

# The Learning Curve

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

## Career Fest held at Macon Centreplex

For the ninth year, the 100 Black Men of Macon-Middle Georgia held its Career Fest at the Macon Centreplex. "As an organization, we know how important education is," says Past President Billy Pitts. "Educational goals is one of our missions. We feel it is important to give these kids this kind of exposure."



Students peruse the many booths featuring colleges and employers.

Up and down the aisles are representatives from more than 50 colleges from around the southeast (including Mercer University, Macon State College, the University of Georgia, The Citadel, Tuskegee University, and the University of Florida), employers from around Macon and across the state (including Georgia Power, 41NBC, the Bibb County Sheriff's Office, and the Medical Center of Central Georgia), and every branch of the military. Organizers wanted to show students there were many, many options for them after they graduated. "We felt there was a need to expose kids to all the opportunities available after high schools," says President Freeman Lester.

"It's an opportunity for kids, no matter what their dreams are, to think about what they want to do next," says Pitts.

According to Freeman, this is more than just an information session; students can take steps towards their future right now. "We're hoping they find a college they want to go to and get a scholarship. If they're interested in the military, there are groups here who can sign them up today. Some people are ready to give them a job today if they qualify."

"There's something here for every student," praises Melanie Hutchings, Journalism and Communication for Business teacher at Hutchings High School. According to her and Chemistry teacher Anita McWhorter, whether a student came looking for more information into what they already planned on doing or information from a wide variety of sources, they were all very pleased with what was available. "It's a good representation of colleges and businesses, both locally and nationally," says McWhorter.

"This is for all students [in Middle Georgia]. It's been a great response," says Freeman. They expected more than 3,000 students to attend the event this year.

## Parent Teacher Resource Center offers workshop for parents

### Informs them of opportunities in the county's Gifted and Special Needs programs

"More and more is expected of children," said Tandi Pressley, Director of Bibb County Public Schools Gifted Programs. "More is expected of teachers and schools."

Speaking in the cafeteria of Hutchings High School, Pressley and Director of Programs for Exceptional Children Dr. Violet Johnson spoke to parents about the many opportunities for their children to further their children's education. Sponsored by the Parent Teacher Resource Center (PTRC), it invited any parents who had questions about teaching students with special needs or were interested in enrolling their student in the Gifted Program.

"I found out that parents didn't know a lot about these programs," says Parent Teacher Resource Center (PTRC) Director Gwendolyn Russell. "This type of information needs to be given to parents at the beginning of the school year so they have time to get their children involved in the required activities to be considered for these programs."

Johnson not only went over the Referral and Placement Process for special needs students, she also explained the many needs they serve, the service models used, and the location of classes in different feeder zones. Names and e-mails were provided of staff in the Central Office who would be able to answer any of their questions or help them along in the process. "One of our Special Education Performance Goals is increasing the percentage of parents of students with disabilities who are active and satisfied participants in their child's education."

Valerie Taylor, says her son was diagnosed with ADHD and has trouble staying focused for long in class and when trying to read. "Any little distraction and he's out of it." She came to the workshop



Tandi Pressley, Director of Gifted Programs tells parents of the opportunities available.

hoping to find opportunities for more personal attention and alternative teaching methods. She would like to find "some ways [for him] to study better because he gets very frustrated fast."

Pressley stressed the importance of making sure students are getting the most out of their education as possible, telling them "the world is constantly changing, and it will never be what it was." She explained the many different programs being offered under gifted education, including the REACH program, pre-advanced placement classes, advanced placement classes, the Governor's Honors Programs, and the many competitions - including the Science Fair, History Day, the Technology Fair, Writing

Contests, Math Teams, and more - around the county to stimulate their interest in various subjects. These are "rigorous programs which will benefit their children."

Warren and Tricia Bruce came with their son Michael, a Kindergartner at Union Elementary, to find out how to get him tested and enrolled in the Gifted Program. As a stay-at-home mother, Tricia says she has been teaching him material on the side and feels he is more than prepared for the rigorous courses. "We want to see what it takes to be in the Gifted Program," she said.

"The response from the parents has been great," said Russell. "Parents that couldn't attend the workshop have been calling the PTRC asking for information and coming by to pick up materials from the workshop."

Upcoming workshops include "How to Plan, Organize, and Present a Science Fair Project" on October 20 and "Magnet Schools - What They Are, Where They Are, and What They Do" on November 29. For more information, call the PTRC at (478) 752-5220.

## Mercer University Athletic Department offers students many opportunities to attend games

"I just want to see the kids have a good time," says Assistant Athletic Director Kevin Gailey.

To reach out to the community, as well as get them interested in Mercer's athletic teams, Gailey and Smith are working on several different opportunities for students to come to the games either for free or very cheap.

A new Kids' Club was begun this year, and for only \$25, they receive a membership card, a skybox party, and tickets to every game. That means all spectator sports, for men's and women's teams. "It'd be good for the kids to have a college team to follow," says Smith.

There is also the Send a Child to a Game program, where a community member donates \$10, allowing a child to attend a game and receive a meal and memento. This can be for any men's or women's game, and the child will create a thank-you card for their sponsor. According to Gailey, they are working with places like the Methodist

Home and the Childlife Center.

They have begun partnering with Macon Reads in order to encourage people to read, says Gailey. The number of books has not been set yet, but classes will keep track of how much they read, passing out incentives for certain levels. "We're doing everything we can to interact with children...to encourage them to read more," says Mercer University Athletic Department Assistant Kristen Smith.

To reach out to victims of the hurricanes here in the community, the women's basketball game on December 19 will be open to anyone who brings a canned food donation. The game is against the University of New Orleans and was originally scheduled to be hosted at their school. "We wanted to help sustain the relief efforts here in the area," says Smith.

The idea for these programs is also a way to fill seats at many of these games. As Gailey points out, "rather than let them go empty, we can do something good with

them." As a former teacher he knows that teachers and parents "are always looking for ways to take kids to an event."

Other than the tickets set aside for the programs, the Department also has 1,000 tickets to just hand out to organizations and schools. "All they have to do is call us and let us know," says Smith. "We want people to take advantage of this; we want our seats to be filled."

With offering all these free and cheap seats, what is the University getting out of this? According to Gailey, he just wants "to see our teams perform in front of a screaming, enthusiastic crowd."

Game schedules can be found online at [www.mercerbears.com](http://www.mercerbears.com). Any questions or interest in taking advantage of these programs can be answered by calling the Department at (478) 301-1994.