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New Class Teaches Students Value of Community Service

SEPTEMBER 11TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

New Class Teaches Students Value of Community Service

A focus on developing a sense of community at Poplar Bluff Junior High School has led students to seek out ways to contribute to the community at large.

Last year, each pod within the building's 'house system' adopted a community organization to fundraise for including the Bread Shed, FosterAdopt Connect SEMO, Hearts for Rescue and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, plus visits were made to area nursing homes.

The student-led efforts were so well-received that a dedicated elective was created this semester called Community Service Learning.

"It fits perfectly with what [Principal Candace Warren] is trying to do with houses—trying to build a community here at school—but also as a town," social studies teacher Aaron Duncan explained. "The more unity you have in the community, the more energy there is, and the positive influence rubs off."

Duncan, and his colleague Lyndsee Moon in the social studies department, approached Warren in the spring with the idea of introducing the elective and, upon receiving approval, the class quickly filled up. The course description reads in part: This experience will allow students not only to become familiar with the community in which they live but will also allow them to see themselves as active, powerful people who can make positive contributions through these efforts.

The participants are presently practicing their “elevator speeches” to effectively raise awareness as they learn about different societal issues, according to faculty. Guest speakers from the nonprofit sector may soon be invited to discuss their missions. The ultimate goal will be to select charitable causes to get involved with in the community, or to create their own philanthropic campaigns.

“I feel like a lot of students don’t think they can [make a difference], and we’re showing them that they’re capable of doing something productive,” Moon said. “We’re teaching how you can help make our community a better place no matter what your age is, no matter what is wrong.”

The house system modeled at PBJHS was originated by the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta to establish a family-like culture by providing students the opportunity to connect with peers across classes and grade levels that they may not otherwise have a chance to interact with.

“In order to give this age group of students a sense of empathy, we’re exposing them to different populations and organizations so they can play an active role in serving others, because we want to develop leaders,” Warren stated. “These students will be the leaders in our community one day, so we might as well start now.”

Pictured: Students Carley Brooks (forefront) and Makayla Schalk, now freshmen, help collect several bags of trash on a walk to Bacon Park during the annual PBJHS EdExpo in May.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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TCC Starts First New Program in Over a Decade

SEPTEMBER 10TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

TCC Starts First New Program in Over a Decade

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center has launched its first new program in over a decade this school year with the addition of computer science in what was once the health occupations classroom.

The instructor, Michael Barrett, received a full month of training through Project Lead The Way in Indianapolis over the summer in order to develop a transformative learning experience for students interested in the burgeoning career field.

“I’m 61 years old and I’m having a blast! I love teaching this stuff, and we’re just getting started. The further we go along, the better,” Barrett said. “And being able to substitute a math or science credit? My goodness, that’s a great opportunity! We’re gonna be packed with students.”

The career educator participated in consecutive workshops in July outlining PLTW Essentials and Principles, covering a year’s worth of curriculum in two-week blocks, he explained. The coursework—designed by the nation’s premier provider of science, technology, engineering and math curriculum and professional development—will teach app creation, coding and programming using software such as Blockly, Python and VEXcode.

"It allows you to think of new ways to problem-solve," commented senior Maria Powell, who was collaborating with classmate Jeremy Bell on Friday, Aug. 30, to create characters for an interactive game using MIT App Inventor. “It’s a disease,” added junior Aron Johnson, referring to the time one can spend working out the details.

Barrett, who obtained his master's degree in administration as well as a bachelor's in engineering management through Arkansas State University, spent almost 20 years of his tenure teaching advanced manufacturing at the Northeast Arkansas Career & Tech Center in Jonesboro, which was also a PLTW certified school. More recently he served as project director for Three Rivers College.

In May, the Missouri State Board of Education approved the updated computer science performance academic standards to include the core concept areas of computing systems, networks and the internet, data and analysis, algorithms and programming, and impacts of coding. Upon receiving district approval, high school students will have the option to substitute a computer science credit in place of a mathematics, science or practical arts credit toward graduation effective in 2019/20, according to a recent memo by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Last year, Gov. Mike Parson signed the STEM Education and Computer Science Bill into law at the Poplar Bluff High School campus in an effort to curb outsourcing and capture some of the job market in Missouri. Sen. Doug Libla of Poplar Bluff served as handler of the legislation, which also established a fund for future public or private financial support.

In January, the R-I Board of Education approved a proposal to add the program at the Technical Career Center, where startup funds are available under the federal Perkins Act and through matching enhancement grants. School officials are currently working on creating a weighted AP module of the program to be offered as early as spring semester, according to Director Charles Kinsey.

“We’re highlighting the fact that career and technical education in 2019 is not what people may think it was back in the 70s, 80s and even 90s,” Kinsey stated. “Students [pursuing] career technical fields, no matter the program, will attain the same entry-level of knowledge as college graduates, if not higher.”

Pictured: Maria Powell, a senior, performs a magic trick utilizing binary numbers. “With computer programming, math is our friend,” instructor Michael Barrett (left) says.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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MRTF Awards \$500 Grant to PBHS teacher

AUGUST 29TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

MRTF Awards \$500 Grant to PBHS teacher

Poplar Bluff High School business education teacher Pamela Davis was awarded a \$500 grant from the Missouri Retired Teachers Foundation on Wednesday, Aug. 14, so students can create interactive folders detailing concepts learned in personal finance class.

“Students will be learning objectives centered on budgeting, saving, credit/lending, checking, financial decision making, spending, taxes and earning income,” wrote Davis in her proposal. “My goal is to help them prepare for their future by creating a resource of knowledge, which they can take with them to reflect on.”

The funding will be used toward supplies for approximately 90 students, including file folders, binding rings, play money, hole punches, writing utensils and other materials.

Davis was among seven regional recipients chosen in the association’s annual classroom grant program.

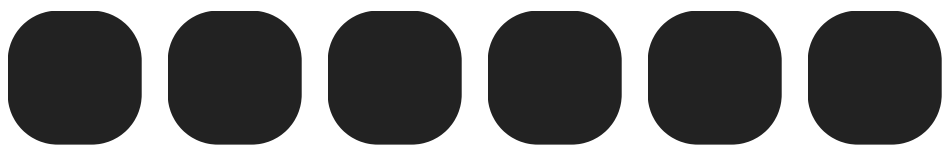
Pictured (Left to right) R-I Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill, MRTA Region 12 Vice President Anne Moyer, teacher Pam Davis, MRTF board member John Moyer, Butler County Unit Vice President James Barnhill and Butler County Unit Secretary Jan Duffy.

Article and Photo by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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PBHS Teacher Earns Statewide Biology Award

JULY 07TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBHS Teacher Earns Statewide Biology Award

Poplar Bluff educator Gretchen Pendley has won the 2019 outstanding biology teacher award for the state of Missouri through the National Association of Biology Teachers.

State director of the OBTA program, Ryan Lacson, traveled from the greater Springfield area to hand-deliver the prestigious award during a surprise recognition ceremony featuring family, school administrators and faculty colleagues on Wednesday, June 5, at the High School.

A selection committee carefully reviewed all statewide nominees, according to Lacson, who noted that Pendley would receive a special gift package, including customized micropipettes.

“Gretchen’s extensive knowledge of science curriculum, her advanced skills in pedagogy and classroom management, and her mindset of esprit de corps made the transition a very easy one,” Gail Karlish stated in a peer nomination letter. Karlish, the PBHS Science Department chairwoman, was referring to Pendley succeeded herself as leader of the departmental professional learning community per personal recommendation.

Pendley began teaching biology at PBHS in 2014, and was named Secondary Grade-Span Teacher of the Year within just two years. In addition, she has served as an adjunct biology instructor at Three Rivers College, where she was named the 2014 Adjunct Teacher of the Year.

“She brings new and innovative teaching techniques to her students through using a great variety of computer software and programs like Pear Deck and Eduweblabs; by being an innovator such as in piloting the use of Chromebooks for our school, and writing grants like the one for which she was recently awarded a new type of microscope projector,” continued Karlish, “and by teaching students how to navigate through different delivery platforms such as Schoology and Blackboard.”

The OBTA program annually recognizes a single outstanding biology educator, grades 7-12, in every participating state. Last year’s Missouri winner hailed from Maplewood Richmond Heights High School in St. Louis.

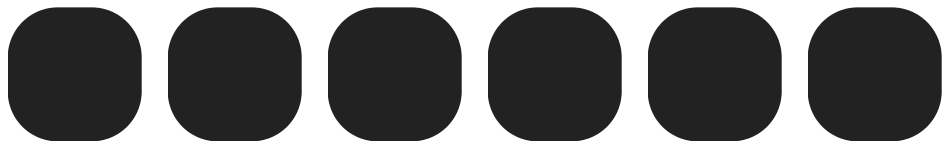
The mission of the National Association of Biology Teachers is to empower educators to provide the best possible biology and life science education for all students, according to its website.

Pictured: PBHS biology teacher Gretchen Pendley is presented a statewide award from the National Association of Biology Teachers by Missouri program director Ryan Lacson during a surprise celebration.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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Baldwin Supports PBHS Driver's Ed Program

JULY 02ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Baldwin Supports PBHS Driver's Ed Program

Baldwin Automotive Group has loaned a pair of 2018 Ford Escapes for students to use in the Driver's Education program available at Poplar Bluff High School.

The SUVs will serve to replace an older model Dodge Caravan and Ford Taurus owned by the R-I district, and repurposed in previous years to operate the summer school program. Baldwin Automotive even purchased and installed passenger-side brake kits for the sport utility vehicles, according to instructor Charley Harper.

"It's a great program for kids, no question about it," commented Baldwin General Manager Bruce Hutson, who helped facilitate the partnership. Hutson has known Harper since the two lived in Ironton in the late 1980s, and both wound up moving to Poplar Bluff to advance their careers.

Driver’s Ed, which runs through June, serves around 70 high schoolers beginning at age 15. After participating in a series of classroom lectures, the student drivers spend four days behind the wheel with one of the instructors in order to complete the road safety course.

Harper, a PBHS Spanish teacher, leads the program with Mike Sowatzke and Mitch Davis, who both teach in the Social Studies Department. The faculty members have received certification through Missouri State University, one of three colleges approved by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Co-owner of Baldwin Automotive Group, Jeff Baldwin, said he could remember benefiting from Driver’s Ed back when he was a student. A graduate of the PBHS Class of 1978, Baldwin is happy the first driving experience for many of the participants will now be in a top-selling vehicle, he noted. The local car dealership has supported the program in the past.

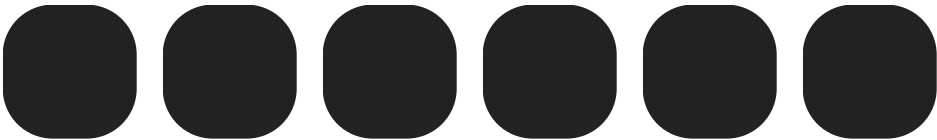
Pictured: With several participating students in the background, Jeff Baldwin (green shirt), co-owner of Baldwin Automotive Group, hands two sets of Ford Escape keys to PBHS educators (front row, from left) Mitch Davis, Charley Harper and Mike Sowatzke on Friday, June 7.

Photo and article Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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