



# The River's Edge

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### Important Dates

December 20 – January 1

*Christmas Holidays  
Campus Closed*

January 3

*Orientation*

January 7

*Classes Begin*

February 26

*Foundation Gala*

March 2

*College Goal Sunday*

March 4

*BRTC Health Fair*

April 3 - 4

*ALPNA Nursing  
Competitions*

April 8 - 9

*Holocaust Presentation*

## Trammel Urges Graduates To Be Leaders

Pocahontas native and current head of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education Coordinating Board Dick Trammel stressed the attributes of leadership when he addressed graduates of BRTC at the college's December 2007 graduation Thursday night.



*Dick Trammel, Chair, Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board*

A total of 114 students received degrees and certificates.

Trammel, now living in Rogers, was introduced by his son, BRTC Board member Scott Trammel.

In his remarks, Trammel noted that leaders understand that education is a lifelong endeavor. He stressed the importance of a good work ethic and of functioning as a "team player" along with persevering as keys to strong leadership. Trammel also encouraged the graduates to embrace diversity, to be active politically, and to

always give back to family and to the community.

Rector resident Jacinda Welch also delivered a warmly-received address as class spokesperson. Welch, who is a BRTC employee at the Paragould campus, spoke of the relief of having completed the degree as a non-traditional student. She noted that in today's college setting, most students can be considered non-traditional. She acknowledged the impact of the encouragement from family, co-workers, and faculty in helping her and other graduates to have achieved their goals. Welch noted she has already begun work on her bachelor's degree.



*Jacinda Welch, Graduate Candidate Spokesperson*

The graduating class included 46 students who received college transfer, or Associate of Arts, degrees, and 46 students

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## Project REACH Work Updated

Restoration work on the Rice Dwelling House is now in progress, and, as anticipated, the process is one best characterized by "discovery." Historic preservation consultant Joan Gould of Fayetteville was in Pocahontas last week to examine the newly uncovered logs in the historic structure. She also met with a large group of BRTC and community leaders to update them on Project REACH (Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage) on the Eleven Point River.



*Joan Gould points to newly uncovered logs with 'peg' holes in Rice house.*

The meeting, held in the City of Pocahontas Community Conference Center, brought together college faculty and staff members,

community representatives, and members of the Upshaw and French families who donated the Rice Dwelling House and Looney Tavern to the college for preservation and restoration. In addition to an update on ongoing work, the session highlighted current and planned faculty and student involvement in this project through the REACH Scholars program. Gould has termed this endeavor "Harvesting Knowledge."

Abatement work to clear the structure of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint has now been

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## New Server to Support Blackboard

Black River Technical College has purchased a new \$16,000 server to allow for the much needed upgrade of Blackboard, according to Karen Liebhaber, Distance Education Coordinator and instructor of English,



*Mike Greene & Karen Liebhaber*

Literature, and Technical Writing at BRTC. Blackboard is the largest and most popular educational course management system (CMS) in the world.

"BRTC first began using Blackboard in the Fall of 2003 with about twelve classes utilizing it," said Liebhaber. "Now, four years later, Blackboard houses 298 classes. Computer Services has tried to upgrade to a new version of Blackboard that will offer many more features, but the current operating system (server) will not support the upgrade."

"We have outgrown the current server," said Mike Greene, Director of Computer Services. "The new server will support the upgrade, have greater

capacity, run much faster and be more feature-rich. Without the upgrade Blackboard would lose its functionality and lose support from Blackboard, Inc."

"There are currently 30 'traditional' (on-campus) classes utilizing Blackboard for such things as posting syllabi and grades, accessing discussion boards and presenting PowerPoint presentations, video and audio files," Liebhaber explained. "Altogether, there are 75 courses and 22 instructors on both the Pocahontas and Paragould campuses that use Blackboard. This number includes adjunct as well as full-time instructors. All online and hybrid classes are facilitated through Blackboard and most CVN classes have a Blackboard component."

Other features of Blackboard, according to Liebhaber, include the ability to hold huge files and course materials that students can access from anywhere. The platform is compatible with many colleges such as ASU that also use Blackboard.

"It's not only for academics," said Liebhaber, "but other affiliations can utilize Blackboard as well. Blackboard utilization has been offered to the community as part of the school and community involvement mission of BRTC. Groups can post messages, hold 'meetings,' and do many other things through Blackboard. Law Enforcement officers around the state access Blackboard for their English classes. I have students as far away as

Fayetteville, Little Rock, and Lake City." Other examples of organizations utilizing Blackboard include Phi Theta Kappa and the Arkansas Counseling Association.

"We have the new server system up and running for the Spring 2008 semester," Liebhaber noted. "Since the new system will be using a different 'language' there is the concern of losing information currently in place, but Mike (Greene) hopes to have the two versions running at once until the transition is complete."

Liebhaber credits the support of Dr. Roger Johnson, Division Chair of Academics, and Angie Caldwell, Division Chair of Business and Technology, for the ability to upgrade to the new system.

"Without their offer to assist in funding the new server, my budget would not have been able to afford it. We had been discussing our possibilities for a while and decided at the beginning of the fall semester that purchasing the server was going to be the best thing to do, but we didn't have enough money in the Distance Education budget alone to do it."

Liebhaber will conduct a brief meeting Friday, January 4, from 12:00-12:45 p.m. for all faculty and staff who use or are interested in using Blackboard. For more information on the meeting or Blackboard, Liebhaber can be contacted at 870-248-4000 ext. 4178.

## REACH

completed, along with the removal of material that previously concealed the Rice house interior.

What can now be seen is the interior of the main parlor much as it might have looked at the time of construction. According to Gould, the logs are in "incredible, super shape." She noted that only the lower logs which have had exposure to the weather are in need of substantial "healing" or replacement.

"We have always known this would be a process of discovery," Gould said, "and it certainly is proving to be just that." She explained that, based on the revelation that the doors in the Rice structure have been moved from their original locations, the structures may have had a use as something other than a dwelling house originally. "We know that form follows function," she said. "We just have to listen now to what the structure is telling us, and be open to all possibilities." The discovery of numerous peg holes in certain of the logs is also of major significance, along with numerous other features that have

now been uncovered, according to Gould.

Gould, along with preservation architect Tommy Jameson of Little Rock, are now carefully analyzing the new findings. The outcomes will feed into the architectural design for the restoration process.

Among those in attendance at the meeting were Linda Collins-Smith of the Randolph County Tourism Association, Billy Carroll, Randolph County Heritage and Preservation Specialist, Randolph County Judge David Jansen and Pocahontas Mayor Gary Crocker. They acknowledged the potential impact of the restored Rice and Looney structures in establishing and/or strengthening this area destination for heritage tourism.

The project is funded through a grant from Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resource Council. BRTC plans to seek continued funding from ANCRC for further study and restoration of the Looney Tavern in the next grant cycle.

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Dendrochronology studies have dated the construction of the Rice house to 1828, and the Looney Tavern to 1833. The structures were built by Reuben Rice and William Looney, interrelated family members who, along with slaves, migrated from Hawkins County, Tennessee, to the Eleven Point River Valley when the area was still a part of the District of Louisiana and Territory of Missouri.



*From left, Christina French, Jack French, David Jansen, Gary Crocker, and Joan Gould.*

# Holiday Auction Generates Funds for MSSPS



*Kay Ellis, Steve Jones and Angie Caldwell look over auction items.*

The annual BRTC live and silent auction held in conjunction with the college's end of the year potluck generated more money than ever before, announced auction coordinator Janna Guthrey.

This year's event featured more donated items, and generated a total of \$2711 for the Mary Sallee Single Parent Scholarship program. Those funds are eligible for a match from the Arkansas Single Parent Scholar-

ship program of 150%, bringing the total amount to be realized to approximately \$7,000.

"We are so pleased with the amount of funds we raised," Guthrey said. Faculty, staff, friends of the college, even student organizations, donated the many items which were either sold in silent auction or at the live auction.

"All the money we raised, with the

match, goes to help single parents complete their degrees."

Special recognition was given to the auctioneering team of "Col." Jack McCord, VP for Academics, and "Ringmen" Mike Dunn, Chair of the BRTC Board of Trustees, and Dr. Gary Buxton, Instructor of English. "Not only did these people make this such a successful auction," Guthrey said, "they also made it lots of fun with their antics and shenanigans."

## Finalists Named for 'River's End' Award

Five finalists for Universal Asset Management's 'River's End' Incentive Award, a new car, were announced at the culmination of the Fall 2007 Graduation ceremony held Thursday in RCDC.

The five are Sean Collier, Walnut Ridge; Sherry Hawkins, Lafe; Jennifer Rainwater, Delaplaine; Belinda Noblin, Hoxie; and Jimmy McPhink, Paragould.

This marks the fourth year Steve Manley, CEO of UAM, will be

awarding a new automobile to one graduating BRTC student. The award is designed as a special incentive to encourage students to complete their degrees of study.

In developing the award program, Manley developed criteria for eligibility. To qualify, a student must have demonstrated financial need (FAFSA certification); must be completing his/her first degree of study in higher education; and must have completed a minimum 75% of the

coursework at BRTC.

Each December, the names of five students are drawn from the pool of eligible students, all of whom must be present. The same drawing occurs in May for five additional finalists. Then the name of one lucky student is drawn from the ten finalist to be the recipient of the new car.

BRTC President Richard Gaines expressed his appreciation to Manley for his generous support of BRTC's students and of the college overall.

## Clements Earns Degree



*Courtney Moore Clements*

Courtney Moore Clements, instructor of English at BRTC, has earned a Master of Arts degree in History from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. She also holds both BA and MA degrees in English, as well as the Specialist in Community College Teaching (S.C.C.T.) degree, all from A.S.U.

Clements began working as an adjunct instructor for BRTC in the Fall of 1999, and became a full-time instructor the following year.

In addition to classes in Freshman English and World Literature, Clements also, occasionally, teaches elective classes in Literature in Modern Pop Culture and Women in the Humanities.

## Graduation

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receiving Associate of Applied Science degrees in Aviation Maintenance Technology, Business Technology, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education, Industrial Maintenance Technology, Paramedic, Registered Nursing and Respiratory Care.

Certificates were awarded to 33 students in the areas of Accounting Assistant, Administrative Services, Auto Collision Repair Technology, Automotive Service Technology, Dietary Manager, EMT/Paramedic, Industrial Electricity/Electronics, Microcomputer Business Applications, Practical Nursing, Welding, Medical Coding, Medical Transcription, and Phlebotomy.



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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.*

*The River's Edge is produced by the  
Office of Development.*

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### On-line Application address:

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

## From the President's Desk



*Richard Gaines*

Even as we end another semester and celebrate with our graduates, we are again reminded that with regard to college completion, much work remains to be done. Our speaker reminded our graduates that learning truly is a lifelong endeavor, and one that requires persistence in the run. That is certainly true not only for individuals, but for our state as well.

Yet another report has documented what we already know, but have not yet determined how to "fix," namely, the state's relatively

low completion rate when it comes to students earning their college degrees. The study is "Adding It Up: State Challenges for Increasing College Access and Success."

From the study comes the following: "Arkansas' civic health, prosperity, and success in creating good jobs for its citizens depends on its ability to increase college success for *all* students, including low-income and first generation college-goers, adult learners, and students of color." The study continues to say that "Today, Arkansas is among the lowest-performing states in the nation in the percentage of adults ages 25-64 who have a college degree. Assuming that current trends in college completion and in-migration of college-educated adults continue, Arkansas will continue to be one of the lowest-performing on this measure in 2025. This will leave the state short of the college-educated population needed to meet workforce demands and compete with bestperforming nations." From

an economic standpoint, Arkansas can ill-afford to continue on this path.

What is even more significant about this report is the news that while the state should be on its way to an educational turn-around, this simply is not the case: "Arkansas currently stands above the nation in the percentage of students completing high school and is on par with the nation in the percentage of recent high school graduates going on to college." The solution, according to the report, is certainly easier said than done: "Further along the educational pipeline, Arkansas must in-

crease the proportion of students completing both two- and four-year college programs to be competitive with bestperforming states – and nations – by 2025."

Here at BRTC, we believe that 2025 is far too long for this trend to continue. We will be working diligently in the coming months to do what we can to help the state become one whose college completion rate keeps pace with its college-going rate. The entire report can be accessed at [www.makingopportunityaffordable.org](http://www.makingopportunityaffordable.org).

## Orientation First Time Entering and Transfer Students

January 3

8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

RCDC