



## Houston County CTAE: Working to Produce High-Achieving Students

# Warner Robins High School

## WRHS FFA Places at National Swine Show

### What's Inside

Congratulations to Dana Hendley for placing 10th in Senior Showmanship at the National Junior Swine Association show. Dana is an active member of the FFA and has been a part of the WRHS FFA livestock team for four years.

The NJSA is the largest youth livestock organization in the world with more than 13,500 members. The NJSA's mission is to provide a network uniting swine enthusiasts while offering competitive opportunities to reward excellence, enhance educational opportunities and develop leadership skills.

Warner Robins High School is located at 401 South Davis Drive in Warner Robins, Georgia. Dr. Veronica Sanders and Brian Rainwater are the Agriculture teachers. Chris McCook serves as Principal.

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Warner Robins High



Houston County High



Perry High



Houston County Career Academy



Veterans High



Northside High

## WRHS FFA Living to Serve

WRHS FFA purchased t-shirts to give to the safe house for the holiday season. T-shirts were used to share the CHAMPION and family spirit shared by WRHS. The club hopes to let them know they have a family in WRHS/WRHS FFA.

Pictured below are club member Chadalyn Smith, stacking WRHS T-shirts to be donated, and Brian Rainwater, Agriculture teacher. This community service project fulfills the last line in the FFA motto; Living to SERVE. Serving and helping others is one of the primary focuses of WRHS FFA.



# Houston County High School

## HCHS FCCLA Student Places Third in National Skill Demonstration Event



Aspen Mitchell, FCCLA Region 7 Officer Team Member and member of the Houston County High School Chapter of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) participated in the first ever Virtual Leadership Experience with National FCCLA by competing in a National Skill Demonstration Event, the FCCLA Knowledge Challenge, in December. Aspen not only took the FCCLA Knowledge Challenge Test, she placed Third in the Nation in this event. In the FCCLA Knowledge Challenge Skill Demonstration Event, students take a knowledge and skill test which allows them to demonstrate their knowledge of FCCLA's programs, activities, leadership, and chapter management. HCHS FCCLA congratulates Aspen on her national win and for representing the chapter in this national competitive event.

Houston County High School is located at 920 Highway 96 in Warner Robins, Georgia. Dr. Doug Rizer serves as Principal.



## Houston County High School FBLA Wins Region 5 Sweepstakes Championship



Pictured (Front L to R): Adviser Ashley Deloach, Jimmy Vu, Deborah Jacklin, Aaliyah Brown, Anna Le, Melissa Do, Rumi Lee, Adviser Jenny Jackson, Khushi Patel, Gianna Castro, Jahzara Taylor, Jaabili Gosukonda, Haley Raymond, Seyanna Castro, (Back L to R): Youjin Chung, Kaylen Aguilar, Shiva Soundappan, Lukas Kriechbaum, Yashil Patel, Daniel Grigsby, Cheluchi Nwagbata, Vincent Le, Somto Nwagbata, Vansh Patel, Junha Lee, Anthony Fazzini, Jane Lee, Kylie Godman and Adviser LaTasha Davis.

On Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, Houston County High School's FBLA chapter was named Region 5 Sweepstakes Champions for the third year in a row. Even though membership numbers were greatly reduced this year due to COVID, thirty-four members competed and won twenty-one 1<sup>st</sup> place, nine 2<sup>nd</sup> place, six 3<sup>rd</sup> place, and many other top ten wins – totaling 64 medals in all.

Awards won by the students were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Chapter – Region 5 Sweepstakes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Largest Chapter Award
- Accounting I: 1<sup>st</sup> - Jane Lee, 4<sup>th</sup> - Aaliyah Brown
- Banking and Financial Systems: 1<sup>st</sup> – Youjin Chung and Melissa Do
- Broadcast Journalism: 2<sup>nd</sup> – Kaylen Aguilar and Haley Raymond
- Business Calculations: 2<sup>nd</sup> – Daniel Grigsby, 4<sup>th</sup> – Angela Tran, 5<sup>th</sup> – Anthony Fazzini, 8<sup>th</sup> – Vincent Tran, 10<sup>th</sup> – Anna Le
- Business Communication: 1<sup>st</sup> – Kaylen Aguilar, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Rumi Lee, 4<sup>th</sup> – Seyanna Castro, 5<sup>th</sup> – Angela Tran, 8<sup>th</sup> – Anna Le
- Computer Applications: 1<sup>st</sup> – Yashil Patel
- Economics: 2<sup>nd</sup> – Somto Nwagbata, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Cheluchi Nwagbata, 5<sup>th</sup> – Rumi Lee
- Entrepreneurship: 3<sup>rd</sup> – Leo Le and Vansh Patel
- Help Desk: 1<sup>st</sup> – Vincent Tran
- Hospitality and Event Management: 1<sup>st</sup> – Zeel Patel, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jaabili Gosukonda and Haley Raymond
- International Business: 1<sup>st</sup> – Kylie Godman
- Intro to Business Communication: 1<sup>st</sup> – Jaabili Gosukonda, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jahzara Taylor, 7<sup>th</sup> – Deborah Jacklin
- Intro to Financial Math: 1<sup>st</sup> – Shiva Soundappan, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Leo Le, 4<sup>th</sup> – Vincent Le, 5<sup>th</sup> – Gianna Castro, 7<sup>th</sup> – Vansh Patel

## Houston County High School FBLA Wins Region 5 Sweepstakes Championship (continued)

- Intro to Information Technology: 1<sup>st</sup> – Shiva Soundappan, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Gianna Castro, 4<sup>th</sup> – Vincent Le, 7<sup>th</sup> – Ishika Patel
- Management Decision Making: 1<sup>st</sup> – Lukas Kriechbaum
- Management Information Systems: 1<sup>st</sup> – Junha Lee and Joshua Rivera, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jimmy Vu
- Marketing: 1<sup>st</sup> – Daniel Grigsby, Cheluchi Nwagbata, and Joshua Rivera
- Personal Finance: 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jane Lee, 4<sup>th</sup> – Kylie Godman, 5<sup>th</sup> – Khushi Patel, 7<sup>th</sup> – Aryan Patel
- Public Service Announcement: 1<sup>st</sup> – Jimmy Vu
- Supply Chain Management: 1<sup>st</sup> – Lukas Kriechbaum
- Website Design: 1<sup>st</sup> – Bayabya Joshi, Somto Nwagbata, and Yashil Patel
- Word Processing: 1<sup>st</sup> – Aaliyah Brown
- Business Ethics: 1<sup>st</sup> – Youjin Chung and Melissa Do
- Client Service: 3<sup>rd</sup> – Khushi Patel
- Impromptu Speaking: 3<sup>rd</sup> – Zeel Patel
- Intro to Business Presentation: 1<sup>st</sup> – Deborah Jacklin
- Intro to Public Speaking: 1<sup>st</sup> – Jahzara Taylor
- Public Speaking: 1<sup>st</sup> – Seyanna Castro
- Sales Presentation: 2<sup>nd</sup> – Anthony Fazzini



HCHS FBLA is looking forward to an amazing year focusing on continuing their tradition of excellence. They are working hard preparing for competition at the state level.

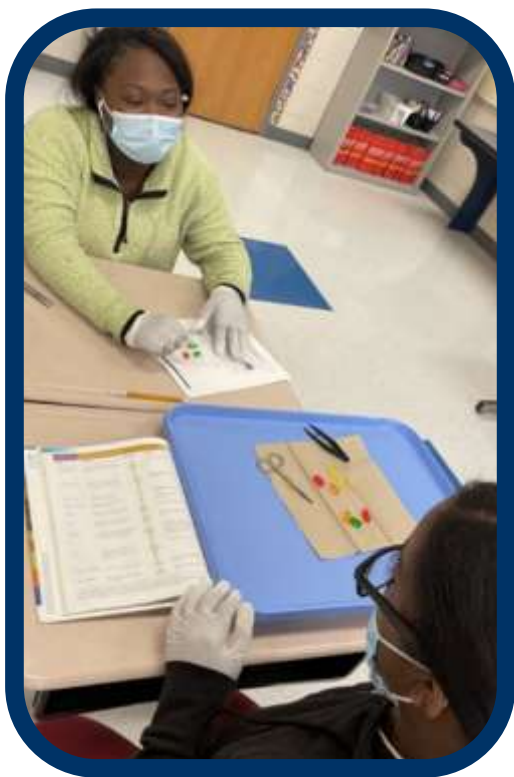
Houston County High School's FBLA Advisers are: Jenny Jackson, Ashley Deloach, LaTasha Davis, and Sheila Jones. CTAE Supervisor is Karma Hayes.



# Houston County Career Academy

## HCCA Healthcare Students Study Anatomy

HCCA Healthcare students are pictured making new anatomy terminology come to life with a gummy bear dissection using the human body vocabulary words.



## HCCA Celebrates Career Technical Education Month



**CELEBRATE TODAY,  
OWN TOMORROW!**

Career and Technical Education Month®, or CTE Month®, is a public awareness campaign that takes place each February to celebrate the value of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the achievements and accomplishments of CTE programs across the country.

Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) is preparing Georgia's students for their next step after high school/college, beginning a career, registered apprenticeships, or the military. Georgia CTAE pathway course offerings, and the new Educating Georgia's Future Workforce initiative, leverage partnerships with industry and higher education to ensure students have the skills they need to thrive in the future workforce. CTAE offers students more than 130 career pathways within the 17 Georgia Career Clusters. [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

The Career Technology Student Organizations at HCCA including SkillsUSA, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and FIRST Robotics (FIRST Alliance) have planned a

month packed full of fun and exciting activities to increase awareness of the importance of CTE education.

CTSO members and advisers are encouraged to sign a large We Love CTAE banner.



# Veterans High School

## FBLA Activities at VHS

The Veterans High Future Business Leaders Chapter has participated in several socially distanced school activities this fall. The year started with the annual awards program where all of the Business Achievement Award recipients were recognized and presented with certificates and lapel pins. The club congratulated the local chapter members who received the Future Award during the 2019-20 school year. Those who achieved multiple levels of achievement by being awarded both the Business and the Leader Awards last year were also celebrated.



Emily Vinup and Evan Coleman



Landon Wilson



Lindsey Smith

Before the Thanksgiving holiday, students participated in one of their favorite community service activities. The FBLA officers organized a canned food drive and members collected, loaded, and delivered the items. On Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, they took the collected food, filled a grocery cart with the contribution, and helped to “Stuff the Truck” benefitting the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank.



Also, in November, the local FBLA Chapter continued with the spirit of giving by collecting cans of cranberry sauce to support the annual “Feed the City” event. They were able to contribute 100 cans of the seasonal favorite to assist in providing Thanksgiving meals to those in need. FBLA members are looking forward to planning many new opportunities to serve others in the community in 2021.



Kailey Harris and McKenzie Capers



In addition to community outreach, FBLA members have been involved in several school activities, as well. The group is showing their enthusiasm, pictured at left, by wearing club t-shirts on designated FBLA T-shirt Spirit Days. The shirts display this year’s state theme, “Dare to Dream” and were designed by VHS students. Also shown in the pictures, at left, are students in Mrs. Collier’s Entrepreneurship class as they work on one of their custom made personalized Porch Welcome Sign Projects.

Dr. Amy Barbour serves as Principal at Veterans High School. The school is located at 340 Piney Grove Road in Kathleen, Georgia. Dr. Sherry Johnson is CTAE Director. Janet Sheffield and Belinda Collier are FBLA Advisers.



VHS AFJROTC

**VETERANS AFJROTC NOV - DEC 2020 NEWSLETTER**



1 Nov - 31 Dec 2020

November 2020 was a great month for Veterans High School AFJROTC! We focused on finishing our first semester strong in academics, JROTC, and school sports team competitions.

We reflected on the many blessings we are thankful for and took time out to serve and contribute to a local food drive; as well as serve breakfast to our wonderful school faculty, staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals.



★ On 18 Nov 2020, our cadet corps donated 2146 canned and non-perishable food items to feed the hungry in our community. Our corp commander, C/Lt Col Daylin Davis and our vice commander C/Lt Col Kamren Smith led us to exceed our goal by 70%. Cadet Airman Basic Spencer Johnson led the first-year cadets to an amazing average of 46 cans per cadet!



★ Our Drill Team competitions are underway; we are growing stronger as a team—becoming more & more competitive each day.  
 ★ We have many cadets that also wrestle and run cross-country for Veterans High School. Both female/male wrestlers & cross-country runners consistently compete extremely well.

★ Our Raiders team finished the competition season strong by placing in a record of 6 events. We built our Raiders guidon and significantly added to our number of award streamers. We look forward to National competitions in Feb 2021.



**Commander's Corner:** Happy Holidays to our amazing cadet corps! As we enter the holiday season you should know what a tremendous blessing it has been for me to witness the citizenship, leadership development, and community service from each of you. Continue to make us proud and stay safe during the holiday season. We need you back with all your fingers, toes, and teeth. Lol Aim High Cadets! Sincerely, Lt Col Chapman

★ In other news, the AFJROTC Academic Bowl is in team competition. We have made it through the first round of district competitions, now focusing for state competition.  
 ★ Finally, we have started our first-ever ESports team and we are very excited about competing.

## VHS FBLA Showcases CTAE Teachers/Advisers



Veterans High School students did an awesome job designing a bulletin board to showcase VHS CTAE teachers/advisers. The bulletin board showcases the teachers along with their pathways and favorite teacher quotes. The highlight of the board is the border that represents many of the items used in the school's programs to help students become successful.

In addition to showcasing what CTAE does, the board is also used as a recruiting tool to allow students to gain interest in CTAE programs to increase VHS pathway completers.

Pictured above are Alexis Jones and Anyssa Allen, Senior Financial Literacy students from Belinda Collier's class. For more information, contact the Director of Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, David McDermott at 478-988-6222, ext. 3440, or david.mcdermott @hcbe.net.



# Feagin Mill Middle School

## Feagin Mill Middle School FCCLA Students Spread Cheer for Christmas

Feagin Mill Middle School FCCLA chapter members Avery Nolan and Raky Ba teamed up with the school counselors to provide Christmas stockings filled with lots of goodies for those in need. They collected stocking stuffer items from FCCLA members, and purchased some on their own. FMMS is so proud they came up with the project to spread some cheer to those who are less fortunate within the school and community.

FMMS is located at 1200 Feagin Mill Road in Warner Robins, Georgia. Mark Sams serves as Principal and Lisa Duke serves as the FCCLA Adviser. For more information contact the school at (478) 953-0430 or email [lisa.duke@hcbe.net](mailto:lisa.duke@hcbe.net) or [mark.sams@hcbe.net](mailto:mark.sams@hcbe.net).



Pictured, left to right are: Avery Nolan and Raky Ba.



Feagin Mill Middle

Huntington Middle

Mossy Creek Middle

Northside Middle

Perry Middle

Thomson Middle

Warner Robins Middle

Bonaire Middle

## Feagin Mill Middle School Students Soar in FCCLA Cooking Competitions

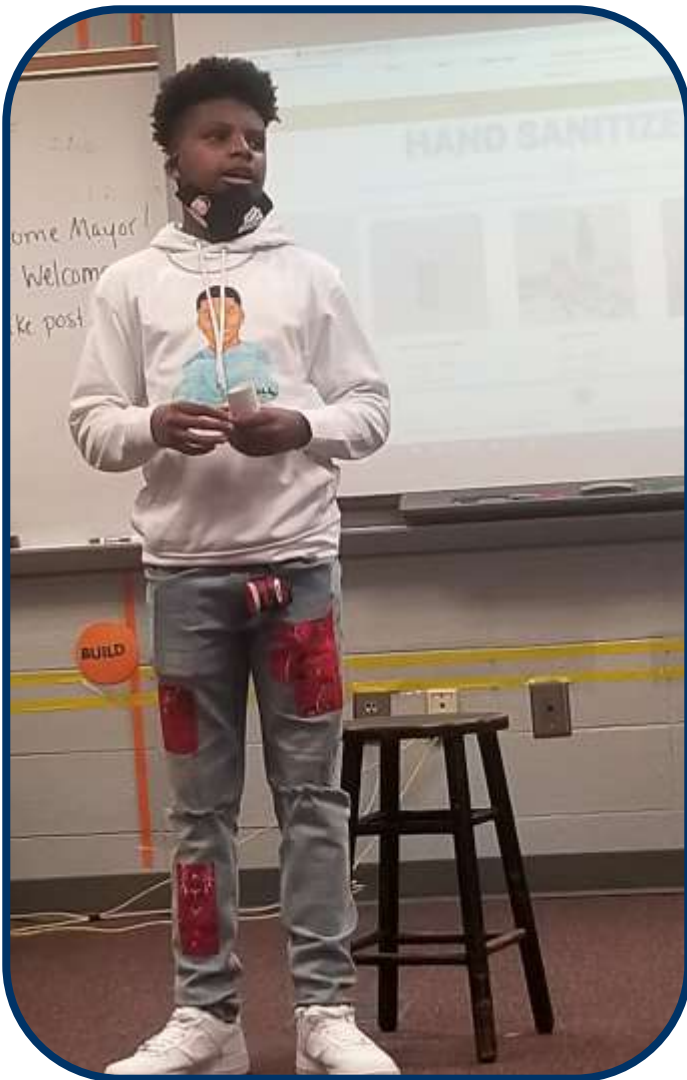
Congratulations to Kara Tarvin for receiving 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the state for the chili competition, and Caden Cook for receiving 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the state for the peanut recipe competition. The students did a great job! Although these competitions had to be changed to virtual this year, they stepped up to the plate and adapted flawlessly. These students put in a lot of time preparing, cooking, videoing, editing etc. to make all of this possible.



## FMMS FBLA Becoming Entrepreneurs

FMMS FBLA has been learning how to be entrepreneurs. One of Feagin Mill Middle School's own 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, Chavis Taylor-Smith, spoke at the chapter's January meeting. Chavis started his own business during the pandemic. He began making soaps and hand sanitizers since many stores were running out of supply. He was featured on 13-WMAZ.

FBLA has been selling keychains at basketball games to raise money for State. Students have been learning the time and effort that goes into a business.



Chavis Taylor-Smith



Shagun Dhanak

## FMMS FCCLA/FACS Collaborates with FFA/Ag to Win 3rd Place in Georgia Organics Competition

The collaboration and team effort in this project earned Feagin Mill Middle 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the state. The Ag classes at FMMS planted and harvested the turnips. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade Ag class was fortunate enough to be one of the classes to plant the seeds sent to them from Georgia Organics. They were able to transplant, water, take care of them, and watch them grow. They changed to FACS class at the perfect time for the second nine weeks to harvest and enjoy their bounty. What a great experience to see the whole process from start to finish with Ag and FACS collaborating. The group activities the students did in FACS started with harvesting the turnips. They compared the turnips bought at the grocery store to the ones grown in their school garden (wow what a difference). The students washed the plants they harvested, and learned how to cut them. They specifically learned how to cut them chiffonade (French word meaning little ribbons). They also had a great time sharing their bounty with some of the faculty and staff. Everyone was so excited to get the fresh from the garden turnips. The classes were also able to participate in their favorite part, the taste test. They were able to taste test the greens (boiled and seasoned) and turnip roots (peeled, diced, and air-fried). They were delicious! Students also learned about the history of turnips, as well as the nutritional value turnips offer. They have learned so much about the importance of knowing where the things they eat come from, supporting our local farmers, and the farm to school concept. They had a blast, learned a lot, and enjoyed some great fresh Georgia grown turnips. Pictured are the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students who participated in the project from the Ag class, and finished in FACS class.



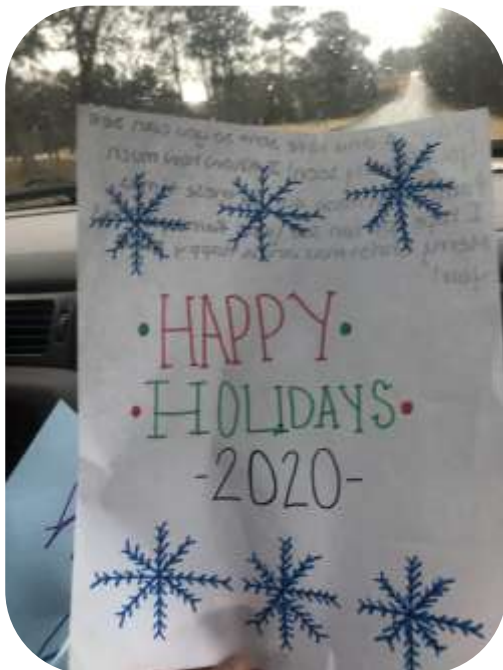
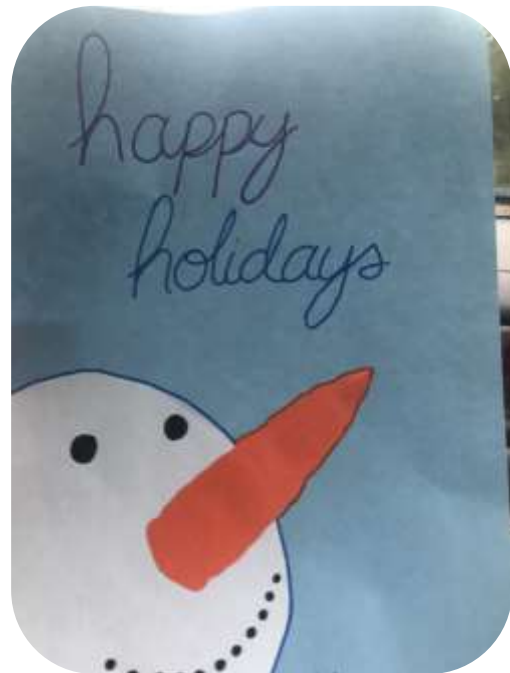
Lisa Duke serves as the FCCLA/  
FACS Adviser and Teacher and James  
Judson is FFA Adviser and Ag  
Teacher. For more information contact  
the school (478) 953-0430,  
[lisa.duke@hcbe.net](mailto:lisa.duke@hcbe.net),  
[james.judson@hcbe.net](mailto:james.judson@hcbe.net), or  
[mark.sams@hcbe.net](mailto:mark.sams@hcbe.net).



# Mossy Creek Middle School

## MCMS FCCLA Shares Christmas Joy

Mossy Creek Middle school's Family Career and Community Leaders of America were able to share some Christmas joy with the community's wisest generation, which is currently living at *LifeSpring Church Home and Rehabilitation Center*. FCCLA members and Family and Consumer Science classes worked on homemade Christmas cards the week before school break to help share love, happiness and cheer over the Christmas/Holiday Season. Over 65 cards were taken and dropped off for the staff to distribute. Below are some examples of the many cards that were shared with these very special people.



## Perry Middle School

### PMS FBLA Brings Home Awards

Education and competition in 2020 and 2021 have presented uncharted obstacles that have been navigated seemingly effortlessly by the FBLA chapter members at Perry Middle School. The 2020-2021 FBLA members showcased their abilities by bringing home 18 awards from the FBLA Region Leadership Conference. Dr. Diana Phillips, FBLA Adviser, expressed her elation by offering accolades to all the winners and participants. Due to COVID restrictions, winners will receive their awards from Region within the next couple of weeks, as they are being shipped from the FBLA State Office. A special, "Thank you!" goes to Dr. Heath Burch for allowing Dr. Phillips to reward her competitors with a lunch from Firehouse Subs since they were unable to attend the conference this year due to COVID.

The place, award, and winner are as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> place for Largest Chapter - Chapter Award; 1<sup>st</sup> place in Business Etiquette - Diem Lindley; 1<sup>st</sup> place in Career Exploration - Evie Bowman; 1<sup>st</sup> place in Employability Skills - Madison Pryde; 1<sup>st</sup> place in FBLA Concepts - Amaya Oliver; 1<sup>st</sup> place in Invention Convention - Brayden Williams; 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Business Concepts - Amaya Oliver; 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Career Exploration - Aubree Dupuis; 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Employability Skills - Lillie Phillips; 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Elevator Speech - August Oliver; 3<sup>rd</sup> place in FBLA Concepts - Camila Arias; 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Marketing Concepts - Evie Bowman; 4<sup>th</sup> place in FBLA Concepts - Lillie Phillips; 4<sup>th</sup> place in Microsoft Office Concepts - Brayden Williams; 4<sup>th</sup> place in Public Speaking - Madison Pryde; 5<sup>th</sup> place in Business Etiquette - Chandler Carter; 5<sup>th</sup> place in FBLA Concepts - Cally Sullivan; and 5<sup>th</sup> place in Marketing Concepts - Chandler Carter.





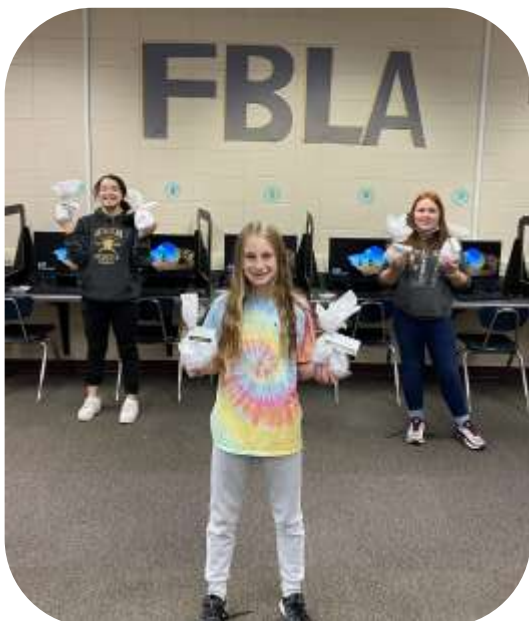
## PMS Expands Learning in Computer Science

The creation of the Computer Science standards have offered many changes in the classroom. Perry Middle School's FBLA Adviser, Dr. Diana Phillips, is showcasing some of the new additions in relation to the standard's changes. The pictures show a project being completed by Dr. Phillips for the students. She created a stencil using the new Glowforge laser and etched motivational comments into pencils for the students. David McDermott, Houston County Board of Education CTAE Director, had these lasers purchased for the Computer Science classrooms to help expand learning in Computer Science. These lasers will give digital creativity a tangible form. A special, "Thank you!" is given to Mike Folsie, Curriculum Integration Specialist, who volunteered his time to help set-up and install the lasers. He further exceeded expectations by offering teacher training on laser use, image importation, image editing, cutting, etching, and much more. Dr. Phillips is so thankful for Mr. McDermott and Mr. Folsie for their dedication to education in Houston County.



## PMS FBLA Appreciates Perry Police Officers

There are a plethora of careers in this world. Some are done for riches, some for position, and others because they make the world a better place. One career that makes our community of Perry a better place is law enforcement. Law enforcement provides employees with long nights, dangerous environments, an essential presence, and the ability to change lives. One officer that is near and dear to the hearts of those at Perry Middle School is Officer Drica Gary with the Perry Police Department. Officer Gary has been at Perry Middle School for two years serving as a School Resource Officer (SRO). She is such a positive presence within the school. Her rapport can be seen with both students and faculty. As a small token of appreciation, for Officer Gary and the other Perry Police Officers, Dr. Diana Phillips, Perry Middle School FBLA Adviser, had her FBLA officers put together 32 goodie bags – one for each officer on patrol. The bags of mints, tissue, peanuts, and lip balm with a tag explaining each item, were delivered to the Perry Police Department on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



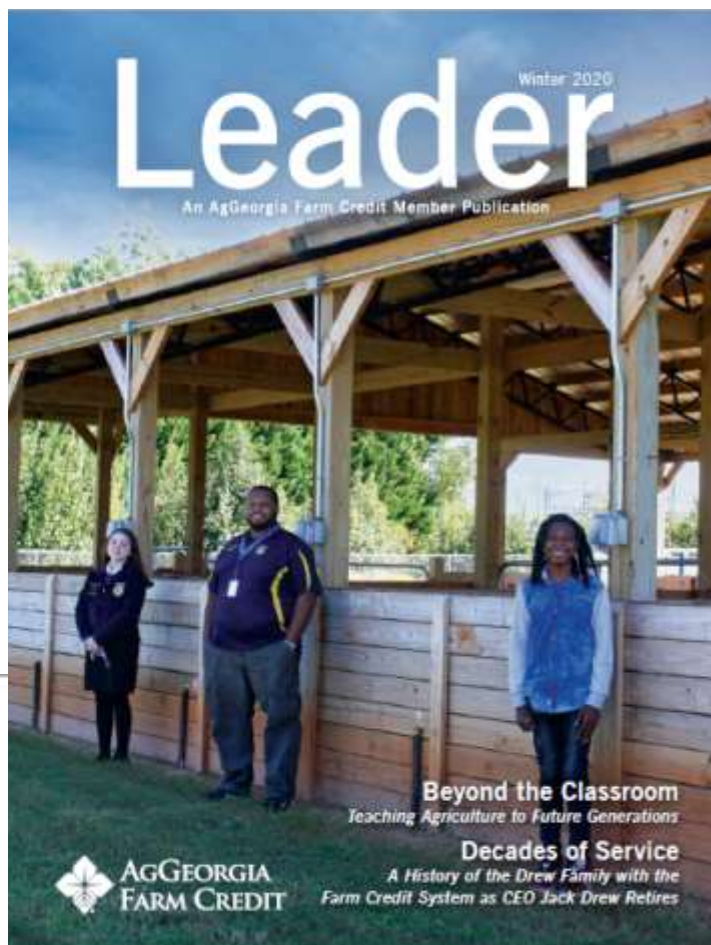
## FBLA Week Celebrated at Perry Middle School

January 11, 2021 through January 15, 2021 was FBLA Week at Perry Middle School. Dr. Diana Phillips, FBLA Adviser, presented members, students, and staff with the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities. These activities included: an FBLA breakfast, goody bags, community service project, spirit wear, and Career Day. Everyone was encouraged to participate in the fun to show their support as they all recognize FBLA.



# Thomson Middle School

TMS Ag Teacher, Kenneth Ford, Featured in Leader Magazine



## Beyond the Classroom

Teaching Agriculture to Future Generations

Article and Photos by Kinsela Shanon



FFA member, Kenneth Ford, with students, Kenneth Clark (left) and Colton Clark.



## TMS Ag Teacher, Kenneth Ford, Featured in Leader Magazine (continued)

“I started at FVSU as an ag engineer, but I didn’t realize how much math you had to do and how much science. My second semester, I quickly made the decision to do ag education and I think that’s been one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.” – Kenneth Ford An old Japanese proverb says, “Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher.” With each generation, that profound statement proves itself to be more and more true. We can probably all remember teachers that had an impact on not only our education but our lives and our future paths. In a day and time when so many opportunities are battling for a student’s attention, it’s refreshing to find that teachers do still give of themselves, share their knowledge and offer themselves as mentors for the students they are responsible for teaching. An example of one such teacher was found at Thomson Middle School in Centerville, Georgia, and personified in Kenneth Ford.

With a strong ag background, Kenneth grew up on a family farm in Early County where peanuts, cotton, soybeans, beef cattle and hogs were grown. His love for ag began early, not only from being raised around it, but it being reinforced with ag teachers. “In high school I had two good ag teachers, Mr. Larry Worsley and Mr. Eric Harris,” Kenneth explained. “I didn’t know anything about FFA at that particular time, but by taking their class I became very interested.” That interest stayed with him and he determined the ag field to be his career choice when he entered Fort Valley State University as a freshman. “I started at FVSU as an ag engineer,” Kenneth said, “but I didn’t realize how much math you had to do and how much science,” he said with a laugh. “My second semester, I quickly made the decision to do ag education and I think that’s been one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.” The students at Thomson Middle are in grades 6-8 and Houston County added FFA as an option to all middle school curriculum. Kenneth has now been teaching for eight years and been at Thomson four years. The FFA program was established at the school two years prior to his arrival with a participation number of 115-120 students. Today, the participation averages about 215 students involved in their FFA program. “It’s considered a connections/vocational, an exploratory type class and is for nine weeks,” he said.

Like Kenneth, some students were not familiar with FFA until an ag teacher made it known to them. That was the case with Thomson’s current FFA President Savannah Clark who had little exposure to agriculture. “I’d never known about FFA until middle school and it was through Mr. Ford’s advertisement. I thought it’d be a good idea for me, and my grandma thought it’d be a good idea too,” she explained. While there are no officers in sixth grade FFA, as Savannah entered seventh, she was elected the chapter’s treasurer and now holds the position of president. She is, according to Kenneth, one of his most versatile students concerning FFA competition. “Savannah is a jack-of-all-trades, competing in floriculture, floral design, nursery landscape and will maybe even be competing in meat judging,” Kenneth said. Savannah is also a member of the band at Thomson.



**Savannah explains the care that is used on the Boston Ferns.**

There are many competitive opportunities for students in any FFA program and the program at Thomson is no different. FFA quiz, reciting the FFA creed, meat judging and poultry judging are a few, but a couple of the most popular at Thomson are Lawnmower Driving and Ag Technology & Equipment ID. In the past three years, Thomson came in the top two for the region and advanced to the state level to compete in Lawnmower Driving. This competition consists of students driving and maneuvering a mower on an obstacle course – middle school drives a mower with a steering wheel, high school uses a zero turn. Also included in the competition is problem solving, such as how to change oil and check tire pressure, along with about 25 multiple choice questions on how to operate the mower safely. The Ag Technology & Equipment ID competition is a practicum, constructing metal and wood items for creating and measuring and can also include electrical wiring. The competition also requires the students to know names for the proper tools and identify them. Their completed project creations are judged for detail, creativity and usefulness among other categories.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some competitions for the 2020-2021 school year will be virtual, the first time ever for the program. Savannah participated in FFA Quiz, along with FFA student, Calvin Clark, who was preparing to compete in the FFA Creed competition. This competition is designed to develop the ability of beginning FFA members to demonstrate their interpretation and self-expression of the FFA Creed by memorization, self-interpretation and self-expression, and gives them experience speaking before a group and communicating effectively. Calvin is a second year FFA member and has spent time with his grandparents who live on a farm in Crisp County. “They grow things like squash, pecans and collard greens,” Calvin stated, “so I like doing that stuff when I would go up there and help them. I realized that FFA was ag.” Calvin is also a member of the National Society of Black Engineers, which is mostly engaged in coding. “We were going to have a robotic competition but it was cancelled due to COVID,” Calvin explained. “I’ve been in it [NSEBE] for 3 years. I enjoy it and [am] really good at it.”

## TMS Ag Teacher, Kenneth Ford, Featured in Leader Magazine (continued)



**A look at the inside of the barn with newly added enhancements.**

The Thomson program also has a livestock program, which is in its second year. A newly constructed livestock barn was a major necessity for the program but also presented a major hurdle. “Middle school levels have to fund raise for pretty much everything,” said Kenneth, adding, “it’s basically working our way up the ladder. Other more established programs already have their donors. We’re like the new kid on the block.” Knowing that the barn would be an advantage to the students participating in that portion of FFA, Kenneth began to reach out to his contacts. He talked to good



**The greenhouse with many of the plants the students**

friend and advisory committee member Rodney Brooks, also a FVSU alumnus and fraternity brother to Ford. “We were working on a project together and just talking about help with the program and the first name he mentioned, he said ‘Have you reached out to AgGeorgia?’ He gave me Mr. Cottle’s contact info [Corey Cottle, Chief Marketing Officer at AgGeorgia Farm Credit] and I feel like he and AgGeorgia were a very big blessing to our program,” Kenneth said. “He did assist us with funding and items needed for the barn.” Along with AgGeorgia’s vital role, Kenneth explained it was an entire community effort. “The barn was built by the Department of Corrections, and funding for the barn came from fund raisers. Flint Energies were a big help, providing two different grants at \$5,000 each. The Optimist Club also got involved, and then a student showing for the first time, their parents put us in contact with someone to concrete the entire barn for us for free. I really appreciate you all and the support [as we] continue to try to grow our program,” Kenneth said. “We’ve had support from the Board of Education, great support from administration and the Board. They support everyone very well in the county especially the ag teachers,” Kenneth said and then added, “We want to get exposure for the program and get the kids involved. We want people to understand some of the great things we have going on at Thomson.”

## TMS Ag Teacher, Kenneth Ford, Featured in Leader Magazine (continued)



**The succulents that are in high demand.**



**Blueberry plants that will be ready to sell this spring.**

The students in the FFA program also have access to their own greenhouse where the kids get hands-on experience. From that project, they have a school plant sale in the fall and spring for the school staff and the community, with the spring being the bigger event. “The students plant all the plants in the green house,” Calvon advised, which includes ferns and succulents, two of the hottest items to sell right now. The students’ duties include not only caring for all the plants but also propagating the succulents. Recently added to the selection are blueberry plants, which will be ready to sell end of March or the beginning of April. David McDermott, Director of Career, Technology & Ag Education (CTAE) also visited with us at the greenhouse and was quick to compliment the program, the students and Kenneth. “The relationships between the FFA teacher and students are what make the difference,” Mr. McDermott commented, adding, “students can see it because Mr. Ford built that relationship.” Kenneth told of one student that he called his biggest success story. “A student here at Thomson was the type to stay in trouble,” Kenneth began, “but he took hold of me and the FFA program. He wound up showing pigs and he’s in high school now. In English class he wrote a letter, some kind of story. He said I inspired him to be an ag teacher and to attend FVSU upon graduating high school. That was a very proud moment for me. From sixth grade to eighth grade was like night and day [in him].” Mr. McDermott agreed and added, “And I think I know the student that Mr. Ford mentioned. I kind of took to him here one day and he was worried that his pig was sick. I went straight over to check it for him. Now when I see him at the shows he comes up and speaks to me but he would’ve never done that had it not been here and had that exposure and had people genuinely care about him. It was just that relationship. Mr. Ford took him aside and asked ‘How can I get you involved here in this program and give you something productive?’” It’s easy to see the pride these two men have in their jobs but more importantly in the students’ lives that they effect. “I know this student’s parents and they’re very appreciative of what Mr. Ford did in middle school,” McDermott said, “and he’s got good ag teachers at the high school. They’ve swept him up and taken him in and moved him to the next level with school. When you build relationships with kids they’re going to want to perform for you. We tell parents to let us help you find your child something to do because if they find themselves something to do it’s probably not going to be productive.”

All that relationship building comes with a major price of a commodity that is so precious to each of us and rarely shared – time. Mr. Ford admitted to the late hours with it being 6-7 o’clock many days before he leaves school. He also admitted to juggling his family which is made up of his wife, who’s an ag teacher in Macon County, and his five children ages 9 to 3, that includes two sets of twins. “They’re sometimes here with me and they love ag,” says Kenneth with a smile and continued, “Savannah’s met my oldest set many times.” He then explained further, “My wife and I met at FVSU. Before she came to Fort Valley she was from New York. She’s an animal science major. We’re a big ag family.” And while the pride for his family and their ag involvement is very evident, his pride for the program and the benefits that have come from it for the students at Thomson is evident as well. “A couple weeks ago I checked my mail box and had gotten a letter from 2 of my former students at ABAC. They’re ag ed majors there and their letters almost brought me to tears. I had no clue those letters were coming. Those things like that make my job worth it. I absolutely love what I do, but when I get those kinds of stories, those kinds of letters, it lets me know I’m doing something right.”

Thomson Middle School is located at 301 Thomson Street in Centerville, Georgia. Dr. Scott Wynn serves as Principal.

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The *Wall of Fame*, is Houston County's monthly Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education newsletter. This is our effort to keep you informed of the many positive activities going on in the Career, Technical, and Agricultural programs of Houston County. Complete details on these newsworthy topics may have already appeared in the local newspapers. The newsletter serves as a short recap of events.

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