



Inside this issue:

Graduation <i>(Cont'd from Page 1)</i>	2
Auto Collision Complex Hosts Guest Speaker	2
Former Waterloo Employee Seizes Opportunity	3
Bosch Continues to Support BRTC	3
Construction on Paragould Campus Running Smoothly	3
Employees Give <i>(Cont'd from Page 1)</i>	3
From the President's Desk	4
Fire Science Instructor Re- tires	4

Important Dates

- January 12
Classes Begin
- January 16
Foundation Board Mtg.
- January 23
Serendipity
- February 24
Foundation Gala
- February 27—28
Tuskegee Airman
Presentation
- March 3 - 4
Holocaust Survivor Visit
- April 17
LETA Graduation
- April 23
Scholarship Luncheon

Graduation Honors Record Number

Degrees were conferred by BRTC President Richard Gaines December 11, to more than 197 graduates, punctuated by the cheers of an overflowing crowd of family and friends. The December Commencement was the largest graduation class in the college's history.



Alvin Lewis, Jr.

The previous record number of class was 178 individuals receiving 192 degrees in May 2008. The current graduating class earned a total of 232 degrees and certificates, with some graduates

earning credentials in more than one program of study.

An additional 47 GED certificates, earned through Adult Education, were also conferred during the ceremony.

Among the graduates were several former employees of Waterloo Industries and Rector Sportsware, two of the regional plants whose closures left many unemployed and seeking re-training opportunities through BRTC.

Alvin Lewis, Jr., of Smithville, BRTC Alumnus and member of the Arkansas National Guard, served as guest speaker. He spoke of his own experiences while stationed in Iraq, and urged the graduates to never let life's "roadblocks" deter them from their goals. Lewis currently pastors the Arbor Grove Freewill Baptist Church, and is working toward completion of his Bachelor's degree.

(Continued on page 2)

BRTC Employees, Board Members Give Generously to Scholarships



Faculty and staff bid on silent auction items.

The faculty and staff, along with members of the BRTC Board of Trustees and BRTC Foundation Board,

gave generously to the Mary Sallee Single Parent Scholarship program while enjoying holiday food and fun at the annual Christmas potluck December 12. The giving came in the form of donated gifts and home-made treats, and the purchase of these items at a high-spirited silent and active auction.

The event brought in \$2,562, which, when matched at the 150% level by the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship program, will bring in an additional \$3,843, for a grand total contribution to the MSSPS fund of approximately \$6,405. The fund provides \$500 scholarships to qualified full-time single-parent students living in Randolph County and pursuing a degree in higher education. Partial scholarships are available for part-time single-parent students.

Auction Coordinator and MSSPS Committee chair

(Continued on page 3)

Graduation

(Continued from Page 1)



Sally JoAnn Gipson

Class spokesperson Sally JoAnn Gipson also spoke of her own jour-

ney in completing her degree, an AAS in Registered Nursing. Gipson said the journey had included overcoming many difficulties and obstacles, but was well worth the effort and persistence. She credited support from her family, particularly her mother, in making the difference.

Board of Trustees member Dr. Rebecca Edwards assisted BRTC VP for Academics Jack McCord in presenting departmental awards to the following Gen Ed students: Sandra Parker, Human Anatomy and Physiology; Derek Cato, Natural Science and Math; Jennifer Doyle, English; Brydon Anders, Fine Arts Visual;

Stacey Diggs, Social Science; and Mylea White, Psychology.

Technical Education award winners: Paul Adam Booth, Networking; James Johnson, Aviation; Erica Davidson, Respiratory Care; Rhonda Difani, Practical Nursing; Brandi Sharp, Registered Nursing; Robert Anderson, Phlebotomy; Cathy Eversole, Dietary Manager; Deborah Baker, Administrative Services; and Katrina Bozarth, Business Administration.

Dr. Jan Ziegler, VP for Development, announced the five December graduate finalists for "The River's End" incentive award to encourage

degree completion. The award is given annually by Universal Asset Management. December finalists are Brandy L. Jones of Pocahontas; Fallon Grace Robbins of Rector; Valerie J. Bickford of Pocahontas; Denise Lynn Wolfe of Paragould; and Donna K. Weisenbach of Maynard. The names of these five will be added to another five students whose names are to be randomly drawn from qualifying May graduates. The award, a new automobile, will be presented at the conclusion of the May graduation to the student whose name is drawn from the ten.

Auto Collision Complex Hosts Guest Speaker



Michael Pellett

Matching auto paint to an existing paint color can sometimes be a

difficult job. Knowing the background of paint and the various types of paint helps this process, Michael Pellett, a Sherwin Williams training center manager, said.

Pellett was a recent guest speaker on the BRTC Pocahontas campus. He held two lectures covering the tips of the trade during a two-day presentation at the BRTC Auto Collision Complex. Butch Dail's Auto Collision class, as well as those from the local auto collision industry, participated.

Day one covered paint color. "Part of the challenge is to get a match," Pellett said. "This is the hardest part of the color match process."

He gave background information on what is in the color and what makes it different and varied. His presentation covered topics such as metallic and micas.

Day two introduced waterborne paints. The new technology does not have a lot of harsh chemicals and is better for the environment. Several

local industries have purchased the equipment needed to use the waterborne paints, Sherwin-Williams Sales Representative, Tina Pickney said.

"This presentation gives the students more exposure. They can get a better job that way," she added.

House arranged for Pellett to speak at BRTC. The Auto Collision Complex was an ideal facility for local business owners and BRTC students to meet for the presentation, Pickney said.



December 2008 Graduating Class is BRTC's largest to date.

Former Waterloo Employee Seizes Opportunity



Sandra Parker

Returning to college was a “dream come true” for BRTC graduate Sandra Parker. When given the opportunity to go to school after Waterloo closed its doors, she took the oppor-

tunity without hesitation. “For me this was a blessing in disguise,” said Parker, who had been with Waterloo for 13 years, “although a devastating situation for many.”

Parker was born and raised in Maynard and graduated from Maynard High School in 1965. She began taking basic courses at a college in Illinois with a desire to one day become a teacher. But work, kids, and other obligations put those dreams on hold. “After all these years, I am glad to be back in an academic setting,” said Parker, “and excited about the opportunity. I wish I was financially able to make a career out of being a student - I just love it!”

After one year at BRTC, Parker was awarded a Dietary Manager Certificate during last week’s graduation ceremony. She plans to graduate in May with an Associate of Applied Science in Dietetics degree, and begin working in a long-term care facility. “I like to talk to patients about their dietary needs,” Parker explained. “I have done clinicals in both hospitals and long-term care facilities, and I really like the long-term care facilities. However, I would really love to become a Registered Dietician and teach.”

The mother of four, grandmother of eight, and great-grandmother of one, Parker explained how challenging this journey was at times after

having been out of school for so long. “I can’t say enough about the faculty and staff at BRTC,” Parker stated. “It’s the faculty and staff that make a campus what it is, and everyone has gone above and beyond in helping me through this process. Without their encouragement, support from family and friends, along with my desire and determination, it would have been so easy to give up.”

“I knew I was capable of doing this if ever given the opportunity, because of the love I have for studying and learning. But, most of all,” Parker states with emotion, “because it’s something I thought I would never again have the opportunity to do.”

Bosch Continues to Support BRTC



Nick Lee (left) and Steve Engelken (right) present check to Richard Gaines.

Robert Bosch Tool Company has once again donated \$2,500 to the Black River Technical College Foundation for use as needed in support of the students. Bosch representatives who were on campus November 25 to present the gift to President Richard Gaines were Steve Engelken, Operations Manager, and Nick Lee, Human Resources Manager. Annual contributions from the tool company have provided new furnishings and remodeling for the student lounge area in BRTC’s Administration building.

President Gaines expressed his appreciation to the company for its continued support of the college and the students. “We are truly grateful for the continued support and for the benefits provided to the students.

Construction on Paragould Campus Running Smoothly

The main structural frame of the new Academic Complex on the Paragould campus is almost complete, Ronnie Walker, BRTC Construction Manager said. Construction workers plan to begin roof installation on the west end before the first of the year.

The north entry gabled framework is currently being completed. The entry faces the new parking area. A corridor connecting the structures is almost complete. The metal stud framing on the south side is near completion.



Brick will be laid soon, weather permitting. Other areas of the construction are currently underway or will begin soon. August 1, 2009 is still set as the completion date.

Employees Give

Janna Guthrey praised the participation and generosity of the many who took part in the auction. “This year we had the largest number of gifts ever, and the total revenues show a record, as well. It’s great when we can have fun

(Continued from Page 1)

and provide these needed scholarship dollars at the same time.” Completing the festive atmosphere was the auctioneering of “Col” Jack McCord, assisted by Auctioneers Mike Dunn and Dr. Gary Buxton.

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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
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From the President's Desk



Richard Gaines

BRTC's graduation earlier this month was yet another milestone for us—a record number of graduates. What makes this event particularly noteworthy is the fact that among the nearly 200 people receiving degrees and certificates were several who had lost their jobs at Waterloo almost two years earlier. Without doubt, the road for many of the graduates, and for the displaced workers not only from Waterloo but from other closed plants, has not been easy.

These students must cope not

only with financial uncertainty, but also with negotiating unfamiliar territory in a classroom setting.

Both our commencement speaker and our student spokesperson referenced the hardships students often face, and these include life-altering experiences which can delay and even derail educational plans. Both of them spoke from the heart when they encouraged those in the audience to persist in following their goals. And both of them spoke of the importance of the support of family members as they undertake new endeavors.

The silver lining of jobs lost to globalization or other economic factors is the fact that dislocated workers often have opportunity to re-train for a new, hopefully better job than before. That is our hope and a major part of our mission here at BRTC. In today's difficult economic times, this mission is increasingly important. We pledge to do our part in helping all our students to build a new, bright future.

Fire Science Instructor Retires



Steve Jones honored by BRTC President Richard Gaines

After 19 years working at Black River Technical College, Fire Science Instructor Steve Jones is retiring. His work at the college began in August, 1989, and he has continued full-time in the same capacity through the Fall 2008 semester. He has been responsible for BRTC's Fire Training Center since its opening in January 1990.

Jones is currently the Lawrence County Emergency Management Coordinator and Director of the

Lawrence County Communications Center and plans to continue in those capacities for a couple more years. He will also serve as an adjunct instructor for BRTC. Other retirement plans include being a representative for companies selling fire and communications equipment, as well as being a consultant for area fire and emergency services organizations.

President Richard Gaines recognized Jones and presented a plaque to him during the staff potluck held December 12 in the Randolph County Development Center. "He built the program," said President Gaines referring to Jones and BRTC's Fire Science Program. "He will be hard to replace and will be greatly missed."