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Carolyn Collins Named Interim VP of Student Affairs

In July, BRTC President Dr. Wayne Hatcher announced that Carolyn Collins would be serving as Interim Vice President of Student Affairs until the position, left vacant with the retirement of Dr. Mike Sullens, is permanently filled.

"The retirement of Dr. Sullens leaves a void that will not be easy to fill," said Hatcher. "Faculty and students knew they could rely on him, and we will miss him and the stability he provided. The VPSA selection process is underway and we anticipate having a new VPSA named early next month."

"I am pleased to have someone with Carolyn's credentials and qualifications willing to serve as our Interim VPSA," Hatcher noted. "On July 8 she assumed all regular duties and responsibilities of the position with the exception of Career Pathways."

Collins taught business for 18 ½ years in the public schools before being hired as business instructor at BRTC in 1990. She has since served as Division Chair

of Technical Education, Director of Financial Aid, and, for the past five years, Coordinator of Student Services at the Paragould campus. She



Carolyn Collins

holds a BSE in Business Education, an MSE in Business Education, and a Specialist in Community College Teaching (SCCT) degree, all from Arkansas State University.

A total of 39 applications for the position have been received by Julie Edington, Director of Human Resources. "The search committee has worked diligently with Dr. Hatcher and the Human Resources area in an effort to

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Important Dates

- September 2**
Labor Day Holiday
Campus Closed
- September 3**
English Club Meeting
- September 4 & 5**
PTK Blood Drive
- September 14**
REACH Sites Open
9am-12pm
- September 27**
Annual IBERIABANK / BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament
- October 8**
Advisory Dinner

Serendipity to Begin Tenth Year

BRTC's Serendipity program will open its tenth year on the college campus at Pocahontas with its first meeting of the year on Friday, September 6, beginning at 11:30 a.m. The theme for the year is "The Ties That Bind," featuring eight contemporary books and other activities, according to Patti Blaxton, Director of Corporate and Community Education, who, together with Dr. Jan Ziegler and Jessica McFadden of the Office of Development, plan and implement the program.

Serendipity is a community outreach endeavor designed to encourage lifelong learning, explained Blaxton, who added that membership is open to men and women of all ages. Serendipity membership includes participation at the monthly luncheon meetings and other activities.



Jessica McFadden (left) and Dr. Jan Ziegler shown with the Serendipity poster for the new year.

The meetings include lunch beginning at 11:30, followed by discussion of the book and its themes. The program frequently includes also music and video that is related to the book and its author and its topic. Sessions conclude at 1:00 p.m.

"We always have a varied group of people," Ziegler said. "Some of us read the book, or part of the book, while some never do, and that is perfectly fine. Serendipity members great-

ly look forward to a summary of the book by Jessica McFadden, who is a great storyteller. So it's not a problem if they haven't read the book," she added. "The stories and the characters embody universal themes and struggles and dreams, hopes and disappointments to

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Commentary on "Team Tonya"



Angie Caldwell
VP for Technical Education

This summer has been very hectic on our campus with interviewing and hiring to be ready for the fall semester. On June 26, we were devastated to learn that our Director of Nursing, Tonya Hankins had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. On this day, she was told that it was inoperable and she had six to twelve months to live so she would need to begin getting "things" in order. This diagnosis sent waves of sorrow and shock across both sides of the Pocahontas campus - the Nursing Department on one side and Law Enforcement on the other where Tonya's husband, Chris, is an instructor.

The love and support that became evident makes me so very proud of our BRTC family. The nursing faculty and former Director of Nursing Ramonda Housh began to assist Tonya and Chris in making contact with MD Anderson Medical Center in Houston, TX. On June 30, Chris and Tonya flew to Houston due to the generosity of Scott and Carmen George from Corning. During her three week stay at MD Anderson, Tonya received some encouraging news; the diagnosis remained pancreatic cancer, but she was given hope and started on chemotherapy with surgery planned in a few months.

During Chris and Tonya's stay in Houston, the nursing and law enforcement faculty members were busy at the Hankins' home. Along with assistance from many in the community, a "Home Makeover" was accomplished to surprise Chris and Tonya upon

(Continued on pg. 4)



Tonya Hankins (above) holding her pager as she waits at MD Anderson.

Tonya and her husband, Chris, before the Color Run.



Collins Cont'd. from pg. 1

seek the most qualified candidate for this position," said Edington. "The committee has narrowed the number of candidates to six applicants who are each scheduled to be interviewed via Skype, a video-conferencing system, on September 6. The committee will then select the top three candidates from those six to be scheduled for onsite interviews."

"As the college moves to select a new VPSA, we are very fortunate in having a Student Services staff that goes the extra mile for students," Hatcher said. "It's what they do, and they do it very, very well, in every way—every day."

Serendipity Cont'd. from pg. 1

which every single person in the room can relate. Everyone has something to share—something that matters and something that adds to the understanding of others, something that makes us all think. That is what we try to do in Serendipity. To make each other think."

"This program has generated a lot of loyal members," Blaxton said. Of the approximately 30 people involved in Serendipity, she noted, 17 of them have been members for five years or more. "Five of them have been in Serendipity for nine years," she added, "and six of them have been in the club for eight years. We are very excited about seeing the returning people, and also hope new ones will want to join."

Serendipity is also one way the college brings diversity to the community, Ziegler pointed out. "Typically we read and discuss works that are set in many different cultures, and this year will be no exception," she said. "Part of our mission at BRTC is to emphasize the importance of diversity for our students and our community, especially since we live in an area where there is not a great deal of ethnic diversity." The last accreditation team that visited gave the college high marks in accomplishing this through many activities and events, including Serendipity.

"This year we will read books set in Zimbabwe, England, Afghanistan, China, the West Bank region of Israel, and India, as well as three novels set in the United States," Ziegler said. "I think looking at universal themes - in this case, family ties and the ways they shape us - through the lens of perspectives very different from our own, help us to better understand not just those other cultures, but better understand our own world."

For more information about Serendipity, contact Patti Blaxton in the Office of Corporate and Community Education at 870-248-4181, or Jessica McFadden in the Office of Development at 870-248-4189.

Three Awarded Academic Scholarships

Matthew Barnett and Amber Skibinski of Pocahontas (not pictured), and Samuel Saxton of Williford, were each awarded the Academic Distinction Scholarship to attend Black River Technical College. The scholarship provides full tuition renewable up to four semesters provided the recipient successfully completes a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester and maintains a cumulative GPA of 3.00 for the first two semesters and 3.25 for the remaining two semesters.

Barnett graduated in May from Maynard High School and is completing Gen Ed courses at BRTC. He is the son of Melissa Barnett of Pocahontas.

Skibinski is a senior at Pocahontas High School where she is active in Spanish Club, Family and Consumer Science, and received the Personal and Family Finance award. She plans to pursue a degree in Math and English Education.

Saxton is a senior at Mammoth Spring High School. He is the son of Bobbie Saxton of Williford and plans to complete the Automotive Technology program at BRTC.

For more information on the Academic Distinction Scholarship, contact Natasha Rush at 870-248-4019.



Samuel Saxton

Human Resources Announces New Hires at BRTC



Bradley Caffrey



Mack Downey



Drew Garland



Ramonda Housh

The Department of Human Resources at Black River Technical College has announced several personnel changes and additions for the Pocahontas and Paragould campus.

Bradley Caffrey of Maynard has been hired for the new Cafeteria/Purchasing position. Originally from Pocahontas, he is a 2000 graduate of Pocahontas High School and has worked the past eight years for Trinity Behavioral Health in Warm Springs. He is also a previous BRTC student.

Mack Downey of Pocahontas has been hired as Business Instructor. He is a graduate of Pocahontas High School and earned a Bachelor of Science in

Healthcare Management degree and a Master of Arts in Management degree, both from Bellevue University. He has been a paramedic in northeast Arkansas for several years and has been teaching science and business classes as an adjunct instructor at BRTC since 2010.

Drew Garland of Walnut Ridge has been hired for the new position of Default Management Coordinator for Financial Aid in the Department of Student Affairs. She is a 2003 graduate of Walnut Ridge High School and holds a Bachelor in Business Administration degree with a major in Marketing from the University of Central Arkansas in

Conway. She previously worked in the field of marketing for nursing and rehabilitation centers in NW Arkansas, and then worked for Central States Manufacturing in Lowell, AR, as a Credit Representative with training to become a Credit Analyst.

Ramonda Housh of Pocahontas has been hired as Interim Director of Nursing. She previously served as Director from August 2004 to January 2013 when she went to work for Corning Area Healthcare. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Arkansas State University and a Master of Nursing Science degree from University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Student Artwork Adorns FRMC Hospital Rooms

Artwork from students in Sandy Baltz' art classes and Kellee Hardage's digital photography classes at BRTC is being used to decorate patient rooms at Five Rivers Medical Center. According to Jody Ayers, Director of Quality Improvement/Risk Management at FRMC, they are in the process of renovating patient rooms at the hospital and thought it would be a wonderful idea to use student artwork to decorate the rooms. She contacted both Baltz and Hardage about the idea.

"This is an economical way to decorate the rooms while also showing off the beautiful creations of talented students at BRTC," noted Ayers.

"Artwork from ten students in my Drawing II and Painting classes was submitted for consideration during the Spring 2013 semester," Baltz explained. "A committee from the hospital made the final selection of pieces to use. Students had to agree to donate their work to the hospital and, in return, were given recognition with a plaque bearing their name hanging under their piece." Donated frames for the artwork, Pinacle Frames and Accents in Pocahontas.



The pieces pictured above, on display at FRMC, are by Terran Halliburton (windmill in oil, left) and Elyssa Davis (sea turtle in pastel).

Dickson, Stillwell Graduate from Leadership Institute

Phillip Dickson, Division Chair of Technical Education, and Priscilla Stillwell, Academic Site Coordinator on the Paragould campus, are recent graduates of the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges' (AATYC) Higher Education



BRTC President Dr. Wayne Hatcher (left) presents Priscilla Stillwell and Phillip Dickson with their awards for graduation from Leadership Institute.

Leadership Institute (HELI). They were among a group of 29 representing the two-year colleges and higher education institutions in Arkansas to complete the course. The graduation ceremony was held June 24 at the Lodge on Mount Magazine.

The goal of the Leadership Institute, according to AATYC, is to identify, develop, prepare and advance leaders through an experience-based model where participants develop general and executive leadership skills related to academics, finance and student affairs.

Training took place during three-day sessions held November, February and March, around the state, with the final session being held in June prior to the graduation ceremony.



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BRTC Mission Statement

*Blending tradition, technology and innovation
to educate today's diverse students
for tomorrow's changing world.*

Team Tonya

their return. The faculty also began planning fund raising events to assist with the astronomical medical expenses that will occur in fighting this battle.

Events began at Kiss the Cook in Paragould on July 12. On July 20 local author Jana Caldwell held a book signing at Hastings in Jonesboro and gave a donation to support efforts. On July 27, over 250 people participated in a 5K Color Run that was spearheaded by the BRTC Nursing Faculty. Nursing Students sold "Team Tonya" shirts and car decals. The LETA faculty sponsored an evening at Upper Crust Pizza in Jonesboro on July 31, along with multiple raffles. Nursing students held an indoor yard sale on August 3. Also on the evening of August 3, Great Harvest Church had a Praise and Worship Service with donations given to the Hankins family. On August 9 Lawrence Health Systems gave away a wreath, with proceeds also helping Team Tonya. Proceeds from these events resulted in over \$22,000 being deposited into bank accounts at Integrity First Bank and Liberty Bank to help offset medical expenses of the Hankins.

When our faculty returned on August 12, I had the pleasure of sharing a message from Chris and Tonya. In this message, I shared their deep appreci-

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ation for all that the BRTC family had done to assist them in this battle. Tonya encouraged all to think about the positive difference that BRTC faculty and staff make in the lives of the students that we serve. They are most appreciative of continued prayers for her progress in this war against cancer. Tonya will be away from us for an undetermined amount of time with her treatment, but is relieved that nursing students and faculty were blessed by the return of Ramonda Housh as Interim Nursing Director.

To summarize lessons we are learning, I want to share in Tonya's words, "Lastly, enjoy this academic year. Yes, I said Enjoy it! Life is unpredictable and too short to complain about things that we cannot change. Trust me, whatever your situation, it could be worse. I don't complain because my situation could be much worse. I am blessed with my God and family! And you are part of my family and I only want the best for you. Blessings for a great academic year for all of you! We will be back with you soon!!!!"

Please continue to keep the Hankins family in your thoughts and prayers during these trying times! You can follow Tonya's fight and progress on Facebook on the "Team Tonya" page.



**Showing Tonya support
every step of the way!**

