

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

February 8, 2013

RHS showcased as model school for engineering program (Courier News, Russellville)

Representatives of 20 Arkansas schools gathered at Russellville High School on Wednesday for a Project Lead the Way orientation meeting, where the representatives discussed potentially implementing engineering programs into their curriculums.

The meeting's location was no coincidence — Project Lead the Way chose RHS as a model school for other districts to observe, as it boasts one of the top facilities in the state.

"They started this program three years ago, and it's a state-of-the-art program to show them," said Bruce Lazarus, STEM program coordinator.

The meeting ran from 9 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., beginning with an introduction by Russellville superintendent Randall Williams and ending with observations of Russellville's pre-engineering and biomedical science classrooms. The meeting also included presentations by Arkansas Tech University, Fayetteville and Springdale high schools and the Arkansas Department of Career Education. The meeting occurs once a year for schools applying for grants to begin engineering programs, and it is the first time for RHS to be chosen as a model school.

For principal Sammy Ussery, being a model school reflects the hard work of the faculty and staff following the program's inception approximately three years ago.

"It's an honor, especially because of how good our teachers are," he said.

"The teachers and administrators, they're going to observe our teachers and see how they teach this class. And they want to see the whole school, not just the engineering classrooms. I told Mr. Lazarus to use us anytime, because it gives a positive name to our students." And if the model school selection is any indication, this won't be the last time schools observe the high school's classrooms.

"We always have [schools] visit here," Lazarus said. "We want to send them to one of the best."

Patsy George reflects on Citizen of the Year award (Courier News, Russellville)

DARDANELLE — Patsy George was in Nashville, Tenn., visiting her brother for Christmas when she received a phone call from her husband. He didn't normally open her mail, but when he saw a letter from the Dardanelle Chamber of Commerce, curiosity got the better of him.

"I said, 'Well, read it to me,'" George said.

And he did. The letter informed George that she had been named Dardanelle's Citizen of the Year.

"It was a shock," she said. "I said, 'This is a joke,' and he said, 'No, it's really true.'"

George, a longtime resident of Dardanelle and employee of the Dardanelle School District, felt honored to earn the prestigious distinction, which marked a culmination of nearly a half-century of work with children in Yell County.

"[Being named Citizen of the Year] is great. You know, I love people, and I love my work," she said. "It's the greatest reward I've ever been given. It makes me feel like people know what I'm doing."

But she found herself stressing about receiving the award in the weeks leading up to the banquet. She considers herself sociable but dislikes being the center of attention.

"I hoped I didn't have to make a speech, but I made a real short one just in case," she said. "Other people came up and didn't make speeches, so I felt better about it. When the time came, I just turned towards the audience and said 'thank you very much.'"

Following her graduation from Arkansas Tech University with a bachelor's in education, George landed her first teaching job in 1951. She had plenty of practice teaching from her childhood, however, as she would regularly "play school."

"I would play school when I was a little girl," she said. "I would have books and dolls, and I would pretend I was the teacher. Sometimes, when I got a little older, I would bring books and papers and things home, and I would pretend that I had students."

Her passion for teaching spawned, as it does with many in the profession, for the love of kids.

"I love children," she said. "It was good to see the children learn."

She worked at a variety of jobs throughout the city's education system, including working at the Dardanelle Elementary School, the Primary School, and as the supervisor of an Arvac Daycare Center.

When she took off work to raise her family, she still found herself teaching youngsters. In a time before kindergartens had become the norm in Yell County, she taught kindergarten classes out of her house.

After working as a teacher's aid at the primary school for six years, she decided to take a hiatus from teaching.

Then, in 1982, she got a phone call about a migrant education program the primary school was going to implement. They wanted to know if she would come back to work.

"I started 31 years ago in this program, and I've been here ever since," she said. "Clerk and tutor, I guess is my title."

Throughout her tenure at the school, George has also been an officer in PTA and the Band Club, and it was this dedication to her job both during and after work hours that attracted the Chamber of Commerce's attention.

George gives thanks to God, "who was with me through all of this," as well as her friends and fellow teachers.

She had one word to describe her feelings towards winning the award: honored.

"I'm just really honored that I've been in the paper so many times," she said. "I just feel so honored. This happens to other people, not to me."

Update: Police Explain Hope High School Lockdown Scare (KARK, Channel 4)

Update (February 7):

The Hope Police Department is releasing an explanation for what happened Tuesday in the lockdown scare at Hope High School.

Here's more in a news release out today:

On Wednesday February 6, 2013, Detectives of the Hope Police Department in conjunction with UACCH Police identified the person of interest that attempted to enter the New Tech Building of the Hope High School Campus February 5 at approximately 10 AM.

Logical investigation conducted suggested no criminal act occurred nor was criminal intent believed to be present.

Assistant Chief Tomlin stated, "It seems that the individual in question, who was from out of town, was scheduled to attend a workshop on the UACCH campus at 10 AM. He was not able to locate the College campus and stopped to obtain directions. UACCH Officers confirmed that this person attended the workshop."

Chief JR Wilson stated, "I want to thank the young people that observed this event and passed on information they genuinely believed to be accurate and occurring at the time. This is exactly what they should have done. Notifying Police early of potentially threatening events is very important. This affords police the best opportunity to conduct successful emergency response and prevent problems."

"It is important that our young people understand that it is not atypical for human beings to misperceive events. Generally, Police can logically identify and weight misperception based on a careful analysis of all information predicated on a robust investigative process. The problem that arises in potentially serious rapidly evolving situations is that Police resources must first be dedicated to emergency response and a community care taking function whereby threats are abated as quickly as possible and systems are returned to normal function. Deployment of more sophisticated investigative techniques is a secondary priority occurring when control is accomplished and safety is ensured. Both statutory law and courts grant Police great latitude to ensure the safety of the public when a serious governmental interest is involved or perceived to be involved. I am very happy that all of our students are safe and that our systems operated in a professional and expeditious manner. I am very thankful to UACCH Police, HCSO, ASP, AHP, and other Law Enforcement Agencies that support us in bringing great resources to bear in a time of potential critical need. The safety of our children is of highest concern to us all."

No charges are anticipated to be filed in this incident.

Original story (February 5):

Hope High School (Hempstead County) was on lockdown late this morning after a report of a man with a handgun on campus.

Hope School District officials tell KARK 4 News that the lockdown started around 10:45 and lasted for about an hour while police officers did a sweep of the area.

The individual police are still looking for is described as a non-student. Police say he is a black man about 5'8" to 6'0" tall, weighs about 175 pounds, and has his hair in braids. He was wearing a blue jacket.

With concussions on the rise, AHS takes action (Siftings Hearld, Arkadelphia)

Concussions are a serious problem, and they seem to be on everyone's mind these days.

Local high schools say there have been multiple concussions this year and that seems to be typical of athletic programs.

While many people think of football when they hear of concussions, there is the danger of concussions in almost every athletic activity offered by local schools.

In fact, an eighth grader at a local school suffered a concussion this week after being pushed into the wall during a basketball game.

Fortunately for the young athlete, there was an EMT and a couple others who were familiar with concussions who were able to give him immediate treatment for his injuries before sending him to a local hospital.

Unfortunately for most schools in the state, there are no athletic trainers on staff, and, had it not been that those who treated the youngster were fans of the team, there might not have been any immediate medical treatment for the teen. The Arkadelphia School District, however, has two things going for it when it comes to dealing with concussions.

The district has an athletic trainer on staff — something that not even all colleges in the state have — and they have also started doing ImPACT concussion testing.

ImPACT — Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing — testing is a computerized neuropsychological screening that allows trained medical professionals to see the effects of a concussion (or supposed concussion) on the athlete's brain.

A medical doctor will then be given the baseline and the post-trauma results to aid in the diagnosis/treatment of the athlete.

The doctor can also have the athlete tested again before he or she is allowed to return to physical activity.

“This is another tool to help us and their doctors,” said Arkadelphia athletic director Chris Babb. “Terry [DeWitt] contacted us in the fall about this. He has done this at other schools, and we thought it was a great idea. We would like to do this for all of our athletic teams and spirit squads. This is just another way that we can provide a service to our student athletes and families and physicians when concussions occur. While this is not required for these students, we strongly encourage them to take this test in the event that they suffer a concussion.”

“Three out of every 100 athletes get concussions,” Dr. Terry DeWitt noted. “Now we can have some way to measure if there are still symptoms. The physician will still make the return to play decision, but now the physician can make a more informed decision. This is a good thing. This can't replace the physical exam, but it is a piece of a multi-faceted system to help take care of these kids. Balance is also a key piece of it. I hope to do some balance testing in the future as part of this. This is new and really exciting. There are a lot of medical societies that are supporting this as a way to get a baseline.

Babb said that the students will not need to retake the test each year, but they should take it every other year to keep the baseline test accurate.

“We are trying to help these kids and keep them safe,” he explained.

Dr. DeWitt said that concussions have become much more recognized due to the emphasis that has been placed on them in recent years.

“The NFL has done a lot to introduce and educate people about concussions,” he said.

While getting set up to do the testing was not cheap, Dr. DeWitt admitted that he had some help.

“I got a grant through Dick's [Sporting Goods] for \$500 to get a license for the district, so this is only costing the district \$5 per student,” he said. “I just want to help keep people safe. I hope that we never have to use it, but if we need it, now we have it. If this can prevent one trauma, it is worth it. This is a good way to take care of our kids.”

Arkadelphia is the first district in Clark County to take part in the testing, but there are other nearby districts that have taken advantage of it.

“Prescott has done the testing for their football teams, and Glen Rose did it this year,” Dr. DeWitt said. “This is big for those three kids out of 100 who get concussions and their parents.”

While this test is new for high schoolers in the area, OBU has been doing the testing for eight years, so local doctors are familiar with the test.

“There are several doctors in Arkadelphia who are familiar with the test and what it does. Again, this is not the only thing that can be done. Nothing can replace the physical exam by the health care provider.”

Dr. DeWitt graduated from OBU in 1988, and he was the first Certified Athletic Trainer in Arkadelphia. He has been a Certified Athletic Trainer for over 20 years. He earned his Ph.D. in kinesiology from the University of Arkansas, and his dissertation was focused on high school sports injuries.

Pastors’ visits to Conway schools OK, adviser says (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

CONWAY — An organization that says it works to restore “religious liberty in America” said Thursday that it thinks a Conway School District policy letting church representatives and others visit with students during lunch on school property is constitutional.

Liberty Institute, a nonprofit legal group the district retained at no cost, described the school system’s visitors’ policy as a “neutral, all-comers” one.

The organization, based in Texas, did recommend a revised policy. Among other things, the policy would require consent from parents whose children are in elementary and middle schools.

In late October, the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation wrote Superintendent Greg Murry to say it had received reports that a Conway preacher had been given access to middle-school students during school hours.

The foundation, which says it works for the “principle of separation of state and church,” asked the district to discontinue allowing any preacher to visit with students during school hours.

Jeff Mateer, a lawyer for the Liberty Institute, has said up to 20 representatives of various religious groups had been visiting with students who already were affiliated with their churches and who attended the district’s middle schools and high schools. He also has said that the same restrictions would have to apply to any religious group.

Murry later halted the visits by religious groups, pending the Liberty Institute’s investigation.

The School Board is set to meet Tuesday, when it is expected to discuss the institute’s recommendations.

The proposed policy is less strict on parental consent when it comes to junior- and senior-high school students. Their parents would be provided a copy of the policy before each school term. They could then opt their child out of such visits by preachers as well as nonreligious visitors, said Justin Butterfield, an attorney for the Liberty Institute.

Butterfield said in an email that the proposed plan “would permit parents to opt out of meeting with particular persons or groups. For example, you could opt out of allowing your child to meet with anyone other than the Girl Scouts if you wanted.”

In all grades, “The principal may take reasonable efforts to segregate visitors and the students they are visiting from other students, such as providing a separate table for visitors and students they are visiting,” the proposed policy says.

The proposal does not mandate such separation.

The proposal also says high-school visitors “shall maintain a list of each student with whom that visitor is affiliated. Each visitor shall be admitted to visit those students on that visitor list.”

The principal “may exclude any visitor engaging in more than de minimis [minor or insignificant] contact with any student not on that visitor’s list,” the proposal adds.

Some visitors would be excluded from the policy. Among those would be military and college recruiters, guest lecturers and volunteers working under the direction of a principal or a principal’s designee.

In Wisconsin, Dan Barker, co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, said, “We are not objecting to the school’s policy. We are objecting to the practice. ... We disagree ... that the school has been handling it in a neutral, nonpreferential way.

“Even though their policy on its face looks OK, it’s the practice we’re objecting to,” Barker said.

Barker said he hopes the matter does not have to go to court.

“We admire the school for its claim to respect the Constitution,” he added.

Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced through Thursday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: www.arkleg.state.ar.us

HOUSE

HB1262, Eubanks - An act to amend the requirements for public school educator professional development; and to declare an emergency.

HB1263, Steel - To cease the transfer of some district courts to the state district court system; to preserve the Administration of Justice Fund; to protect state trial court assistants by repealing judicial positions not yet filled.

HB1264, Broadaway - To amend the number of days in which a person must file an answer in a garnishment proceeding.

HB1265, Broadaway - To amend the form of notice required when a small estate is distributed without administration.

HB1266, Dale - To create a sales and use tax exemption for construction materials purchased to construct, repair or remodel a facility to be used by an exempt entity.

HB1267, Kerr - To require a prior approval process for experimental and investigational surgical procedures and medical devices.

HB1268, Catlett - Concerning the authority of fire departments in responding to highway emergencies, the recovery of costs in responding to emergencies and clarifying environmental restoration.

HB1269, Catlett - To allow a concealed-handgun licensee to keep a handgun in a locked vehicle on an employer's parking lot.

HB1270, Catlett - To repeal the requirement for tuberculosis screening for public school employees and volunteers.

HB1271, Catlett - To increase the look-back period allowable for the seizure of a person's motor vehicle when the person is convicted of driving while intoxicated, fourth offense. HB1272, Hickerson - To amend the law concerning vehicular size and load regulations for transportation.

HB1273, Hickerson - To amend the law concerning the operation of all-terrain vehicles by municipal public safety officials.

HB1274, Hickerson - To amend the law concerning the operation of golf carts on city streets.

HB1275, Wardlaw - To amend the law concerning notice of an application to sell alcoholic beverages at a retail business.

HB1276, D. Douglas - To allow an alternate method of disbursement of service charges for emergency medical service areas.

HB1277, D. Douglas - To allow an additional method of selling county property.

HB1278, D. Douglas - To allow additional exemptions from the county bidding requirements.

HB1279, D. Douglas - To allow counties to recover costs related to remediating unsanitary conditions.

HB1280, Kizzia - Concerning the prohibition against certain novelty lighters.

SENATE

SB254, Hester - An act to allow the Department of Finance and Administration to enter into an installment agreement with a taxpayer who has individual income tax debt if certain conditions are met.

SB255, B. King - The Arkansas Water Additive Accountability Act.

SB256, Irvin - To allow an Arkansas marriage license to be used in other jurisdictions.

SB257, D. Sanders - To revise the parole statutes; to require that a person on parole who violates parole due to committing a particular subsequent felony offense serve the remainder of the original sentence.

SB258, D. Sanders - To require the Parole Board to issue a warrant for the arrest of a parolee who has committed a violent or sexual felony while on parole.

SB259, D. Sanders - To include sexual offenses and other serious felonies as offenses not eligible for mandatory parole.

SB260, D. Sanders - Concerning the definition of recidivism for certain law enforcement agencies and other state agencies tasked with incarcerating or monitoring inmates, parolees or probationers; and to require a report.

SB261, J. Key - To create a petition process for citizens to request a meeting of a local governing body. SB262, A. Clark - To facilitate and encourage charitable donations; and to exempt from the sales and use tax sellers' donations of tangible personal property to charitable organizations or for charitable causes.

Notable Resolutions

SJR5, E. Williams - To propose an amendment to the Arkansas Constitution concerning civil claims and court procedures.

SJR6, E. Williams - An amendment to change the powers of the General Assembly and the courts regarding rules of pleading, practice, and procedure for courts, appeal rights, and compensation or damages awarded by courts and administrative agencies.

SR6, B. King - To recognize the many contributions made by citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan and that it is in the best interest of the state of Arkansas to promote relationships with the Azerbaijani people.

SR8, Irvin - To support the United States-Ukraine Open World Program and encourage Ukraine to promote the environmentally safe development of its gas reserves.

SR9, Holland - To commend Arkansas farmers for their vital contributions to the security and economic well-being of the state and the nation.

Mayflower breaks ground on new school facilities (Log Cabin Democrat, Conway)

The Mayflower School District broke ground Thursday and began on a new phase of facilities that will result in a new high school in 2025.

The ground breaking was for the new Agriculture Facility and Indoor Sports Training Facility for Softball and Baseball. The \$1.25 million project will include new classrooms, an agriculture workshop, batting and pitching areas, locker rooms and offices.

The project is being funded by a Partnership Grant, Second Lien Bond Loans and money saved from the school district.

The project is part of a 20-year facilities plan and the first buildings of a proposed new high school in 2025. Construction consists of two separate buildings, which will house the agriculture program and two sports. Both facilities should be ready by the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

Officials said the need for this construction is because of increased enrollment and the ability to add sporting and educational programs for Mayflower students. Mayflower is the only school district in the area that does not have an agricultural program.

The project has been in the planning stages for more than six years. The facilities were designed by Jackson, Brown, Palculict Architects of Little Rock.