

Alabama Community College Association



2021 FALL JOURNAL



**FOCUSED ON THE  
STUDENT EXPERIENCE**



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The ACCA Executive Committee has been preparing this year with the hope of having an annual conference at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel/Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, November 22-24. However, with the surge in infection rates in Alabama of the COVID-19 virus and especially the Delta variant, the decision has been made to cancel this year's ACCA Conference.

A notice was sent at the end of August to all institutions. The health and safety of our attendees, presenters, and conference partners is of great concern.

We are moving forward with planning the 2022 ACCA conference which is tentatively scheduled for the Birmingham Sheraton and BJCC for November 20-22, 2022. We know this is a challenging time for all educators and hope that you have a productive and safe year.

I hope that everyone stays safe and healthy as Fall semester continues and that you will plan to attend the ACCA Conference in November of 2022.



**Ben Jordan**  
**2021 ACCA President**



# ALABAMA TECHNOLOGY NETWORK

## ATN Impacts Alabama

Alabama Technology Network (ATN) is an entity of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). It serves as Alabama's center for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), which is part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Located across the great State of Alabama, Alabama Technology Network is part of 15 Community Colleges and 3 University Campuses. With 52 employees, ATN's mission is to provide workforce training, technical assistance, and engineering services to incumbent workers statewide.

ATN has the most extensive training and service offerings for business and industry, which includes five primary areas of delivery: continual improvement, industrial maintenance & technology, food safety, environmental health & safety, and leadership & management development.

A study published recently by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research found that in 2018, ATN provides a sizable net positive economic impact to the State. The Upjohn study examined topline areas of ATN's projected economic impact to the State, including a contribution to Alabama's GDP of \$893 million, an additional personal income of \$437 million, and an effect on the State's gross output of \$2.26 billion.

The study also reported that the \$1.8 million federal dollars invested in ATN during the calendar year 2018 generated nearly a 25.08:1 increase in state personal income tax. Then, the return on investment of state funds invested was 9.67:1. This created a net positive return to the state treasury of an estimated \$45 million.

During mid pandemic in 2020, Alabama Technology Network managed to serve 237 unique clients with over 311 projects completed statewide.

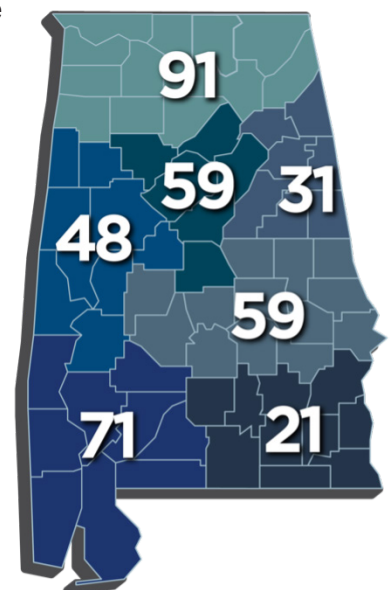
Since 2015 through 2020, the following are client reported economic impacts:

- 1,059 Independent Client Surveys Completed
- 2,306 New Jobs
- 10,226 Retained Jobs
- \$1.56B Increased & Retained Sales
- \$358M in New Client Investments
- \$744M in Cost Savings

### Totals

- o 12,532 Jobs
- o \$2.6B Client Impacts

Over the years, ATN has learned to perfect customer service. We pride ourselves on being a trusted local partner, to implement solutions and innovations for your company, to develop and train employees, and to assess and improve processes in the workforce, knowing you can count on Alabama Technology Network. Contact us today at (334) 293-4671 or [www.atn.org](http://www.atn.org).





# BEVILL STATE

## Former Heart Patient John Corbell Finds His College Home at Bevill State

Words by Terrell Manasco | Image by Al Blanton

The kid's got a lot of heart. When John Corbell arrived in this world, life promptly tossed him a bag of rotten lemons before he took his first breath. So, John learned to make lemonade.

It hasn't been easy for the Sulligent native, who was born with a rare disease called Unbalanced AV Canal with Pulmonary Atresia. "It's basically half a heart," says John's mother, Sabrina Corbell. "He did not have the proper arteries going to his lungs. His aorta was turned around. He did not have a left ventricle."

Despite being on medication, John was sickly as a child. Because a viral infection could send him to the hospital—or worse—he had to avoid sick people. When his friends played football, John could only sit and watch. "I couldn't do much. I couldn't breathe well," he remembers. "My heart rate was really high. It made me weak and nauseous."



In 2018, a 17-year-old girl from Georgia passed away. Her death, though tragic, gave birth to hope. Her named was McKenzie—and she was a heart donor. Within days, doctors at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt placed McKenzie's heart in John's chest.

But his health issues weren't over. Months later, John's neck was swollen, he was having headaches and was often tired. He was diagnosed with lymphoma and had to undergo chemotherapy, which he completed in May 2019.

As a boy, John always loved football. He became his middle school's team manager in the 7th grade, but his dream was to play. He got his wish his senior year when he was cleared for a few plays each game as a defensive back and receiver at Sulligent High School. Recently, he was an overall state winner of the 36th Annual Bryant-Jordan Awards in Birmingham.

This fall, John will enter the Bevill State nursing program on the Hamilton campus. His goal is to work at Children's Hospital. "I've always wanted to help people since I was little," he says. "I've gone through what those kids are going through. I feel like as a nurse, I can encourage them and their parents. This isn't the end of the line; there's a future."

John admits there were times he was troubled. Making lemonade wasn't always easy but he says he could always lean on his family, friends, and God. "Even in the dark times when I was down and scared, there was always a comfort and a peace over me," he says. "I believe that was all God and I give Him all the thanks and the glory that I'm still here today."

Finally, John would like to share something a young girl named McKenzie taught him. "I encourage anyone to be a heart or organ donor," he says. "You don't know what it means to someone else who needs that. It opens a whole new chapter in their life. You could save someone's life."

# BISHOP STATE

## **Bishop State Graduate's Passion for People Leads to Rewarding Career in Nursing**

LaDarrius Marshall has always had an interest in helping people, so he majored in health science at a local four-year university with ambitions of attending pharmacy school. After three years at the university, he met with his on-campus advisor and realized the career options for students in his major were not of interest to him. "They didn't give me a good rundown of what I could do with that degree [at the university], so I looked at other options—as far as healthcare degrees—because I still wanted to work in healthcare, I still wanted to work with people," he said.

He decided to become a nurse and was impressed with the stellar reputation and affordability of the nursing program at Bishop State. Marshall's decision to transfer was met with a brief moment of self-doubt. "Initially I felt like I was downplaying myself because I was going from a university to an Associate's degree," Marshall said. Nevertheless, he remained optimistic. "I knew it was going to ultimately pay off in the end because it was affordable," he said.

It did pay off, and he was able to utilize his nursing degree from Bishop State to pursue a career path that tripled his income. "When I got my RN, things changed. I got a pay increase; I was able to move out [and] help out my family," Marshall said. In 2020 when COVID-19 ravaged the U.S., he became a travel nurse and tripled his income within three months. "...That changed my life incredibly," he said.

Marshall attributes Bishop State's Nursing Program for providing the foundation he needed to successfully pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX)—a nationwide examination for the licensing of nurses. "If you can get through nursing school, you can pass that exam because [Bishop State's Nursing Program instructors] literally give you the foundation and the education you need to pass that exam and to be competent in your work to take care of people," he said.

Although he's able to bask in his success today, Marshall's journey to this point in his life didn't come without challenges. He failed during his second semester in the nursing program and had to start over. "It was hard. I had to study a lot. I made a lot of sacrifices," he admitted. "If you don't cry at least one time in Nursing School, you're not doing it right." His advice to anyone pursuing a nursing degree at Bishop State is to seek support. "A support system is the biggest key to getting through the program," he said.

As a nursing student at Bishop State, Marshall was able to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and a Registered Nurse (RN). Upon graduating from Bishop State, he successfully completed his Bachelor's degree at a local university, and at the time of writing, he's pursuing his Master's degree. Despite his continued success, he has one regret: "I wish I would have started with an Associate's Degree first and then [pursued] my Bachelor's," he said.



# CALHOUN

## Calhoun Community College Partners with Huntsville Hospital to Offer Free CNA Training

Calhoun Community College has partnered with Huntsville Hospital to offer a free certified nursing assistant training program.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 1.5 million people employed as nursing assistants will experience a projected employment growth rate of 9% between 2019 and 2029, which is faster than the rates of most occupations. A large portion of this projected growth can be attributed to the aging population, which continues to increase the number of patients who require care each year.

Certified Nursing Assistants, also known in the healthcare industry as CNAs, are in high demand across the region. To help address that demand, Calhoun's Workforce Solutions (CWS) team partnered with Huntsville Hospital to create an accelerated five-week training program. Not only will the program provide the necessary instructional training for individuals to immediately enter this field and begin work, but also to provide students with real-world experience that includes hands-on training at various medical clinics in the College's service area. Students learn the same techniques that are used by healthcare professionals who work at hospitals and medical facilities.

Upon completion of the program, graduates are guaranteed a position as a Certified Nursing Assistant at a Huntsville Hospital System facility in North Alabama. "As the American population continues to age, it is evident that the number of patients needing care will increase, and a number of current CNAs will be retiring as well," commented Houston Blackwood, Calhoun's Director of Workforce Solutions. "Huntsville Hospital has been a valuable partner over the years and continues to support Calhoun's Health Sciences division with many different training initiatives to assist our students in obtaining a career in the medical field," added Blackwood.

Research from the Premier Nursing Academy states the most obvious factor in the shortage of CNAs can be attributed to the bottleneck effect in the education system. There are many more potential students who apply to CNA programs each year than can be accepted, slowing the rate of new graduates. "That very reason is why this opportunity is so monumental for Calhoun," commented Dr. Jimmy Hodges, Calhoun Interim President. "High-quality healthcare is something every patient should receive when they walk through the doors of any medical facility, and it is our desire to continue creating multiple training options for future CNAs through advanced instruction. We are always excited to partner with Huntsville Hospital, and this program is not only a win for Calhoun, but it's an even bigger win for our students," added Hodges.

The cost of the course is \$799, and Huntsville Hospital pays \$500 towards tuition upfront for all students who are selected to participate in the program. After 90-days of employment at a Huntsville Hospital System facility, students also receive another \$500 payment, and after 6 months of employment, an additional \$250 will also be paid.



**Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program**



**Guaranteed\* Job at**  **Health System**

**Free Tuition† - Limited Time Offer - Apply Today!**

[Calhoun.edu/HH-CNA](http://Calhoun.edu/HH-CNA)

\*Qualified applicants will be offered a job after completing and passing the program.  
†Huntsville Hospital will pay \$500 of the \$799 tuition up front for all students selected for the program.  
The remainder of the costs will be reimbursed after 6 months of employment. See website for complete details.



# CENTRAL ALABAMA

## Central Alabama Community College Partners with Local High School for LEAP Program

Central Alabama Community College will welcome the first ever LEAP fellowship students to campus this fall. LEAP (Leaders Excelling in Academic Pathways) is a brand new program where high school ninth graders will now have the opportunity to take college courses during their four years in high school and be on track to graduate with an associates degree in conjunction with their high school diploma.

CACC entered into a partnership with one of their main feeder high schools, Benjamin Russell High School, to begin this program. Students had to apply for the program and had to meet certain academic requirements, along with attendance and discipline requirements.

Students who applied and met the qualifications then had to interview before a panel of high school and college officials. Eight students were selected for the inaugural class of the LEAP program and will begin classes this fall semester.



“We are extremely excited about this new opportunity for the students at Benjamin Russell,” Jeff Lynn, president of CACC stated.

“We have a great relationship with Dr. Keith Lankford and the Alexander City School System. They did an outstanding job identifying these students, and we worked collaboratively to make this possible.

This is only the beginning. We look forward to growing this program to other schools throughout our service area.”

# CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY

## More than a Dual Enrollment Coordinator, CVCC's Demeka Daniels Strives to Make a Difference

It's not unusual to find Demeka Daniels in any local store having a conversation with a high school student about their future. "Yea, I get stopped in Wal-Mart a lot," Daniels said with a laugh. "It never fails, but it's OK. I enjoy what I do."

Daniels is passionate about education, and in her role as Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) Dual Enrollment Coordinator/Career Coach, she advises high school students through the next phase of their education. She is the liaison that connects the College to Phenix City, Lee County, Russell County, and Smiths Station School Districts. Daniels provides direct and comprehensive career coaching, advising, and student development to help students earn college credit while in high school. In 2017, when she began in this role, there were 144 dual enrollment students at CVCC, in the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 288 students enrolled. Daniels says she's proud to see the program grow.



"I am thankful for the continued growth since I have taken on the role of Dual Enrollment Coordinator," she said. "The numbers have increased in both semester hours taken and the number of students enrolled."

"Research shows that students who participate in dual enrollment courses earn higher college GPAs and more postsecondary credits than their classmates," said CVCC President Jackie Screws. "Ms. Daniels is not only making a difference in these students lives, but she is making a difference in our communities. Many of her students become first-generation college graduates."

That was the case for Janeiyah Baugh, who earned a short certificate in Phlebotomy at CVCC this past spring while finishing up her senior year at Central High School in Phenix City, Alabama. Her family had the opportunity to watch her walk across the stage at both commencement ceremonies. Now, she's back at CVCC this fall, finishing up classes to prepare to apply for the nursing program.

"My family is very proud of me," said Baugh. "When I heard about the dual enrollment program, I just thought it was cool how you could be in high school and college at the same time. Ms. Daniels has helped me every step of the way, and she continues to support and encourage me. She always tells me that she is just a phone call away. I know she really means that, because I call her all the time," she laughed.

Daniels is being recognized for her work at CVCC by the Columbus and the Valley magazine and the Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals as one of five rising stars in the community. "I am truly overwhelmed with happiness and appreciation for this honor. As a member of the Pirate team, I feel valued to be recognized. It feels good to know that I have made an impact on the students I work with daily," Daniels said.

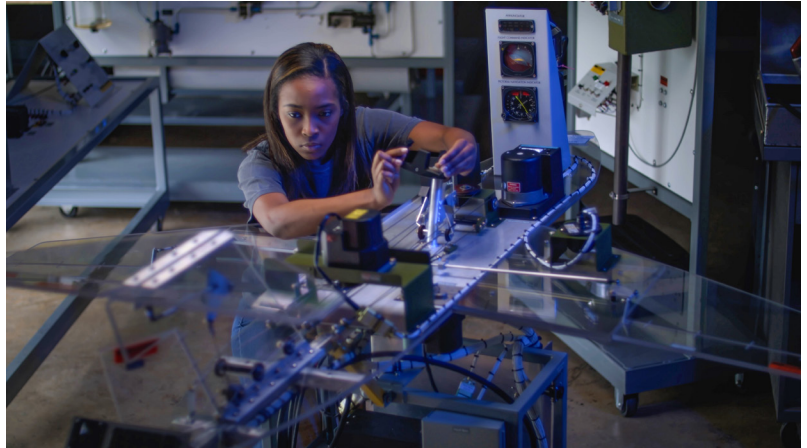


# COASTAL ALABAMA

## **Apprenticeships Provide a Pathway to Great Careers for Coastal Alabama Community College Students**

Apprenticeship opportunities are the backbone of Coastal Alabama Community College's Workforce Development Program, and the Fall 2021 semester will see students entering classrooms, and industrial facilities en route to fulfilling, and lucrative, careers.

Recently, the college announced a new apprenticeship occupation in the construction crafts. This apprenticeship forged a partnership with C-Sharpe Restoration & General Contractors, a Gulf Coast leader in exterior restoration and general contracting and Kerby Custom Renovations, a leading home remodeling company in Baldwin County.



The apprenticeship will utilize the training provided by a new short-term certificate in building maintenance, which is offered at the Coastal Alabama's Foley Career and Technical Facility. The goal is to develop a workforce that can lead the way in maintaining the expansive infrastructure in south Baldwin County as the county continues to set record tourism numbers season after season.

"We pride ourselves on being the 'go-to' organization for companies as they look for innovative ways to build a talent pipeline," said Dr. Josh Duplantis, Dean of Workforce at Coastal Alabama Community College. "These programs provide the opportunity for our local, emerging workforce to get on a pathway to a great career working with dedicated employers."

Laura Dover, Human Resource Manager for C-Sharpe, said the company is excited about the partnership with the college. "This program will add another pipeline to develop new and upcoming talent in the workforce," she said. "We look forward to the opportunities this partnership will bring."

Coastal Alabama Community College's Alabama Aviation Center has established a reputation in training quality technicians for the growing aviation industry in South Alabama. A great model for talent development in aviation is the Registered Apprenticeship at Foley's Collins Aerospace.

The apprenticeship offers aviation mechanic students a pathway to Federal Aviation Administration licensure, and training that could ensure preferential placement with airlines throughout the United States. It is a four-year program pioneered by the Coastal Alabama and Collins to address the critical need for aviation maintenance technicians throughout the country.

The Gulf Coast is home to the third-largest multi-state aerospace corridor in the world, which currently includes more than 200,000 workers. And more are needed every single day. "We need 9,600 technicians over the next 20 years annually," said Mark Sloan, director of the Alabama Aviation Center. All the schools that teach FAA curriculum, combined, graduate around 7,500, which creates a 2,100-worker deficit every year.

That means the demand for skilled workers is far greater than the supply. And with the proper training and industry partners, the Coastal Alabama Community College students enrolled in the program will have their pick of high-paying jobs with excellent opportunities for advancement.



# DRAKE STATE

## Drake State Students Help NASA Build Habitats in Space

Two Drake State students have earned an out-of-this-world opportunity. Engineering Design students Jaiden Mason and Josh Driskill are part of the new Frontiers Research Program at Drake State Community & Technical College. They were selected to help NASA Marshall Space Flight Center construct a potential habitat on the moon by 2024.

Mason and Driskill work with materials that are similar to resources found on the moon to develop construction techniques, but these interns are not strangers to the design world. "I'm excited about space exploration because I am interested in physics and science," said Driskill. "Space travel improves our understanding of both."

In 2018, Driskill assembled his first 3D printer by himself. His design techniques will help him and Mason develop 3D-printed structures that have the strength and durability to survive in space. "I hope to learn everything that this internship has to offer," said Mason. "This research will be essential with the expedition to Mars, and I know this opportunity will impact our future success in this career field."

Both Mason and Driskill credit their instructors for preparing them for this opportunity. "Drake State really cares about the success of their students," said Mason.

"My teacher, Mr. Grissim, mentioned the internship to me and encouraged me to apply," said Driskill. "I have been excited about space and 3D printing for a long time and this opportunity was an excellent mix of both of those interests."

Bob Grissim is the Principal Investigator for the Frontiers Research Program. He tracks Mason and Driskill's progress. "I'm very curious to see how it will come along in the end," said Mason, "if these plans will actually be carried out in the expedition to Mars."

Mason said this research experience will be a gem on his resume and "a great learning experience" to step into the STEM field.

Driskill said the new Frontiers Research Program gives him the kind of exposure he otherwise would not have on his own. He wants to study aerospace engineering once he completes his studies at Drake State. "This program will make future space exploration safer and more cost effective," said Josh.

Mason and Driskill spent the year researching space construction techniques on the moon thanks to a Cooperative Agreement Notice (CAN) from NASA. Drake State became the first and only Historically Black Community College (HBCU) to receive a CAN from NASA's Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP).

They plan to continue studying engineering at the University of Alabama in Huntsville and Alabama A&M University, respectively. Two new interns, Trevon DeFelice and Joseph Green, will pick up where Driskill and Mason left off at Drake State.



Frontiers Research student interns Jaiden Mason (left) and Josh Driskill (right) collaborated with an innovative 3D printing construction company in Austin, Texas to test 3D printed models.

# ENTERPRISE STATE

## ESCC Adding New LPN Program, Welcoming Phillips as Coordinator

In Spring 2022, Enterprise State Community College is increasing its healthcare program offerings with a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program.

"We are all too aware of the need for more licensed nurses in our state," ESCC Vice President/Dean of Instruction Danny Long said. Locally, we are seeing new medical facilities coming to our area, and we know that our current area healthcare facilities have a need for LPNs to help provide patient care. We already offer pathways into the healthcare sector through our Medical Assistant Technology (MAT) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs. This LPN program is the next step in supporting our healthcare community."

Through the new program, students will receive essential skills training in IV therapy, nasogastric tube insertion, wound care, head-to-toe assessments, medication administration and more. The focus will be placed on educating students in such a way to ensure the quality and safety of patient care, all within the scope of practice for an LPN.

"I think the program has been a need for some time now, especially with the national shortage of all nursing staff," Enterprise Health and Rehab Administrator Wes Averett said. LPNs are no different. The opportunity for us to put more LPNs in the workforce would be beneficial not only for us here at the nursing home but also throughout the area with Medical Center Enterprise, physicians offices and others who certainly have the need for Licensed Practical Nurses."

ESCC's LPN program will join the College's three healthcare-focused programs: Medical Assistant Technology (MAT), Emergency Medical Technology, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). There will also be a two-course sequence that will bridge the MAT and LPN programs.

The new program will be overseen by Nursing Program Coordinator Amy Phillips, who has over 20 years of experience in nursing and education combined. "We are excited to bring this program to ESCC and help meet the need for LPNs in our community and state," ESCC President Matt Rodgers said. Mrs. Phillips is bringing a wealth of experience to the College, and under her leadership, I am confident that our students will be more than ready to join the work-force and provide top-tier patient care."

Phillips received both her nursing degrees and her masters in Clinical Nurse Specialist with a focus on adult health and education from Troy University. Before coming to ESCC, she worked as a nursing instructor at Wallace Community College for a little over eight years full-time and part-time as a clinical instructor prior to 2012. She also has 13 years of experience as a registered nurse, working in several areas of nursing to include Medical-Surgical, Infection Control, Home Health, Employee Health, and Staff Education.

She said she is ready to bring the new LPN program to life at the College to meet the needs of Enterprise and the surrounding communities. "I recognized that ESCC was the perfect career choice for me after witnessing their continued efforts on college growth through student involvement and community outreach events," Phillips said. I admired their focus on community and their willingness to give back, and this new nursing program is a prime example of just such an initiative. For me to embark on this journey of implementing a nursing program will entail a lot of hard work, but I stand ready for the challenge.



Amy Phillips will oversee ESCC's LPN Program as the College's Nursing Program Coordinator. The new program will start during the Spring 2022 semester.

# INGRAM STATE

## ISTC's Jeannie Shiver Prepares for a Future in Logistics

Ingram State's Jeannie Shiver is a petite 40-something who, at first glance, might not look like she belongs in a warehouse setting. However, over the past four months Shiver has progressed from what she describes as someone with "no idea about the industry" to a Manufacturing Skills Standards Council "Certified Logistics Associate".

Shiver was looking for a new career path when she opted for logistics, based in part on the enthusiasm of other students. "They talked about how they were learning to operate different pieces of equipment, and the different kinds of jobs they could get with their training." When Shiver expressed concern about the short time she had before release, other students were quick to respond. "One girl reminded me that everything I would learn in the program was something I could use in the future."

While she quickly mastered the classroom portion of the program, Shiver had to work to develop her skills as an equipment operator. "I was pretty good on the forklift from the start," she said. "But the order picker was a little scary. I just reminded myself that I like heights and kept working until I mastered it." Logistics instructor Matt Poole requires all of the students to be proficient with the program's equipment. "I tell them that while most of them will advance beyond freight handling, they need to understand and appreciate the skills involved."



ISTC student Jeannie Shiver plans to combine her years of experience in supervising others with some newly acquired technical skills to build a future in logistics.

Poole said Shiver will have an abundance of career options. "Jeannie is a great candidate for an inventory control or other management level position. Her past experience supervising others combined with the skills she has learned over the past few months will appeal to a wide variety of employers."

Asked about her experience at Ingram, Shiver focused on how enrolling helped her prepare to transition from incarceration to the workplace. "Just attending classes five days a week was so much better than how I had been spending my time. And working with the equipment, earning my CLA and creating a resume all helped me feel more comfortable about the opportunities ahead."



# GADSDEN STATE

## Gadsden State is a Family Affair for the Durens

Gadsden State Community College has often been a family affair, and, for many, like the Duren family, it can also be a life changer.

"I have found my passion," said Kenni Rae Hunt-Duren. "Sometimes it takes time to find out where your heart is."

Kenni Rae and her oldest children, Zachariah, 20, and Judah, 18, are enrolled at Gadsden State. The boys are students in the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration program while Kenni Rae is working towards her general studies degree. Judah and his twin sister, Halle, also earned their GED through the College's Adult Education Services.

"I knew I needed to do something to better myself," said Judah. "I couldn't just wait for something to happen. I had to make it happen. I needed something to support myself and help my family."

It has been a long road to Gadsden State for the Durens, who selflessly give of themselves to the less fortunate. They lived in Missouri, where they assisted farmhands in learning English to pursue their American citizenship. They moved to Mexico to serve the needy and disenfranchised. In Minnesota, they worked with homeless youth transitioning to a stable life.

In 2014, they found their way to Alabama via Nomad's Land in Attalla, where they homesteaded and hosted travelers and transient people. Two years later, they put down permanent roots and bought a house on Noccalula Mountain.

With a new home, it was time to also take a new career path. Judah and Zachariah enrolled in the HVACR program and are set to graduate following the fall semester. Kenni Rae is focused on English with plans to teach her native language to immigrants and refugees.

"I really love different cultures," she said. "I appreciate diversity. Accepting others is a good way to make people feel at home. We want them to feel a part of our community in a healthy way."

Kenni Rae has a 4.0 GPA, has an on-campus work-study job, and, like her sons, she pays for college with the help of a Pell grant and receives services from Student Support Services. "SSS is amazing," she said. "It's truly a lifesaver. Everyone who has access to SSS should definitely take advantage of all it has to offer. Everyone is so helpful."

Though Kenni Rae is a successful student, there have been a few bumps in the road, like starting college online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I admit I struggled," she said. "I admit I have been frustrated. I felt bogged down having to navigate online classes. I have burned a lot of energy learning how to learn."

But, Kenni Rae and Judah said Gadsden State instructors helped them and have been vital to their success. "The instructors, especially my English teacher, have been so encouraging," she said. "When I was discouraged, she would move me along. A supportive teacher makes a big difference. I am not going to quit!"



Judah Duren and Kenni Rae Duren have proven to both be successful students at Gadsden State. They also work together at Gadsden's own Back Forty Beer Co., where they are pictured.

# JEFFERSON STATE

## Jefferson State Opens New Welding Center

From Shelby County Reporter

Jefferson State Community College held a ribbon-cutting ceremony recently to officially open the college's new Welding Center at the Shelby-Hoover Campus.

At the event, Jefferson State President Keith Brown described the opening as the culmination of a two-year collaboration between the college, county leaders and the city of Hoover. According to Brown, the development project was initiated in response to a growing demand for skilled welders in Alabama and across the United States.



"The research tells us that this is what employers in Shelby County need, and this facility is one way we plan to fill that need. So, I am very excited to see this come to fruition after such a long time of planning, but I'm more excited about what it's going to mean for this community," Brown said.

In fact, welding jobs are currently the second-highest jobs in demand in Shelby County, according to 58 INC., an economic development group based in the county.

Amy Sturdivant is the managing director of economic development at 58 Inc. and says that the facility will be instrumental in addressing workforce shortages across the county and state, significantly reducing hiring costs as well as job wait times. "This facility will give a great pipeline of talent and allow a lot of the graduates here to find jobs quickly and locally," she said. "Many of these graduates will also rise up and become managers so these jobs will be used by folks that live in this area and that can go to work at companies in Shelby County."

The new building will also expand educational opportunities to several areas in the state, according to Jefferson State President Keith Brown, and will provide greater access to the college's welding disciplines in Shelby, Chilton and Bibb counties. "People will now have the opportunity to develop these skills right here in their community, and we will now be able to serve not just in south Jefferson County, but also deep into Shelby County as well," Brown said.

Prior to the construction of the Shelby-Hoover facility, the school's welding program was offered only at the college's Jefferson and St. Clair-Pell City campuses. According to Brown, the construction of the new facility is part of a larger effort to diversify the college's curriculum and prioritize more skill-based training to contrast with the school's primarily academic programs. "We have really stepped up our efforts in providing career technical programs, specifically skilled trade and welding, and this facility will expand our footprint on the skilled trade side," he said.

The college's welding program initially launched in 2015 with a class of just eight students, and currently has over 200 actively enrolled participants. Moving forward, Brown said that the school's priority will be on broadening the program's enrollment and course offerings, and that the new facility was even designed to accommodate additions and expansions.

# LAWSON STATE

## Lawson State Community College Named a Regional Hub for Apple's Community Education Initiative

In the summer of 2020, Lawson State Community College was named a regional hub for Coding and Creativity as part of Apple's Community Education Initiative and Tennessee State University's HBCU C2 initiative designed to bring coding and creativity experiences to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and their communities. As part of the initiative, HBCUs serve as centers, bringing together students, faculty and staff, local businesses, and community leaders to promote coding, creativity, and technology. Lawson State was one of ten HBCUs named to the network of technology hubs last July.

Tim Cook, CEO of Apple said, "At Apple, we believe in the power of education to transform lives and we're committed to partnering with communities of color to advance educational equity. Proud to be expanding our coding, creativity, and workforce development programs to 10 more HBCUs." As part of its Community Education Initiative, Apple will support Lawson State with equipment and professional development to help the college become the pre-eminent regional HBCU C2 hub in the southwestern area of the City of Birmingham, the City of Bessemer and Jefferson County—the communities in which the college serves.

"In this digital age, we are excited to be at the helm of creating access to the latest Apple technology that will lead to opportunities and economic growth in our communities and state," said Dr. Cynthia. T. Anthony, president of Lawson State Community College.



*Lawson State has continued to expand its technology offerings since becoming a designated hub for Apple's Community Education Initiative in 2020.*

Since the announcement, faculty leaders from Lawson State have participated in Apple's virtual Teacher Coding Academy to learn about coding and app development using Apple's comprehensive curriculum, which utilizes its easy-to-learn Swift programming language. A soft opening for the teacher program was held May 13, 2021 with sessions for Lawson State faculty and staff.

These sessions assisted in building a knowledge base to establish a foundation for instructors to effectively use Apple products such as the iPad and Mac computers and learn Apple applications like Pages, Keynote, GarageBand, and iMovie. As attendees complete their sessions to learn new skills, they are encouraged to take interactive quizzes in the Apple Teacher Learning Center in order to earn badges.

In the process, if eight badges are collected, enrollees in the program can possibly receive a prize of an iPad or Mac computer and can become a recognized Apple Teacher. Once designated as an Apple Teacher, individuals have the opportunity to be a member of the Apple Teacher Learning Center and be a part of a community of teachers from around the world.

The college has also continued to expand its Everyone Can Code summer coding program under the Apple hub designation. In June 2021, the college again held its annual Birmingham Can Code boot camps, returning to in-person sessions with middle and high schools from the Birmingham City School System. The college also expanded the program to service students from Bessemer City Schools for the first time.



# LURLEEN B. WALLACE

## LBW is Reemerging Ideas for Successful Employment

LBW Community College announced a pilot program in April, the Alabama RISE Program, developed to train individuals with disabilities for a career.

RISE, which stands for reemerging ideas for successful employment, is the vision of LBW Community College President Dr. Brock Kelley to offer career exploration to an underserved population so they may successfully enter the workforce.

“Seventy percent of persons with disabilities are not actively in the workforce,” Kelley said. “LBW can help alleviate the workforce shortage throughout our service area by providing education and training for these individuals to close that gap.”

Partnerships with local employers and K-12 systems are a key component of the program. During their senior year, students explore career opportunities through virtual reality technology provided by the College.

“Industry-leading businesses in the area have offered summer internships to our students to gain hands-on experience in their chosen career field,” said Dean of Workforce Development and Strategic Initiatives, Jennifer Hall.

Following the internship, each student may complete either the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) Certified Logistics Associate training or a MAP, Mobilizing Alabama Pathways course offered at no cost through LBWCC Adult Education and Workforce Development.

“Our Career Pathway program is dedicated to providing quality education and training to prepare our communities’ citizens for the workforce,” Hall added. “The Alabama RISE program will bring us one step closer to reaching Governor Ivey’s Success Plus Initiative goal of adding 500,000 highly skilled employees to Alabama’s workforce by 2025.”

Since the program’s inception, Alabama RISE was chosen as a regional best practice by the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship. LBW was also selected as a contender for the First Annual Governor’s Work-Based Learning Seal of Excellence Awards.

“We’re very happy to see LBW taking innovative steps to continue strengthening talent pipelines and ensuring that paths to good jobs and promising careers are available to all students,” said Statewide Project Manager for the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship, Meredith Smith. “Our office is proud to be part of the development of this project.”

LBW’s Alabama RISE Program was recently nominated for a 2021 AlabamaWORKS Innovator Award. The program was recognized for innovatively approaching workforce development and breaking barriers to propel Alabamians forward.

“We believe this program can be an answer to Alabama’s workforce needs and potentially become a model for the state to serve non-traditional students in a way that benefits Alabama and our mission as a community college,” Kelley added.



# MARION MILITARY

## MMI Breaks Service Academy Appointment Record

In May, Marion Military Institute (MMI) announced a record-breaking 2020-21 Service Academy Program (SAP) year with a total 101 appointments to the five U.S. Service Academies:

29 Coast Guard, 24 West Point, 15 Air Force, 14 Merchant Marine & 11 Navy. (MMI's previous school record for a single academic year was 96 appointments.)

Thanks to the guidance of SAP Director LTC Tom Bowen, USA (Ret) and dedicated faculty & staff, these Marion Made future military officers are poised to become strong leaders.



A group from the MMI SAP class of 2021 celebrates Convocation.



# NORTHEAST ALABAMA

## Northeast Alabama Community College First to Offer Free Laptop Checkout Kiosk for Student

Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) is the first Community College in Alabama to provide free laptop vending machines, giving students greater access to technology and more flexibility when on campus.

A new “Tech It Out” kiosk is now located in the Student Center at Northeast. Retrieving a laptop from the automated kiosk system is quick and easy. A student agrees to NACC’s Terms and Conditions, swipes their student ID, punches in their code when prompted, and out pops one of the 12 Dell laptops. The kiosk system, made by LaptopsAnytime, has two easy-to-access rows of devices which slide in and out of the slots vertically.

“We are very excited to be able to offer this service to our students,” stated NACC President Dr. David Campbell. “Our Educational Technology Director, Mrs. Patricia Falk, keeps us ahead of the curve in educational technology that benefits students.

Computers and computer programs, of course, have become indispensable parts of education these days. Mrs. Falk and her staff continuously seek out new, innovative ways to serve students.”



Pictured are NACC ETS staff and Director Patricia Falk, NACC President Dr. David Campbell, and LaptopsAnytime staff member.

The fully charged devices are available for short-term checkout (not to exceed 48 hours) and can be used anywhere on campus. When done using the computer, the student will return the laptop back to the kiosk. The kiosk, in turn, readies each laptop for the next series of users by recharging and wiping its contents. NACC also offers long-term laptop rental in the library. Students may check out the laptops in the library for an entire semester.

“We are excited to be the first Community College in Alabama to offer this innovative service. We wanted to increase access to technology, and when we became aware that this could be done in an unmanned, 100% self-service manner with full accountability, we reached out to LaptopsAnytime who provided guidance and became a willing partner,” said Patricia Falk, NACC’s Educational Technology Director.

“The overall goal is student success. This one-of-a-kind kiosk helps us provide convenience to students without burdening our staff. And it ensures availability and flexibility for those that need a laptop when they need it.”

Each laptop runs typical programs, like Microsoft Office, and allows internet connection through the college’s Wi-Fi network.

Jonathan Ruttenberg, Co-Founder & VP, LaptopsAnytime, said this Northeast is the first Community College in Alabama to utilize this service, but they are in 40 states and every continent except Antarctica. He said the company’s kiosk system can handle up to 30 devices. Ruttenberg noted, “NACC is a forward-thinking organization that we are looking forward to working with. At the end of the day, while unique and powerful, our kiosks are only as good as the people who are managing them.”



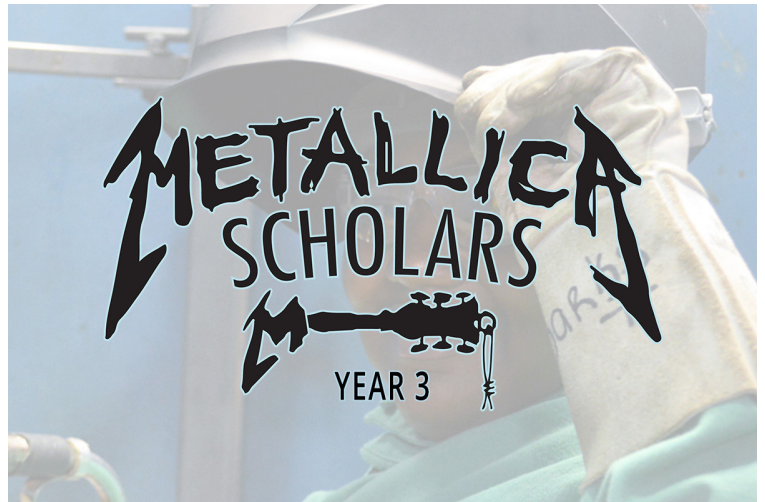
# NORTHWEST-SHOALS

## NW-SCC Awarded \$100,000 for New Metallica Scholars Initiative

Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) was selected from a competitive field of community colleges across the country to receive \$100,000 to transform the future of students in the community.

Funded by Metallica's All Within My Hands (AWMH) and led by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Metallica Scholars Initiative was designed to directly support students while also elevating the importance of career and technical education. This work is highlighted at a global level by leveraging the influence of Metallica who continue to speak out on the dignity of professional trades and community colleges that prepare students.

The Metallica Scholars Initiative is now in its third year and has fundamentally improved the earning potential for students who become Metallica Scholars. NW-SCC intends to prioritize students in programs leading to careers in the Advanced Manufacturing and Construction industries. Metallica Scholars will be showcased to promote varying skilled trade pathways as a means to economic development.



"The foundation and the band pay attention and follow these programs and students, and there is no doubt that lives have been changed. What makes this work so unique is that in addition to supporting students directly, our goal is not just to change individual lives, it is to unabashedly promote the trades as meaningful and well-paying career pathways. We are not afraid to be loud nor to dig in on things we believe in, and we believe in these students," said Dr. Edward Frank, executive director of AWMH.

"We are proud to work with Metallica to advance the career and technical education provided by the nation's community colleges," said Walter G. Bumphus, AACC's president and CEO. "Colleges across the country provide pathways to well-paying jobs through programs, services and training that lead to in-demand skills, certificates and degrees for students. These programs are responsive to the needs of local businesses and provide a pipeline of qualified workers to local industry. It's a win-win for our students and the local economy. For Metallica to continue to invest in these students and communities is a testament to the power of the workforce education community colleges provide and we are proud to do this work with them."

James Hetfield, Metallica's vocalist/guitarist and co-founder said, "As a touring entity we are in direct involvement with multiple essential career choices along our path. From electrical, professional driving, culinary, mechanical maintenance, public safety, logistical organizers. And that just scratches the surface. Those, along with a multitude of other technical careers, make our touring and our performances possible. We are passionate and grateful to these trades and tradespeople."

# REID STATE

## Reid State Technical College Receives Legislative Resolution Honor

On Monday, May 17, 2021 Reid State Technical College along with Central Alabama Community College, Auburn University at Montgomery, Auburn University, and Troy University were presented with legislative resolution HR243, a legislative resolution of commendation for nursing students' that provided service and support for COVID-19 testing and vaccination during the 2021 Legislative Session.

Reid State's nursing department sent 21 practical nursing students to the Capitol to administer COVID-19 tests of legislators and state employees. Approximately 500 COVID-19 test were administered during each of the five testing sessions that took place typically three weeks apart during the 2021 Legislative Session; altogether, approximately 2500 tests were administered.

Additionally, Reid State Technical College, Central Alabama Community College, Auburn University at Montgomery,

Auburn University, and Troy University students also helped administer the vaccine through the vaccine clinic operated by the State Wellness Center and the State Employees' Insurance Board in downtown Montgomery. The vaccine was administered to 10,000 state officials, state employees, retirees, and their dependents. State House staff and legislators were also provided an opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.



"Reid state nursing students did a tremendous service to our state and are to be commended for their vital skillset. We are proud to have such service-oriented students," said Reid State Technical College President Dr. Coretta Boykin. Reid State Technical College president, Dr. Coretta Boykin, represented Reid State on the Floor of the House of Representatives on May 17, 2021.

See full HR243 details at: <http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/ALISON/SearchableInstruments/2021RS/PrintFiles/HR243-int.pdf>

# SHELTON STATE

## Shelton State Adult Education Student Navigates Her Road to the Future

As she sat down to answer questions about her educational journey, Sevide “Gloria” Adingni realized that precisely one year had passed since she completed her GED.

Although she can now enthusiastically share her success and future plans, the road to this conversation was filled with obstacles. Beginning with her first visit to Shelton State Community College, Gloria’s challenges were clear. She didn’t speak English or have a GED, she didn’t have transportation or expendable income, and she had little support.

“Gloria had every reason to give up before she ever started,” said Kristen Bobo, Shelton State’s Adult Education Director. “But she didn’t.”



Kristen met Gloria and her brother in 2016 when they arrived at Shelton State to inquire about GED classes and English as Second Language (ESL) classes. Originally from Benin, West Africa, the only English word Gloria knew was, “yes.” Fortunately, Gloria’s brother spoke English and was able to provide translation for their initial visit. The ease of this beginning was not to be the standard. Gloria’s brother had other obligations and was not able to attend even her first day. He asked Kristen to make sure Gloria got on the correct city bus at the conclusion of her first class.

“Helping someone who doesn’t speak English learn to navigate mass transit was a learning experience for our whole staff,” said Kristen. “We rallied around her to ensure her comfort level in returning home and coming back to school. It took time and several pocket translators, but she did it!”

“Sometimes it would take me two hours or more to get to or from campus on the bus,” Gloria said. Despite delays, she never missed a class. “The fact that she took a two-hour bus ride to attend class was my first glimpse of her amazing determination,” said SSCC Adult Education instructor Mary Rainey. “She attended class without fail.”

Once Gloria passed her first GED test, she was unstoppable. Working tirelessly to improve her vocabulary and writing, she passed two tests in a matter of months. Ultimately, she hit a wall with the social studies component. Coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, her instructors worried she might give up. “Every time I thought she would quit, she just worked harder,” said Mary. “She took advantage of focused time during the pandemic and passed the final part of her GED in August 2020.”

Though dedicated to her goals, Gloria also became an asset to the program. “As soon as she mastered conversational English, she sought out our new students,” said Kristen. “She befriended our other ESL students and made them feel welcome. She wanted everyone to feel encouraged and capable.”

A recent recipient of a Pete Turnham Scholarship through the Alabama Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education (ALAPCAE), Gloria is actively pursuing her nursing degree and challenges other non-English speaking students to follow her example. “For everybody who might come from a different country, anyone who doesn’t speak English – don’t give up,” states Gloria. “Everything in this life is possible. You just need to keep going.”



# SNEAD STATE

## Snead State Students Add Their Own Spin to the College Experience

When it comes to focusing on the college experience, Snead State Community College looks to the “experts” to put their own stamp on a long-time tradition.

Snead State hosts new student orientation in July of each year. It once was a time for all available faculty and staff to lead students through the orientation, advising and registration processes. Then about three years ago, the orientation morphed into the version of Parson Days that is led completely by students with faculty and staff providing support.

“More than ever, we need to find common ground with our students. Our student leaders are current students or recent graduates who are in the middle of or just completed the same journey that our incoming students are about to take. A student-led orientation is personable and relatable. I have seen many long-lasting friendships formed during a Parson Days session,” said Director of Student Support Services and Engagement Brittany Goble.

The leaders are among the first faces new students see when they attend Parson Days. From sharing information during the general sessions, leading groups on campus tours or helping students register for classes, the student leaders are at the forefront, sharing their knowledge and experience with the incoming class.

“Our students are our most important asset,” said Snead State President Dr. Joe Whitmore. “The student leaders are examples of what opportunities a Snead State education can provide. They set the standard for our incoming students from day one, and the impact can be seen year after year.”

Sophomore Erika Duarte was a student leader during Parson Days 2021. “I did not have a traditional Parson Days experience due to...COVID-19. I attended Parson Days through online meetings, which was very informative and helpful. This year’s Parson Days was not only on campus, but also student led. Snead State is one of the only community colleges that holds student-led orientations. I believe having a student-led orientation allows the newcomers to feel more comfortable and be able to relate on a personal level, letting the upcoming freshmen know that we, as students, empathize. We’ve all been there, nervous, anxious but anticipating this new chapter.”

Because of the success of the student-led Parson Days, Snead State has continued to utilize student leaders in other events, such as college fairs and Rapid Enrollment Days. During the recent Parson Days, Snead alumni who are beginning their senior years at their transfer universities served as student leaders. “The students were able to compare experiences and talk about how Snead prepared them for that next step in their education,” said Snead Ambassador Sponsor Miranda Collier, who also coordinated the Student Leaders for Parson Days.

“These students, along with faculty and staff, bring life to our orientation sessions. It makes for a smooth and fully-invested transition into higher education,” said Mrs. Goble.

“Being a student leader is very rewarding. Student leaders are meant to be there for students, and I truly enjoyed lending that helping hand and building new friends along the way,” said Erika.



Snead State Community College enhances the college experience for new students by hosting orientations and enrollment events that are student-led. Using current students and recent graduates to lead the events adds a personal touch and “brings life” to the events.

# SOUTHERN UNION

## For the Students

Southern Union Supports their non-traditional education students through its new mentorship program.

By: Mackenzie Reese

In early January, Southern Union President Todd Schackett sat down for lunch with Khanh and Thang Le.

The siblings were from Vietnam and were interested in getting their GED and entering Southern Union.

As they ate, President Schackett asked them about what they wanted in life and what their dreams were. He slowly began to craft a plan of attack to help the siblings achieve it.

After lunch, he took them on a tour of Southern Union's buildings showing Khanh and Thang glimpses of a future that became more obtainable with each second they spent talking about it.

Khanh and Thang Le are two of the 19 students currently enrolled in Southern Union's Mentorship Program. The program, offered through the college's adult education department, is an educational support system geared towards non-traditional students receiving guidance through college difficulties.

The program's goal is to foster students' mindsets and help them learn that no matter where they start, they can go as far as they can dream; a GED is not terminal. Instead, it's the beginning of an educational pathway that opens the doors to opportunity.

The mentorship's framework is structured over two years. A student will be provided a mentor to help guide them through getting their GED, transfer into a general college, and build connections in their chosen field.

Each mentor's goal is to identify the roadblocks that could potentially stop their mentees from wanting to continue their education. It will also create a system that allows students to meet successful workers in the field they wish to pursue.

Currently, there are 19 mentees and mentors in the program as it works on transferring students into the Academic, Health Sciences, and Technical Pathways at Southern Union. All the mentors are currently staff at Southern Union. The community college expects more students to join, hoping that eventually, each mentor will have up to three to four mentees.



President Todd Schackett is pictured with his mentees, Khanh and Thang Le.

# TRENHOLM STATE

## Trenholm State Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Utility Companies to Create a New Lineworker Training Program

Dedicated to providing job training opportunities that lead to high-wage careers, Trenholm State Community College (TSCC) partnered with Alabama Power and Alabama Rural Electric Association (AREA) to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on July 12, 2021. The agreement creates a new lineworker training program offered through TSCC's Workforce Development division. The nine-week course will train students to become entry-level electrical lineworkers by providing instruction in topics such as the fundamentals of electricity, mechanized equipment, climbing, and safety. Additionally, students will receive an OSHA 10 certification and will have the opportunity to earn their CDL certification as well.

In preparation for the program, Alabama Power generously created an outdoor learning lab on TSCC's Patterson site to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities to use industry equipment while emphasizing safety standards. The outdoor lab consists of a field of training poles and a 50 ft performance pre-test concrete pole that applicants must climb to qualify for the program. Upon course completion, students will be able to inspect and test power lines and equipment as well as identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers, and switches.



Trenholm State Community College signs Memorandum of Understanding with utility partners. From the Left, Dixie Electric Cooperative representative, Central Alabama Electric Cooperative representative, Alabama Community College System Chancellor Jimmy Baker, Alabama Power Executive Vice President Jeff Peoples, and Trenholm State Community College Interim President Dr. Kemba Chambers.

According to EMSI, there are more than 500 open lineworker jobs in the River Region with a median annual salary of more than \$84,000 and Trenholm State hopes to be a key player in filling this need. "We are excited to offer this job training program that will lead to high-wage careers in the River Region," stated TSCC Interim President Dr. Kemba Chambers. "Trenholm State is delighted to work with our community stakeholders and partners to expand workforce opportunities that create a pipeline for our area utility companies."

Montgomery Mayor Steven L. Reed and Montgomery County Commission Chairman, Elton Dean, praised the public-private collaboration. "This program will be a gateway to a better future for our community," said Reed. "Because it opens doors to new opportunities for Montgomery area residents." Chairman Dean added, "I am grateful to Trenholm and the utility companies for having the vision to create such a valuable initiative."

Trenholm State is the fourth community college within the Alabama Community College System to partner with Alabama Power to establish a lineworker training program. Jeff Peoples, Alabama Power Executive Vice President of Customer and Employee Services expressed his commitment and excitement about the new partnership. "Through this program, students gain the skills and hands-on training needed for meaningful careers in our industry."

TSCC's inaugural class is set to begin January 2022 with ten students, and the next cohort will begin in March 2022.



# WALLACE - DOTHAN

## Wallace Community College Adult Ed Instructor Receives State Honor

Linda McCoy of Dothan was recently named Adult Education Instructor of the Year by The Alabama Association for Public Continuing Education and Adult Education. McCoy, an education veteran with 52 years' classroom experience, teaches in the Adult Education Department at Wallace Community College.

McCoy says her 14 years in adult education has been her most rewarding assignment. "I enjoy getting to know my students," she says. "Each one has a story. They come from all kinds of backgrounds."

Those backgrounds are very real to McCoy, whose first assignment came in the newly integrated Girard Middle School in Abbeville in 1967. After retiring with 28 years in middle schools and high schools in Alabama, McCoy realized she was not ready to leave the profession. She taught six years more in Georgia before coming to Wallace in 2007.



Through adult education McCoy says she can still mentor teens while also assisting adults of all ages. "Right now, I have students from 18 to 71," she says. Despite their age differences, McCoy notes her students share one common goal: to improve their lives. "Adult education is a place

where people can come for a second chance," she says, "but I get more out of it than they do. It's life changing!"

McCoy recalls story after story of adult education changing students' paths. One is a lady in her 60s who lost a lifelong job when the Abbeville West Point Pepperell mill closed in 2007. She had abandoned school in the 1960s to work in the mill. With no high school diploma, the aged worker worried she would never find another job. She enrolled in the WCC program, completed her GED, and received relief funds for college classes. McCoy recalls, "She called me and said, 'It's a miracle!' She was so excited about getting that high school diploma!"

Another student designated as special needs had dropped out of high school as a single mother. McCoy remembers, "She was afraid of math, but we worked through that." Also, the girl's father frequently left her at the library to study. "She basically taught herself to read," McCoy says. "She went on to enroll in college, and I remember she made all A's her first semester."

All of McCoy's students are likewise impressive. "They are all hardworking, smart, and dedicated. Adult education is a special program. I love it! This is the best job I've ever had."

# WALLACE - SELMA

## Beloved Custodian Surprised with Graduation Celebration

Derrick Harris was able to celebrate his college graduation in the same halls he'd worked in for years. The 26-year-old was the beloved janitor at Wacoochee Elementary School in Salem, Alabama.

This spring, Harris achieved his dream and graduated from Wallace Community College Selma. Harris learned about WCCS's online program from Dr. Veronica Chesnut, who is a former WCCS employee. "I attend the same church as the Chesnut family, and she helped me map out a plan to complete my degree," said Harris.

Harris registered for classes in February 2020, but, soon after, the pandemic forced school closings. "The pandemic forced me to work from home, but it also provided me with an opportunity to focus on my classes," said Harris.

"Derrick is truly a remarkable student who is determined to strive for excellence in spite of his life challenges. The virtual setting is quite challenging for many students but, Derrick's presence within the course was quite engaging and enjoyable," said Pamela Wright, WCCS mathematics instructor. "I thoroughly enjoyed working with Derrick and I know he is destined for greatness."

Wacoochee teacher Tracie Lane said that Harris sets an example for hard work and deserves to be celebrated. "He has been a mentor to so many. He is such a light, a shining light, to everybody he's around," said Lane.

Harris was one of hundreds to participate in the college's traditional graduation on May 14 in Selma and on May 25, the last day of school, the elementary students and staff decided to surprise Harris with a goodbye graduation celebration. The students lined the halls and cheered Harris' name. Some held signs that read, "You're my hero!"

Harris begins this year as a PE assistant at West Forest Intermediate, and he has completed his first semester this summer at Auburn University at Montgomery.

Harris, who hopes to be a physical education teacher and a coach, says he wants to teach and help young people through sports. "I'm excited to work with more kids and more students and impact them in a positive way," said Harris.

He said his best advice is to stay positive. "Just keep going in life," he said. "I don't get down too much on myself or things that are going on around me. I just keep going."



# WALLACE STATE

## Diesel by Distance

Wallace State Community College is setting the standard in educating diesel mechanics through its Diesel by Distance program. The program provides students the opportunity to learn skills through work-based learning experiences, using remote learning so they can train on their schedule from anywhere. The program uses virtual learning techniques to teach skills before putting them to practice.

Diesel by Distance gives students the flexibility to learn the program's course objectives and theory online in addition to watching live lab sessions. Instruction occurs in an online format, complemented by virtual reality labs and periodic competency demonstrations on campus scheduled at the student's convenience, such as on weekends or evenings.

The program allows students from all over Alabama, the United States, and the world to enroll in diesel technology courses with an online theory format. Instructors can provide live feedback to train using all the technological advances available.



One of the main components of the Diesel by Distance program is the work-based learning experience in partnership with an employer of diesel technicians. While enrolled in the Diesel by Distance program, students must be employed and engaged in work-based learning through an industry recognized or registered apprenticeship program in partnership with a participating company.

Individuals enrolled in Wallace State's Diesel Technology program can earn an associate in applied science in the field or pursue multiple certificates, including those in preventative maintenance, diesel engine specialist, transportation trailer technology and heavy utility vehicle specialist. Similarly, students enrolled in the Diesel by Distance program can choose any of the degree or certificate components or a specific class they're interested in.

Wallace State's Diesel Technology program also offers Kubota technician curriculum and certifications and is a National Coalition Certification Center (NC3).

Development of the Diesel by Distance program was supported by a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor through the Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC) program, in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA).

The Diesel by Distance program has also received praise from the Alabama Trucking Association.