsa, Oklahoma, for the Oklahoma-Arkansas Regional PTK Conference February 25-26.

Phi Theta Kappa is an international honor society for students in two-year colleges. More than 300 attended the Tulsa conference, where

Chitty's election followed speeches from all the candidates for offices.

Chitty received an Associate of Arts degree from BRTC in May of 2004. She is currently completing pre-requisites and will apply for admission into the nursing program this fall. She is president of the BRTC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.

As a part of her responsibilities as regional vice president, Chitty, along with her advisor, will participate in several upcoming PTK events and

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Community Potluck

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Members of the panel were introduced by (standing) Gary Buxton, of BRTC. Panelists are, from left, Ethel Tompkins, former Hoxie student; Dr. Gloria Gibson, Dean of Humanities and Sciences at ASU, panel moderator; Fayth Hill Washington of Little Rock, former Hoxie student; and Eunice Robert of Pocahontas, wife of former Hoxie School Board member.

her family and the families of other Hoxie School Board members “went through hell.”

The Hoxie Schools were integrated in 1955, just one year after the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka ruled that separate schools were “inherently unequal.”

Hoxie’s decision was prompted in part by economic reasons. But in part it was due to knowing this “was the right thing to do—it was the law,” in Robert’s words. Hoxie’s African American children became the first Black students in the Delta to attend public schools—a full two years prior to the Little Rock School desegregation of 1957, and a full ten years before schools at Pocahontas

and most other towns were forced to integrate.

In their opening remarks and in response to questions from the audience, panel members spoke of the fact that the teachers and the students themselves responded very positively to the decision, as did most of the adults in the community. However, following publication of an article in *Life* magazine, outside agitators converged on Hoxie, inciting racial prejudice and organizing opposition against the integration. The issue was eventually resolved through the courts, and within a couple of years the school integration issue at Hoxie was no longer contested.

Tompkins explained that as a

twelve-year-old student, she was unaware of the conflict surrounding her, and learned only many years later that she had been a part of “history.” Washington’s mother, Rosemary Hill, had been one of the leaders in the Black community, and thus her memories of the event differ. She remembers that even though the African Americans in Hoxie were attending public school with their white neighbors, they still were subject to many restrictions, such as extra-curricular activities. For example, she noted, her brother, an excellent athlete, could not participate in sports at Hoxie because the other schools in Hoxie’s conference would not have allowed this.

Gibson reminded the audience that this experience, as any event, consists of many different “stories,” and that all these stories should be heard and recorded. She pressed the audience to make effort to preserve

their own family stories on all aspects of life.

The month’s activities were funded in part by a Humanities Education mini-grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, submitted on behalf of the



Political guests attending the Community Potluck included, from left, State Representative J. R. Rogers of Walnut Ridge; former State Representative Harmon Seawel of Maynard, State Representative David Cook of Williford, and prospective candidate for State Treasurer, Don House of Walnut Ridge.

BRTC Foundation by Buxton. Earlier events included educational exhibits and demonstrations on clothing made from cotton sacks, food preparation, quilting, making peanut butter and cornmeal, and hog butchering.

Employment Opportunity Introduced to Students in Electricity/Electronics



Brenda Blankenship

On Friday, February 25, Ms. Brenda Blankenship from Bell-South Telephone spoke to students in the Industrial Electricity/Electronics program at BRTC in an effort to interest the students in working for their company in the western Tennessee area. Blankenship spoke about the hiring and working requirements of the Bell-South company. A sample on-line test for working as a

Bell-South technician was taken by the students who produced scores of 95% or better. Blankenship pointed out that the starting pay for technicians is over \$16 per hour, and all health, eye, and dental insurance coverage is free to the employee and his/her family. Bell-South also has a 401-K program and a retirement pension plan. Several students were interested in Ms. Blankenship’s offer.

“Bell-South Telephone is only one of many opportunities afforded graduates of the Industrial Electricity/Electronics program,” noted David Bowlin, instructor. Maintenance for industry and the electrician’s apprenticeship program make up the largest attraction for graduates, but many other areas of the electrical field in which our students can find a job also exist.”

Art at BRTC - an Ageless Endeavor

BRTC students Charlotte Sullivan and Bea Harper are proof positive that the pursuit of art is an ageless undertaking. Both women are enrolled in the Painting class taught by Fine Arts instructor Sandy Davis-Baltz. While not necessarily the “senior” mem-



Bea Harper shows her barn painting, this one of a barn near Mill Creek built by her father, Fred Sorg.

bers of the class, both Sullivan and Harper and their respective spouses, Arnold Sullivan and Wade Harper, celebrated their 50th anniversaries this year. They are among a group of “non-traditional” students who, in the opinion of their instructor, give at least as much as they get.

“Having students like Bea and

Charlotte, along with the other non-traditional students, makes this class so enjoyable,” Baltz said. “With their age, experience, and enthusiasm, the younger students always enjoy being around them and looking at their work. It’s really special to have all these different ages together in a class. And I think it helps the younger students to learn.”

Harper, who frequently paints barns or rural scenes, is “a good cut-up,” according to her instructor. “She keeps the class lively.” Sullivan’s paintings typically show an “old-world flavor of Europe,

especially Italy,” Baltz said. The Sullivans actually lived near Turin, or what Americans know as Torino, Italy, for three years while Arnold Sullivan worked for McDonnell Douglas.

Both student-artists give high marks to the class and their instructor, whom they describe as “wonderful,” and they say that art for them “is great therapy.”

Harper explained she actually first started painting the year her young granddaughter died, and has continued it since, painting only in the winter time.

“I’m too busy the rest of the time,” she said.

Paintings are for the two women a way of remembering—for Harper because she typically paints from photos of places that were important in her family, as is the case with her most recent barn painting, and for Sullivan because painting images

from Italy, a place and a people she loves, almost makes the past present.

In true clown-of-the-class fashion, Harper pointed out, “I like painting old buildings—the ones that are leaning—that way I don’t have to be too exact!”



Charlotte Sullivan is working on her latest piece depicting a scene from Italy.

Black Writer, History are Topics for Serendipity

A short story by Zora Neale Hurston, “Sweat,” was the topic of the Serendipity Club “Lunch and Learn” held February 16 by the Department of Continuing Education at BRTC. The fictional story deals with a woman whose husband’s abuses result in his own death, as well as the death of a marriage.

Those in attendance discussed the writings of Hurston, considered one of the influential voices of the Harlem Renaissance. Known also for her studies in folklore, Hurston’s

writings reflect the dialect and settings of her native Florida. Among her masterpieces is the novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The session was moderated by Dr. Jan Ziegler of BRTC.

In addition to their discussion of Hurston, Serendipity members also had opportunity to view the documentary film, “Hoxie: The First Stand.” Upcoming activities for Serendipity members include lunches, classes, and short travel opportunities.



Serendipity members, from left, Wilma Cox, Pat Johnson, Dexter Kimbrough, James Throgmorton, Frances Brett, special guest BRTC President Richard Gaines, and Vickie French.

Chitty

conferences: the International PTK Convention in Grape Vine, Texas; a Leadership Conference/Relay for Life event in Mt. Home in May; an Honors Institute in Las Vegas, Nevada; a visit to the PTK International Headquarters in Jackson, Missis-

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sippi; and next year’s regional conference in Little Rock.

Dr. Moss expressed her pride in Chitty’s election, and said this opportunity will open many doors for the student, and for future members of the college’s PTK honor society.



Serendipity members, from left, Shirley Chester, Jeanne Simpson, Sue Whitmire, Eva Chester, Sara Crabtree and Sharlene Creech.

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.

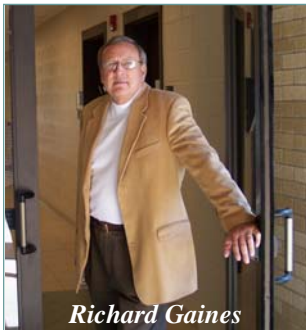
janz@blackrivertech.org
annd@blackrivertech.org
dina.hufstedler@blackrivertech.org

On-line Application address:

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



From the President's Desk



Richard Gaines

Several of the articles in this issue of *The River's Edge* point out the extent to which Black River Technical College is a vital part of the life of this community. It goes without saying that we are in the business of educating students and granting certificates and degrees when they are completed, and that we provide training and job skills for those in the workforce. But we impact the quality of life here in many other ways as well.

For example, our art program not only provides credit classes for stu-

dents working on a four-year degree, but also provides opportunity for artists or would-be artists of all ages to practice and perfect their skills as they go about creating art, regardless of whether they need the academic credits or just love art.

The citizens of this community benefit also through such activities as those during Black History Month, celebrated at the Eddie Mae Herron Center in February. It is fitting that BRTC can provide its human resources to the sorts of community-wide activities held in conjunction with the celebration. Such activities hold positive impact for the many students of all ages, as well as many members of the community and out-of-town guests, who enjoyed and learned more about an important part of our history.

We celebrate also the successes of BRTC's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, and the many opportunities this honor society brings to two-year

PTK Wins Award

The BRTC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, international honor society of two-year colleges, has been awarded the 2004 Pinnacle Bronze Chapter Award based on membership growth, according to PTK Executive Director Rod Risley.

Announcement of the honor encourages chapters to enhance methods of communicating the bene-

fits of membership to eligible students. The leadership skills acquired by student members and officers of PTK will, in turn, serve this community in the years ahead.

All these activities, as well as many, many others, are possible due to the involvement and hard work of BRTC faculty and staff members whose time and areas of expertise flow not only into their classrooms, but out into the community as well. These are just a few of the reasons that Black River Technical College is truly a *community college*.

fits of membership to eligible students.

Advisors for BRTC's Beta Delta Phi chapter of PTK are Dr. Linda Moss, Philip Dixon, Ruth Schaa and Gary Buxton. President Richard Gaines expressed his congratulations to the faculty advisors and the local PTK members for their outstanding achievement.

**BRTC
Community Health Fair
March 15**

**RCDC
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Blood Glucose
Blood Cholesterol Levels
Blood Pressure
Lung Functions
Measuring Height - Weight
Calculating Body Mass Index
Body Composition Analysis
Vision Screening
Adult Immunizations
and more