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## BRTC Holds Commencement Exercises

BRTC held Fall Commencement Thursday, December 17 in the Randolph County Development Center. BRTC awarded 39 degrees and certificates to 284 graduates. Some students completed more than one certificate. Separate commencement ceremonies were held for nursing, respiratory, and law enforcement graduates.



Degrees were conferred by BRTC President Dr. Eric Turner and awarded by Vice President for General Education Dr. Roger Johnson and Vice President for Technical Education Angie Caldwell. Degrees awarded included two-year Associate of Arts, Associate of Business, and Associate of Applied Science degrees as well as one-year technical certificates, one-semester certificates of profi-

ciency, and GEDs. Shilah Meeks, candidate for the Associate of Science in Business, served as graduate candidate spokesperson. She reminded her classmates to be "kind, considerate, and you'll go far in life."

BRTC Fine Arts Department Head and Speech and Theater Instructor Kelly Grooms served as keynote speaker. Grooms reminded graduates that there are three building blocks for achieving happiness: family, friends, and their community. He described BRTC's transformation from a vocational technical college to a state community college, explaining that the faculty and staff who helped BRTC undergo that process

*(Continued on pg. 2)*

### Important Dates

- January 11**  
*Spring Classes Begin*
- January 18**  
*Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—No Classes*
- February 6**  
*ACT Testing*
- February 12**  
*Movie Night for Students*
- February 16**  
*Black History Month Presentation*
- March 5-11**  
*Midterm Exams*
- March 12**  
*Gala*

## Rotaract Raises Funds for Northeast Arkansas Wounded Warrior Group

Rotaract Club put their club motto "Service Above Self" into practice this semester as they planned and organized a multi-site fundraiser event called "Cards for a Cause."

Cassidy Yount, working with fellow Rotaractors Sara Benson, Bambi Palmer, Rebecca Lopez, Leah Morgan, and Megan Carey, proposed and implemented the project.

Yount's brother, a local wounded veteran, inspired her to be proactive in seeking recognition and humanitarian aid for military men and women returning from active duty. Through this inspiration, Yount developed the idea to send Christmas cards to active duty military stationed overseas at Christmas. In order to also aid local veterans, Yount's idea morphed into a fundraiser project in which the Christ-



*Rotaract presenting check to Chad Overman, president of Northeast Arkansas Wounded Warrior Group.*

mas cards would be sold for \$2.00, and all proceeds from card sales would be donated to the Northeast Arkansas Wounded Warrior Group.

Rotaract members eagerly agreed to take on the planning and implementation of this fundraiser, and they decided to use a variety of local events as a platform for their "Cards for a Cause" fundraiser. For example, Rotaract members set up booths

at the Veteran's Fair on BRTC's Paragould campus in October and at the Foothills Festival in Black Rock in November. In addition, they set up a booth on the Pocahontas campus during the week of Veteran's Day, selling cards to BRTC students, faculty, and staff.

In all, over 100 cards were sold and sent to military men and women stationed in Kuwait,

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## Commencement from pg.1

became family. He encouraged graduates to support future graduates by giving back and challenged them to “purposefully seek someone who can benefit from your kindness and generosity.”

Grooms grew up in and graduated from Pocahontas High School in 1982 then from Arkansas State University with both his bachelor and master degrees in Speech, Communication, and Theatre arts.

He has taught drama and speech at BRTC for 27 years. Grooms is COO for Downtown Playhouse, Inc., and has directed and designed several productions for The Foundation of Arts in Jonesboro. Before the Downtown Playhouse, Grooms was Artistic Director with the Imperial Dinner Theatre.

Grooms and his wife Dathne have served as therapeutic foster parents for over 80 children in a 9-county region. He views his involvement with these kids as the most important work of his life. He and Dathne have 5 children and 1 grandson.



*Kelly Grooms*

# Foundation

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2016

6:00 IN THE EVENING

ROLLING HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

POCAHONTAS

# SAVE THE DATE



## Alphin Wins Awards

Jessica Alphin, Director of Clinical Education for Respiratory Care at BRTC, was recently awarded two awards at the Arkansas Society for Respiratory Care (ASRC) conference in Hot Springs. Alphin was awarded Respiratory Care Educator of the Year and the Jay Williams Memorial Respiratory Practitioner Award 2015 Northeast District.



*Jennifer Parr, President of Arkansas Society for Respiratory Care, and Jessica Alphin*

ASRC is a chartered affiliate of the American Association for Respiratory Care. Their mission is to provide effective leadership that promotes the respiratory care profession and its skilled practitioners as leaders in the field of pulmonary medicine through patient, community, and healthcare provider education.

Alphin was also voted as the President Elect for ASRC. This position will last a year and then she will become president for the next year. “It is such an honor to be recognized among such an outstanding group of professionals,” said Alphin. “I have always been passionate about Respiratory Therapy. It is an honor to do what we do every day as a therapist, but to be recognized as Educator of the Year was certainly a great honor. Training students not just to become respiratory therapists but instead to become part of an elite group of professionals is a priority of mine as well as BRTC!”

## Respiratory Care Students Graduate

On Thursday, December 10 Dr. Eric Turner conferred Associate of Applied Science degrees in Respiratory Care to fifteen students completing their program studies. The pinning and graduation ceremony took place in the Randolph County Development Center.

The Against All Odds Award went to Annette Eubanks. Brandon Blackwell was awarded the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award. The Outstanding Clinical Achievement Award went to Stephen Robertson. The Clinical Preceptor of the Year was Ron Hold from NEA Baptist.

Matt Knight, Director of Education for Mid South Health Systems, was the guest speaker. Recounting memories from his childhood he reminded graduates their words make a difference. “Your encouragement to others changes people’s lives,” Knight stated.

A reception was held following graduation thanks to the donations of Price Chopper, Subway, Taco Casa, and Walmart. Graduation photos can be found on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/blackrivertech/albums/72157661898249760>.



## Nutrition and Dietetic Students Attend Fall State and National Conferences

Dietetics students of BRTC had the opportunity to attend two conferences during the fall semester, according to Kathy Murdock, Nutrition & Dietetics Program Director. In September, Nutrition and Foodservice Management students attended the Arkansas Association of Nutrition and Foodservice Professionals (ANFP) fall conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas. In October, Nutrition and Dietetics students traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, to attend the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE), which is the national meeting for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND).

Dietetics instructors, Christina Derbes and Kathy Murdock, and Angela Caldwell, Vice President of Technical Education, attended both conferences with the students. At the ANFP conference in Hot Springs, which was also the 50th anniversary of the Arkansas chapter, students attended educational sessions on a range of subjects from culinary trends and foodservice management to food safety and nutritional management of specific disease processes.

Derbes presented on managing employees, and Murdock presented on nutrition trends and fads. Caldwell presented on the topic of leadership. As a special treat for attendees, BRTC students prepared an entertaining and creative skit, highlighting food safety and sanitation. During the ANFP Gala, it was announced that Derbes won 1st place in the 50's best costume design, and BRTC alumna and past BRTC Dietetics Program Director, Tina Harris, who is also ANFP state treasurer, won the Commitment in Leadership Award. Sandra Parker, who recently retired as BRTC Cafeteria Coordinator, and is the current NE



*From left: Kathy Murdock, Leah Morgan, Joyce Huffins, Mark McCuiston, Judson McNeal, Joetta Doyle, Barbara McKissick, Christina Derbes, and Angie Caldwell*

Central District President and Newsletter Editor, received the ANFP Member of the Year Award.

In October, BRTC Nutrition & Dietetics students attended FNCE, which was held at the Music City Center in Nashville, along with approximately ten thousand other students and nutrition professionals from the United States and abroad. In addition to attending educational sessions on a wide range of topics, student also visited the Expo, which featured approximately 350 vendors in food, nutrition, and education. They learned about products and services available, and visited with vendors about trends in nutrition. Students also viewed posters, which exhibited the latest research in nutrition.

“Being able to give our students the chance to attend state and national meetings is priceless. We thank all that help make this possible, from those who have entrusted us with catering events and those who purchase fundraising items, to the BRTC Foundation SEAS funding and the Student Government Association funding,” stated Murdock. “Along with increasing knowledge in nutrition and foodservice at educational sessions, annual conferences give students the opportunity to network with professionals in their field of interest as well as meet potential employers. Students are able to see the varied areas of practice outside of our geographical area. This opens their eyes to the diverse possibilities for career advancement and employment in nutrition and dietetics.”

## A&P Study Lungs

Lynda Griffin's A&P II Fast Track class had a unique lab this semester.

While learning about the respiratory system and the mechanics of breathing, Griffin demonstrated



with inflatable pig lungs. Students were able to see basic anatomy such as the lobes of each lung, the pleura membrane, and the trachea. They applied concepts learned during lectures concerning the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system. The inflatable pig lungs allowed the students to have a hands on simulation of how human lungs work.

## Sade Hired

Rhonda Sade of Black Rock has accepted the position of Bookstore Cashier for the Pocahontas campus.

Sade attended Lynn High School and Williams Baptist College before graduating from BRTC with an Associate of Arts degree in General Education and an Associate of Applied Science degree in Business Technology - Health Options.

Rhonda managed Northwest Arkansas Florist in Fayetteville before opening her own florist shop in Black Rock. In 2011 she began working part-time as an Institutional Services Assistant while attending BRTC full time.



## Rotaract Cont'd from pg. 1

and a \$200 donation was presented to Chad Overman, president of Northeast Arkansas Wounded Warrior Group. Overman expressed much gratitude for the donation, explaining that all of the organization's funds are used locally, providing aid to disabled veterans in Randolph, Lawrence, Greene, Clay, and Craighead counties.



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### **BRTC Mission Statement**

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

## Registered and Practical Nursing Graduation

The graduation and pinning ceremony for BRTC's Practical Nursing and Registered Nursing students was held on Tuesday, December 15 in the Randolph County Development Center.

Guest speaker Matt Knight of Mid-South Health Systems challenged students to not compromise themselves but be who they are. Knight is a Licensed Professional Counselor with 30 years experience in mental health services, education, and consulting for individuals and business. He also spoke about the courage it takes to fail. "The worst part of fear is fear itself," Knight stated.

The event included the traditional candle lighting ceremony, culminating with a vocal rendition of "Go Light Your World," performed by Rhonda Difani, RN graduate.

Dr. Eric Turner, President of BRTC, conferred degrees with awards and pins presented by nursing faculty members. Also assisting in the ceremony in the presenting of diplomas was VP for Technical Education, Angie Caldwell.

Practical Nursing awards included Nursing I Theory Award, Jordan Whitted; Nursing I Pharmacology Award, Jordan Whitted; Nursing I IV Therapy Award, Justin Beck; Nursing I Best Geriatric Nurse, Dawn Cothorn; Nursing II Theory Award, Haley Howell; Nursing II Best Medical Surgical Nurse, Justin Beck; Nursing II Theory Award, Haley Howell; Community Service Award, Jenny Remirez; Perfect Attendance Award, Ashley Kappelman; Professionalism Award, Monica Followell, Ashley Kappelman, and Whitley Blue; Florence Nightingale Award, Haley Howell; and Faculty Choice Award, Dawn Cothorn.

The following Registered Nursing Awards were presented: Best Medical Surgical Nurse, Crystal Ashton; Best OB Nurse, Ashtin Burgess; Best Mental Health Nurse, Nikki Peek; Best Peds Nurse, Terri Lanston; Best Critical Care



*Matt Knight speaking directly to nursing students.*

Nurse, Tiffany Gugle; Leadership Award, Edie Pursifull; Best Simulation Nurse, Andrea Sneed and Shay Tyler; Florence Nightingale Award, Shay Tyler and Edie Pursifull; and Faculty Choice Award, Shay Tyler.

A reception following the ceremony was underwritten by several facilities where BRTC nursing students complete their clinicals: Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, Pocahontas Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, Randolph County Nursing Home, and St. Bernards Medical Center.