

The Learning Curve

This page was written and designed by Education First in cooperation with the Bibb County Board of Education, the Peyton Anderson Foundation, and The Telegraph.



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

Students honor America's veterans

"We honor those Veterans who have served and given their lives for our freedom," said Albert Lewis, Past President of the Georgia State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America, speaking to the student body at Morgan Elementary.

According to Principal Diana Rodgers, with many of her students either having family members who are veterans, are currently serving overseas, or are preparing to go overseas, it would be special if they showed their support of the armed forces. "We've come here to honor those people."

Along one wall of the cafeteria is an American Flag made of cut-out handprints and stars; each handprint has the name of a student's relative who is a veteran, and each star is the name of a family member currently serving. At the assembly, students brought American Flags they made in art class to wave as they sang patriotic songs like *God Bless America*, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and *You're a Grand Ol' Flag*.

Afterwards, Lewis spoke with the students about the importance of serving in the military, the love he has for his family and friends who supported him while overseas, and the pride he feels when he sees students like them supporting their veterans.

All the students then filed outside to the field, joined hands in a large circle, and watched as red, white, and blue balloons were released into the air.

Vineville Academy's celebration featured skits, songs by the choir, a video presentation, and a local Veteran. "There will never be enough words to express our gratitude," said Principal Paulette Winters.

Students acted out a skit of Snoopy vs. The Red Baron and sang patriotic songs like *You're a Grand Ol' Flag* while tap dancing. Students and guests were then treated to a video presentation on the importance of volunteering at Veteran's Hospitals.

The featured speaker, Captain John Adams, is a graduate of Mercer University and has served in Cuba and Iraq as part of Military Police Officer Units. He has been awarded the Bronze Star and National Defense Service Medal. During the course of his speech, he discussed the everyday life of a soldier in Iraq: lack of running water for showers and toilets, arriving before supplies like tents and cots got there, and how to overcome those obstacles. "I liked to sleep on top of my truck because it was generally cooler, and I could see the stars."

Vineville was then presented with an American Flag which was flown over Iraq in honor of Vineville by a parent currently serving over there. "Thank you for all of your support. Being away from home at important times makes you appreciate those you left behind that much more."

Bibb County Public School's Teacher of the Year Banquet

Community comes together in outpouring of support for county's top teachers

"The schools are just buildings. Bibb County Public Schools is all of you," Cheryl Palmer of 41NBC-WMGT told a crowd of more than 400 teachers and administrators, praising them for their hard work and dedication.

Bibb County Public Schools, in partnership with the Bibb Association of Educators (BAE), the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, and Education First, honored its 2005 Teachers of the Year on Tuesday, November 16 at the Macon Centreplex.

"I have great respect for what you do each and every day," School Board President Tommy Barnes told them. "Everyone in this room is an inspiration."

The Macon/Bibb County community showed its outstanding teachers an unprecedented amount of support by contributing money and gifts. Each school's Teacher of the Year received a commemorative clock as well as a bag comprised of donated items from local businesses and organizations. The clocks were handed out by Superintendent Sharon Patterson and members of the School Board.

Not only were the Teachers of the Year shown support, every teacher in Bibb County will be recognized for their contributions. Churches and community organizations around the county 'adopted' a school and wrote a personalized letter to each teacher thanking them for their hard work.

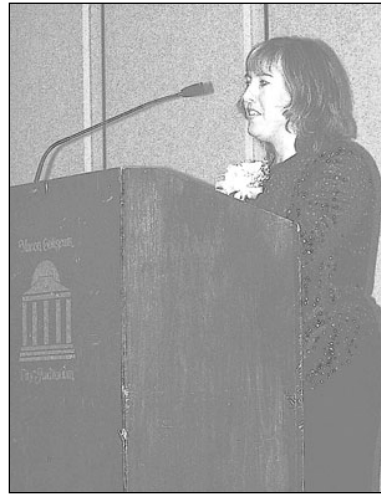
"We are excited to have this opportunity to recognize the talent and dedication to Bibb County classrooms," said Telegraph Publisher and Education First Board Chair Jeannie Enyart. "You are shaping this community's future, and we are grateful for your hard work."

The top five candidates for Bibb County's Teacher of the Year were featured in a video, showing them interacting with their students. Principals and teachers were interviewed and shown praising their Teachers of the Year, stating exactly why they were the perfect choice.

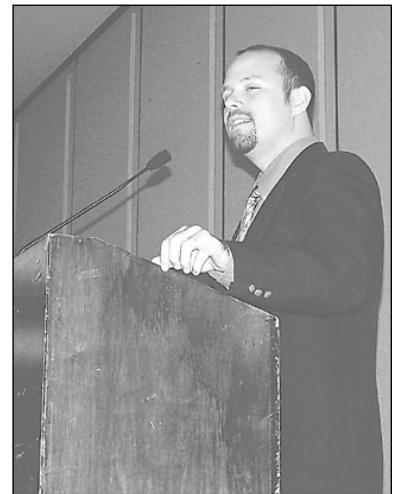
Bibb County's 2005 Teacher of the Year, Porter Elementary Music Teacher Sherry Meyer, was also announced and honored with a monetary gift from MidSouth Federal Credit Union, a shopping spree from Kroger, and letters of recognition from the community. "This says a lot about the music program," she said with tears in her eyes. "This goes out to all the fine arts and music teachers who contribute to a well-rounded education in Bibb County."

The featured speaker for the evening was Georgia's 2005 Teacher of the Year, Screven County Middle School Language Arts and Reading teacher Chase Puckett. "There's nothing more exciting than being a teacher. When you cross that line and become an educator, you cross the line into a strange new world that no one else understands."

He spoke about every aspect, emotion, and hardship a teacher



Bibb County Teacher of the Year Sherry Meyer thanks her family and the Music Department for all of the support they have given her.



Georgia Teacher of the Year Chase Puckett speaks on the importance of teachers using personal experiences and humor.

can go through in their career, using his own experiences as examples. He was the trouble-maker in school until a middle school teacher made him read a book everyday and put him on the gifted track. As a first-generation high school and college graduate, he asks "Why did I make it when [my family and friends] didn't? Because of a teacher."

One of his main points was that teachers put up with many hardships and often question why they ever joined the profession. According to him, it is the love of teaching and reaching out to students that keeps them going. "What holds us accountable is when we

walk into the classroom and lock eyes with our students. It's that accountability that allows us to love someone else's kid."

He ended his speech on a funny note, saying those who downplay the education system and the hardships teachers go through should come into the classroom "as a substitute teacher without a para-professional on a Friday right before Christmas Break."

The Banquet was sponsored by MidSouth Federal Credit Union, Wesleyan College, Cox Communications, GEICO, SCANA Energy, Georgia Power, the Medical Center of Georgia, Kroger, and Publix.

Professional organizations for teachers work together to make Teacher of the Year Banquet successful

BAE and PAGE working to attract, promote, and protect teachers

Partnering with Education First for the 2005 Teacher of the Year Banquet were the two professional organizations for teachers and support personnel, the Bibb Association of Educators (BAE) and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE).

"I think it's great that we can work together in Bibb County," says Danielle Fanning, PAGE Membership Service Representative for District 12. "It's all about the Teachers of the Year."

Started by BAE - PAGE partnered with them beginning its second year - the Banquet has hon-

ored the outstanding works of Bibb County's top teachers. According to BAE Past President Evelyn Johnson, "it's been a success ever since it started." Lynn Jackson, Board of Directors member for Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) District 7 agrees: "it's been wonderful it's been allowed to grow."

Both BAE and PAGE work with their member teachers to help them with professional development, legal services, and government advocacy. They offer workshops for teachers to help them learn more about their profession as well as informing them of any

outside opportunities for professional growth.

By joining, teachers also receive the benefit of protection for contract disputes and other legal issues. "It's sad to say some situations have to go to court," says Jackson.

"The main benefit is to protect teachers in times of need," agrees Fanning. "We provide them with an attorney to answer their questions."

BAE is closely associated with GAE and the National Association of Educators (NAE). By joining NAE, it signs them up for all three organizations, but they have the choice

to join just the local chapter of BAE. PAGE is a state organization, but Bibb County is lucky enough to have its own local chapter. Local chapters are voluntary and completely member-driven: it is up to the teachers in the area if they want a local chapter or not. Having the local chapter is a plus for teachers, says Fanning. "It's promoting Bibb County, and there's such a need to promote public education in a positive way."

Teachers can join either organization, and both have an open-door policy which allows any teacher or support personnel to join.