

LIFESTYLES
2024 CHILDREN'S
BENEFIT BALL

Derby themed event was held on Feb. 16. A9



BUSINESS
SOUTHERN SASSY
GAL'S BOUTIQUE

Recently opened in Boyle. A10

The Bolivar Bulletin

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Truth, Logic, and Common Sense

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2024

CSD Teachers of the Year

Recipients are exemplary role models within the district

BY JOEY LEE
The Bolivar Bulletin

The Cleveland School District recently announced the recipients of their Teachers of the Year awards for school year 2023-2024. This recognition honors educators who have demonstrated exemplary dedication, leadership and commitment to student success.



Bramuchi

The recipients represent a diverse group of educators from schools within the CSD. Among them are Earlishia Simmons, D.M. Smith; Laura Moorman, Bell Academy; Debra "Christy" Prine, Hayes

Cooper Center; Lauren Shurden, Nailor Elementary; Taylor Holland Taylor, CCHS; Emilee McClenton, CCMS; Andrea Dudley, Parks; Donesha Baker, Pearman and Toni McWilliams from CTE, with Taylor taking home the honor of Teacher of the Year for the entire district.

The selection process for this award

is rigorous and thorough, with each school evaluating candidates based on performance, leadership and impact on student achievement. Individual campuses make decisions separately, highlighting each educator's strengths and contributions.

"These recipients are role models for each

TEACHER AWARDS *continued*, PAGE A6

DAA Grant

NEA awards \$10,000

Special to *The Bolivar Bulletin*



Powell

The Delta Arts Alliance has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Challenge America award of \$10,000.

This grant will support gallery exhibitions at the Delta Arts Alliance. In total, the NEA will award 257 Challenge America awards totaling \$2,570,000 that were announced as part of its first round of fiscal year 2024 grants.

"The NEA is delighted to announce this grant to the Delta Arts Alliance, which is helping contribute to the strength and well-being of the arts sector and local community," said National Endowment for the Arts Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. "We are pleased to be able to support this community and help create an environment where all people have the opportunity to live artful lives."

"We are incredibly grateful to the NEA for this granting opportunity," said Lauren Powell, Executive Director of Delta Arts Alliance. "Over the past two years, our monthly gallery exhibitions have become a beloved event that we are proud to offer to our community. This support will allow DAA the proper maintenance and tools we need to continue supporting high-quality exhibitions and experiences at the Ellis Theater."

For more information on other projects included in the NEA's grant announcement, visit arts.gov/news.

Coronation



THE ROYALS: Sarah Aylward and Bob Reed were crowned during the 2023 Junior Auxiliary of Cleveland Children's Benefit Ball that was held on Friday, February 16. See page A10 for photos from the event.

MBTC Rebranding

Will now be Arriva Connect

Special to *The Bolivar Bulletin*



Mound Bayou Telephone & Communications (MBTC) is rebranding, along with its parent company, Fail Telecommunications Corporation, to Arriva Connect.

Arriva, which translates to arrive, represents the company's arrival into the next generation of new, enhanced telecommunications and connections. With the same team, the new name and logo reflects the company's century-long commitment to telecommunications in Bolivar County and its future focus, which includes significant investment underway in ongoing fiber projects. Arriva Connect will both improve current services and provide broadband connectivity to many more unserved households in the future.

"Our rebranding is much more than a simple name change. It's redefining who we are and who we are becoming, which is more than just your local telephone provider," said Arriva Chief Marketing Officer Ali Alexander Phillips. "Today's user wants fast, reliable Internet at an easily affordable price for working remotely, online education, gaming, entertainment, and staying connected to friends and loved ones across the world."

By the end of 2025, Arriva will provide a fiber broadband connection with gigabit

ARRIVA *continued*, PAGE A6

Bolivar Co. Students Participate Sunflower Film Academy receives accolades

Special to *The Bolivar Bulletin*

A film produced by the students of a free summer workshop, the Sunflower County Film Academy, has been chosen as an official selection for the Magnolia Independent Film Festival, and the Oxford Film Festival, and won three awards with The Best Shorts Competition.

Six students from Bolivar County participated in the workshop and worked on the film: Zariah Burl, Ariyanna Duvall, Aaron Johnson, and Jaiden Nix of Cleveland Central High school and Mariano Sifuentes

and Arthur Evans of West Bolivar High School.

Their film "Help Wanted" won the prestigious Award of Merit from the California-based Best Shorts Film Competition in two categories: "Film Short (Student)" and "Young Filmmaker - 17 and younger", as well as an Award of Recognition for Actor Leading (Student) Merion Turner as "Elijah".

Known as The Mag, the 27th Annual Magnolia Film Festival will take place



Cleveland Central High School Student Zariah Burl (r) films (l) "Elijah" (Merion Turner) in the kitchen for a scene from the movie, "Help Wanted." Filmmaker Glenn Payne (center) directed the film with Clevelander, Ben Powell

FILM ACADEMY *continued*, PAGE A6

TEACHER AWARDS*Continued from Page A1*

teacher in the district," said Dr. Lisa Bramuchi, CSD Superintendent. "They are the leaders of each campus, known among peers as effective teachers."

Within the district, the award holds immense significance as it recognizes and celebrates outstanding teachers. These recipients

exemplify the core values and goals of the district, embodying excellence, innovation and a dedication to the students.

The motto of the Cleveland School District is "Committed to Excellence."

"The Teacher of the Year awardees exemplify this motto because they make the commitment each day to implement creative and dynamic teaching methods, embed real-

world connections into their teaching and engage in continuous development to remain abreast of current trends, research and technology," said Nikki Towers, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Cleveland School District. "Most importantly, their passion, dedication and enthusiasm are evident in the positive relationships they have fostered with their students and colleagues."

These teachers play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall success and reputation of the district. As leaders within their respective campuses, they inspire and empower their colleagues, fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. Their impact extends far beyond the classroom, shaping the future of their students and community.

"They are the cream of the

crop," said Bramuchi. "Our district has numerous faculty that deserve to be recognized each day. We are thankful for the support, guidance and instruction they provide our students. Teaching is a job that requires a huge heart for students. Cleveland School District is lucky to have faculty that exemplify these characteristics."

In recognition of their achievements, recipients receive financial assistance

for classroom supplies, a commemorative plaque and acknowledgment on the district website.

These teachers epitomize the dedication, passion and commitment to excellence that define the Cleveland School District. Their tireless efforts and profound impact on student success serve as an example of the exceptional caliber of educators within our community.

ARRIVA*Continued from Page A1*

speed capability to over half of the current MBTC serving area, offering a reliable connection nearly 100 times

faster than the current copper DSL connections. Our rebranding to a centralized name moves us towards more efficient and optimized operations and an enhanced customer experience. Arriva solidifies and clarifies our

commitment to providing world-class connections via more than just a telephone line."

"As we enhance the customer experience and bring new offerings to the Mound Bayou and

Winstonville areas, our services will be provided with the same touch and feel from the local faces our customers already know," said Arriva Director of Field Operations Jay Vanlandingham. "We are investing in both our future

and our children's future while bringing top-tier connectivity to our service area."

For more information, visit our brand-new website www.goarriva.com. Customers can anticipate a seamless

transition experience, characterized by a smooth onboarding process and continued excellence in service.

FILM ACADEMY*Continued from Page A1*

February 22-24 in Starkville. "Help Wanted" will have a showing at the Hollywood Premier Cinemas on Saturday, Feb. 24 at 11:30 am. Dates for the showing in Oxford have not been announced.

"I'm so excited that our students will have the experience of watching their hard work up on the big screen at a film festival," said Sunflower County Film Academy (SCFA) Instructor Glenn Payne. "It's a unique and fulfilling event at one of the most nurturing festivals in the state."

Payne and Ben Powell, both award-winning filmmakers, were the instructors for the 2023 student workshop hosted by Lauren Powell and the Delta Arts Alliance at the historic Ellis Theatre in June. Students from Sunflower, Washington, and Hinds

counties also attended the four-week workshop.

Written by Payne and directed and produced by Payne and Powell, "Help Wanted" tells the story of a troubled teen, "Elijah" who forms an unexpected bond when he befriends a gruff old man, "Mr. Earl" (Cleveland resident Tony Foster) in a story about friendship, growth and finding one's place in the world.

The film also stars SCFA student Jonarius Lee (Leland High School) who plays, "Jeremiah". All the students had roles in the film as extras and were part of the production crew. The film premiered on June 30 at the Ellis Theatre.

Founded in 2018, the Sunflower County Film Academy is part of the K-12 educational curriculum, Find Your Voice, for the multimodal project and award-winning film, Fannie Lou Hamer's America. A civil rights icon, Hamer is known for her activism



Cleveland resident Tony Foster (r) had a starring role as "Mr. Earl" in the student movie, "Help Wanted" filmed in Cleveland last summer. Peyton James, Summer Hill Junior High, prepares the scene for filming with "Elijah" (Merion Turner) and "Mr. Earl".

for voting and equal rights and her humanitarianism in her native Sunflower County. A fierce proponent of education, Hamer aided in bringing the first Head Start program to the state of Mississippi in the 1960s. The SCFA continues Hamer's mission of bringing educational programs and

career opportunities to students in the Mississippi Delta.

A 2024 workshop is planned for June and will be hosted at the Ellis Theater. The 2023 workshop was funded by a private donor and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi.



"Help Wanted" a short movie produced and filmed by the students of the Sunflower County Film Academy in Cleveland last summer will have a showing at The Magnolia Film Festival in Starkville this Saturday, February 24. Pictured on the movie poster are students (l to r) Merion Turner of Drew High School, Cameron Baldwin (Columbus Middle School), Jay Lee (Leland High School) and Jacob Baldwin (Columbus Middle School).

AG PROGRAM*Continued from Page A2*

not a single public school in this region has an ag science program to enrich these kids' lives about farming and where your food comes from -- what careers can be in ag science outside of just being a manual labor.

"The secondary push for this project was that we also live in the Mississippi Delta where we are the number one region in the number one state for the most obese, inactive, unhealthy population. Albeit most of them are the disenfranchised or underrepresented communities," he said. "There is a distinct issue with food and a knowledge base of food and nutrition. My wife is the nutrition and garden teacher at Bell Academy. It was once a magnet school, and several years ago one of the people who is on my current board of FOCSD, she wrote a small-scale grant for a small garden and greenhouse at Bell Academy."

Through other private funding and grants, that program was expanded, then

the district fully funded Mrs. Davis' position into being the district-wide nutrition and garden project coordinator.

"She is primarily stationed at Bell, but she has been helping other elementary schools with getting their garden projects embedded in the curriculum -- growing seasons and such. The biggest link was that all schools filter to the one middle school. So, it would make sense the middle school would have this larger scale agricultural science education center," said Davis. "And, then we have a teacher there currently, Miss Tammy Marlowe, who is a national award-winning science teacher, and she started a very small scale garden club with her own money, and then we came in and sort of addressed and assessed what we thought would be unique and good for the schools.

"We've worked with district leaders and teachers to say what would be the priority at this point -- what programs would be good for science career readiness that are unique to this region and such. The ag-side garden project was the first phase of about four phases of large

scale projects that we have proposed for the middle school program, where they have intermittent sports and games and activities and recreation leaders for the students because there are 435 students as our middle school. And, we only have a small group of athletic sports like baseball, softball, football, and basketball, which only allow 10 or 15 students at a time. So, we're talking about almost 300-some kids go home every day with no after school activity and no enrichment programs," he said.

To meet this need, the first phase of funding was received from the Bolivar Medical Center Foundation, a nonprofit organization in the region that uses money garnered from interest from different monies that they have received from the hospital board to fund health and wellness programs.

"We're currently in the early stages of developing a formalized approach to how students would engage in the after school part of the garden club. That's typically been something that Miss Marlowe just kind of expresses in

science classes, and any student who wanted to participate could learn about certain gardens and plants and stuff here and there," said Davis. "The agricultural science education part is going to be large scale. We're talking about a massive garden. We've already purchased a tractor. We just poured cement for a thirty by fifty bam. We're working to build our raised beds, and we have a big drainage ditch situation that we're working on with our students. We're trying to incorporate all aspects of this into our schools.

According to Davis, the curriculum will be embedded in or encouraged to be embedded in science, math and art -- art in the sense of the outside and exterior walls of these thoroughfares where the gardens will be.

"The art teacher wants to paint large scale murals of flowers," said Davis. "So, some of that will be educational with identification of certain things and the signage around the plants that will all be painted by students in the middle school. Art is definitely going to be something that's embedded

in the curriculum. The math -- geometry and such -- will be used to measure out where garden plots will go and how much the seeds should be for this and that. We're really hopeful that math will be a large part of going out there, there'll be an outdoor classroom, there'll be raised beds, they'll be again the barn and spaces to walk through with greenhouses and such. And then of course, there's the science."

Davis said he is hopeful that science will encourage students to do research for science fairs on particular things.

"Some scientists are anxious to be involved in these middle school lives because they work at Stoneville, which is one of the larger research centers here in Mississippi that does specifically agricultural science research," said Davis. "There's a large federal government institution here that does research on science too, and they've also interested in coming to the middle school because we all know that the sooner you can get unique things sort of sparked in young minds,

the sooner they have a knack to see more vision and see careers and possibilities than some adults do. So I'm anxious to see that be done."

Plans to continue expanding the program into other schools, including the Vo-Tech program at the high school, are on the table, and will provide additional opportunities for students to learn about ag science.

"Some of the parents of these children in K-6 are appreciative that their children have this opportunity to grow and be educated about garden and nutrition. This has been a missed opportunity to do some of this in our own schools with our own kids because we do know culturally, a lot of our African-American students and youth tend to stay closer to home when they finish school because they have larger families. We need to find ways to grow career for these students in some of these major corporations that do agricultural science right here in the Delta," said Davis.

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