

REACH program provides college scholarships to middle school students

By WESLEIGH SAGON
Banks County Middle School awarded five of its eighth-grade students with a \$10,000 REACH Georgia Scholarship.

Students recognized at the scholarship signing day ceremony were: Aidan O'Kelley, Erica Thomas, Tiana Roger, Cole Whitehead and Hunter Reems.

Principal Michael Boyle welcomed guests to the program. "This is the largest award in the Banks County system," stated Boyle. "We appreciate the opportunity to celebrate the success of these fine young men and young women here today."

During the ceremony, guest speaker Hank Ramey, assistant superintendent, spoke to students giving them life advice and then recognized the students receiving this honor.

Students then signed a contract accepting the scholarship. Ramey explained to students their obligations and responsibilities before it was signed.

Students must maintain a 2.5 grade point average in academic classes, remain drug and alcohol free and continue to have good attendance and behavior.

Each student will be assigned a mentor which they are required to meet with twice a month. The students will also have an academic coach who will meet with them once a month. Students are encouraged to attend REACH program events and activities.

During the program, parents and guardians also



Photos by Wesleigh Sagon
Five Banks County Middle School students were selected to receive a \$10,000 scholarship check during the REACH Georgia Scholarship Signing Day Ceremony. Shown are: (L-R) Aidan O'Kelley, Erica Thomas, Tiana Roger, Cole Whitehead, Hunter Reems and principal Michael Boyle.

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Erica Thomas

pledged to support the students throughout the process. Ramey stated that the money will go into an account where students will receive \$2,500 each year for four years totaling \$10,000 while enrolled in a Georgia college.

Ramey also said that students are still eligible for the HOPE Scholarship and other scholarships as well.

REACH Georgia was launched on Feb. 6, 2012,

at the Georgia Institute of Technology with funding from AT&T. Over the years the program has grown and many sponsors have awarded \$350,000 in student scholarships annually.

Students expressed their gratitude and appreciation as a 2021 REACH Georgia scholarship recipient.

Erica Thomas, who received the Hoyt and Ruth Parson Phi Delta Eastern Star Reach Scholarship, said, "I feel like it's a really exciting opportunity because it's not every day that someone gives you \$10,000. It's even more exciting that I'm in the eighth grade getting this opportunity before I even start high school."

Tiana Roger received the ETM Memorial Reach Scholarship.

"I am grateful because there are a lot of students that could have received the scholarship," she said. "Only five were selected out

of 12 students who signed up for the interview."

Aidan O'Kelley, who received the Banks County Republican Party Reach Scholarship stated, "I feel really happy that I received this scholarship because it was a lot of competition to go up against. I am glad I was able to get it especially since I was quarantined when I had to do my interview."

Hunter Reems and Coal Whitehead also expressed their appreciation as the scholarship will help them to earn a degree in technology. Reems received the HBC Roofs Reach Scholarship and Whitehead received the Commerce Country Café Reach Scholarship.

Principal Michael Boyle then congratulated students on their accomplishments and closed the ceremony and invited guests to celebrate at the reception honoring its scholars.

Christmas activities planned across the county

By ANGELA GARY
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The arrival of December means Christmas activities are planned across Banks County.

Visits with Santa, parades, s'mores, arts and crafts and Christmas tree lightings are among the plans.

BALDWIN

Friday, December 3, is Baldwin's Tree Lighting at 6 p.m. at Mitchell Gailey Park. "Come enjoy a cup of hot cocoa, cookies and pictures with Santa and celebrate the Christmas season with friends and family," organizers state.

LULA

In Lula, Christmas in the Park will be held on Saturday, December 4, at 4 p.m. with a parade planned at 6 p.m.

MAYSVILLE

Christmas in the Park in Maysville will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4, at Veterans Park.

There will be vendors, hot chocolate, s'more roasting, boiled peanuts, music and inflatables.

The Maysville Community Club is sponsoring the event.

HOMER

The town of Homer will host a "Gingerbread Christmas" which will include a parade and Christmas tree lighting on Saturday, December 11, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Organizers say the event will also include photos with Santa, cookie and ornament decorating, inflatables, free hot dogs and gingerbread cookies, craft vendors, live Nativity, and entertainment.

For parade or vendor information, call 705-677-3510 or email tking@townofhomer.org

GILLSVILLE

Christmas in Gillsville will be offered Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 11-12, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in downtown Gillsville. The free family event will include visits with Santa, a movie, smores, crafts and prizes. Santa will arrive at 6 p.m.

Sydney Segars Real Estate is sponsoring the event.

BOE approves personnel items

By SHARON HOGAN
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The Banks County Board of Education approved two personnel matters at its Nov. 15 meeting

Those items were hiring Kelly Szatkowski, school food nutrition assistant for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year; and Kurstyn A. Fry (pending background check and ability to obtain paraprofessional license), paraprofessional for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year.

The BOE also approved the following items:

- 2022 BOE meeting dates.
- resolution verifying the November 2, 2021, election returns approving the ELOST resolution.
- applications for Facilities Use: Banks County Public Library to utilize the BCPS Gymnasium for Family Nights at the Arts (Vibrant Community Grant), the third Thursdays, November 2021-May 2022; Banks County Public Library to utilize BCPS bus ramp and picnic tables for Prime Time Family Reading Time Program, April and May, 2022; S3DA Archery to utilize BCHS 2.0 Gymnasium for Indoor State Archery Tournament, February 19, 2022; and Banks County Public Library to utilize BCES Gymnasium for Family Night at the Arts Program, May 19, 2022.
- Field Trip Requests: BCMS FFA to visit Georgia National Fair Cattle/Goat Show, Perry, October 7-10, 2021; BCMS FFA to visit Georgia National Fair Pig Show, Perry, October 14-16, 2021; BCMS FFA to visit State Livestock Show, Perry, February 23-26, 2022; BCMS FFA to visit State Forestry Field Day, Swainsboro, April 13-14, 2022; and BCMS FFA to visit State FFA Convention, Macon, April 27-30, 2022.
- Project Requests: BCMS PBIS to sponsor purchase of candy grams, November 29, 2021-February 14, 2022; BCHS Beta Club to sponsor face painting booth at Homer Christmas Festival, December 11, 2021; BCHS Automotive 515 to sponsor sale of raffle tickets for a complete brake job and oil change with tire rotation, November 5-26, 2021; BCES SPED Resource to sponsor coffee and sunshine cart on Fridays, January 5-May 27, 2022; and BCES SPED Resource to sponsor sale of handmade ornaments, November 19-December 8, 2021.

In other business at the monthly meeting:

- superintendent Ann Hopkins advised, depending on COVID-19 numbers, student recognitions during the monthly BOE meetings are set to resume in February 2022.
- assistant superintendent Hank Ramey advised the BCHS track re-surfacing project has been done and striping is coming up.
- Ramey also reported the warranty work on the playing surface of the tennis courts is currently being done.

Community Brotherhood to meet Dec. 5 at Homer United Methodist

Community Brotherhood will be held on Sunday, December 5, at 7:30 a.m. in the Don Stewart Hall at Homer United Methodist Church for a monthly breakfast and program. The speaker will be Ja'Quon Chamblee, a deputy with the Banks County Sheriff's Office. Spouses are welcome to attend the December meeting, along with their husbands.



PRESENTS THANKSGIVING PROGRAM

Mrs. Jessica's Pilgrims and Mrs. Carissa's Indians classes put on a Thanksgiving program on Nov. 19 at Homer Baptist Preschool. They performed "Here's the Pumpkin," "5 Fat Turkeys Are We," "1 Little 2 Little 3 Little," "We Love Turkey," "5 Big Turley Sitting On a Gate," "This is The Way, Gobble, Gobble, Gobble" and "Hello Mr. Turkey."

MAILING LABEL



100TH WIN AS A COACH

Coach Steve Shedd earned his 100th win as a basketball coach. He is shown with the Lady Leopards after the win. See story and more photos on page 5A.

Photo by Randy Crump