

The Learning Curve

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Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

Vineville Academy Offers Art Classes to Community

For the second year, Vineville Academy has opened its doors to area residents over 50 years of age to give them a chance at some formal art instruction. Thanks to a Grassroots Arts Program Grant from MaconArts, the school offers a free class for two hours every Thursday night (the grant pays for the supplies). "We had to come up with something that's not going on [in the community]," says Mae Thurston, Vineville's Arts Liaison for the Community.

During the fall, the classes go over the basics and principles of drawing (including shapes, lines, colors, etc), as well as a bit of art history. During the spring, the class takes a more open approach to their projects, with participants being set free to draw and paint in their own form and their own styles. "We offer them a variety of mediums," says Thurston.

However, despite its classroom approach, it serves more as a way to get the community involved in a group activity in a school environment. Some people come for actual lessons, picking up their paint brushes for the first time, and some are relearning a skill they learned in their youth. "We gently critique," says Thurston. "They can feel comfortable no matter what level they are."

In its first year, the school partnered with several nursing homes to offer it to 20 people, but this year, they took out an ad in the paper and are offering it to 24 people. According to Thurston, they come almost every week, and it's a great social gathering for everyone involved. "They all get together and start talking."

At the end of the year, they will host an Art Show in the lobby of the school for the community to come and view the work that has been created.

The original grant was for two years, but Mae and Vineville will be looking for ways to fund it in the future. With the increased interest, they believe the program can continue to grow and include even more of the community.

Bibb County Summer Graduation



Dr. Sam Scavella, the new Northeast High Principal, relates his own life story of overcoming hardship to this year's summer graduates.

cameras flashing, quiet cheers, and barely whispered congratulations are hard to ignore. Friends and family move for a better camera angle and make sure their special graduate notices the support they have for mak-

"It is with honor and true privilege that I welcome you to the 2006 Summer Graduation," Counselor Isabell Byas told the jubilant crowd gathered at Victory Deliverance Church. "These Seniors did not quit."

In a very intimate ceremony, the proud faces, twinkling eyes,

ing it to this special day.

Having missed out on graduating with the rest of their class due to a missed class, shortage of hours, or failure to pass a section on the required exams, these Seniors took their destiny in their own hands and stepped up to make sure they had the same opportunities every graduate has.

According to Byas, of the 23 students assembled before their loved ones, five are entering the workforce (two are already employed), five will be attending a vocational school, one has enlisted in the military, two are undecided, and 10 will be attending a four-year college or university, including Paine College, Macon State, Tuskegee University, Savannah State, and University of Georgia.

"You're high school years are what really make you who you are," Summer Opportunity Program Coordinator Baheejah Hasan told them. "Don't ever forget the lessons you've learned."

The student speaker, now a graduate of Central High School, moved many in the audience to tears with his well-spoken speech on overcoming adversity in life. Speaking from his own experiences, he spoke from the heart, having lost both his parents and growing up in a group home for children. Despite

his hardships, he told them, he strived hard, knowing his future rested on his ability to make it to that stage.

Dr. Samuel Scavella, new Principal at Northeast High, was the featured speaker for the evening, sticking with the theme of the night of being able to overcome obstacles in life, no matter what people told you. Playing football in high school, he told the students and parents how he was constantly told he was too short and too slow to play in college. Playing for a smaller school, he left there, not wanting to accept what others told him he could be; shortly after, he began playing for the University of Florida.

His advice to them: never live up to someone else's lower standards if they know they can make more of themselves. It will take loyalty, self-control, being resourceful, ambition, preparation, and to never stop learning.

"I'm sure they'll get out of life what I've gotten out of life," Scavella told the parents as they nodded in agreement. "They're here because they did what they had to do, even when they didn't want to; they're here today because they want things tomorrow others don't have."

A Principal's Career Comes Full Circle

"This is just...awesome," Bernd Principal Carol Bloodworth says with a chuckle, reflecting not just on her most recent principal assignment, but the fact that this is where she went to school. "It was surreal because the memories came flooding back: being here as a student, a teacher, and now a principal."

Not afraid to discuss specific years or what grade she was attending in those years, she quickly opens up a massive ledger of grades from the early 1960's and points out her name under a 1st grade classroom. The note on the right side of the page said "good student." The teacher? Merry! Rapley, "the best teacher I ever had. She was probably the most influential teacher in my life; she truly loved us."

It's all come full circle for Bloodworth: she started her education in the 1st grade at Bernd (kindergarten wasn't offered yet), she's taught there, and now she's the principal. It's been a winding road, she says, pointing out she's attended or worked at schools all over the county. Attending Bernd until 7th grade, she went to Lasseter High from 8th grade on; she was there during desegregation when it was changed to Northeast High.

Graduating from Georgia College at Milledgeville, she began teaching at Danforth Elementary before heading back to her roots to teach at Bernd. Eleven years later, she was promoted to Assistant Principal and sent all over the county to work. A decade later, she was promoted to principal at Burghard Elementary, and from there, it was back to Bernd. "I love Burghard with all my heart, but this was truly a dream come true."

Even with all the moving, Bernd has always been her anchor; each time she comes back, there's a connection to her past. As Principal, there are teachers there from when she was a teacher. Even earlier, as a fairly new teacher, she already had mentors she trusted: her own teachers. Her predecessor was the principal when she was a teacher. "It was so neat to teach with teachers who had taught my sister and me. I always felt very cared for and that I was an individual."

The connection to the school and community extends beyond her group of peers. She taught many of the parents of the students attending now, and one of her custodian's now had children in her class back at Danforth. "I couldn't be happier; I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. The teachers know it, and the parents know it."

There's even a volleyball trophy in the school she helped win back when the elementary schools competed in intramural sports. "So many memories flood back," she says of every time she walks through the front doors. "It's like a full circle."

It also amazes her sometimes how much has changed over the years. When she attended, there were

no regular extra curricular activities like music and physical education. Once every two weeks, the whole school would gather in the auditorium to sing, one of her favorite memories. As Principal, she's bringing back the old School Song. There was no library in her early days; they had 7th graders designated as "shelvers" who would take care of the books stored on the stage.

As far as the role of Principal goes, she's glad the role has changed from her childhood. As a student, you didn't want to avoid notice of the Principal, knowing it meant you were in trouble. "A Principal is much more visible now," she says. "I much prefer this role."

A lot has changed over the years, but some things are

just the way they have been and should be. The community is still very supportive of the school, making sure they have what they need, when they need it. That...and the love and dedication of the faculty at Bernd for their students and community.

"I'm proud of the fact I've been afforded this opportunity. Hopefully I'll retire from the school where I learned to read."



Carol Bloodworth with the bust of Florence Bernd, the Lanier High teacher who the school is named after.

High School Orientation

Students go to their school to get parking decals, pay for lockers, and find out about clubs, activities, and sports.

Rutland High

- 11th/12th grade - Aug. 1 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

- 9th/10th grade - Aug. 2 - 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Central, Hutchings, Southwest, Northeast, Westside High

- 9th/12th grade - July 26 - 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

- 10th/11th grade - July 27 - 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

SCHOOL STARTS AUGUST 8!!!