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Education

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Upward Bound funding safe for another year

■ Flat level of funding may still equal problems for the program

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — Educators and students who have seen impressive results from the Upward Bound program in Choctaw County will not have to fight for funding next year, if President

Bush's FY 2008 budget is approved.

For the first time in three years, the proposed budget set down by the President for education spending does not call for the elimination of the TRIO programs that include Upward Bound and Talent Search — programs that encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter and complete their college educations.

The President's FY 2008 budget funds the programs with \$828.2 million, the same amount as the 2006 appropriations.

Accurate appropriations for FY 2007 have not yet been approved by Congress. However, on February 14, one day before a

temporary funding resolution was set to expire, the U.S. Senate voted 81-15 to keep the federal government running for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2007 by passing a \$463.5 billion temporary measure. The resolution was necessary because the 109th Congress failed to pass nine of the eleven annual appropriations bills that were necessary to fund the government for 2007 before they adjourned in December. President Bush signed the measure into law on February 15.

The temporary resolution sets aside \$57.5 billion for the U.S. Department of Education for 2007, with appropriations remaining unchanged for

most programs — including Upward Bound.

With threats of elimination of the program over the past few years, local Upward Bound proponents have flooded Congressional leaders with letters and phone calls asking for a re-funding for the program, which provides incentives for students in poverty-stricken rural areas like Choctaw County to pursue their educations despite obstacles. Last year, over 900 letters in support of the program were sent to legislators from Choctaw County and the surrounding area alone.

Each year, local students from Choctaw and parts of Washington counties are involved in the

program through Alabama Southern Community College. To date, the program has helped hundreds of students who might not otherwise have attended college to pursue and complete their college degrees.

If the President's FY 2008 budget is approved by Congress, Upward Bound and the other TRIO programs will be funded for at least one more year. Yet, with appropriations remaining the same for the past several years, educators connected with the programs may have another fight on their hands.

With state increases in teacher salaries, the program in Choctaw and other areas has suffered

strain to meet the financial requirements to pay faculty members. In addition to mandated salary increases, the cost of materials, field trips, and other expenses incurred by the program keeps going up, while funding remains the same.

"It's great that the President did not try to cut funding altogether," says Upward Bound Director Angie Williams of ASCC. "But we need an increase; we've haven't seen one in over 3 years. Our budget is straining at the seams. We need an increase in funding, or we will lose people."

"We may not have to fight one fight," she adds, "but we still need to fight another one."

Emily Harry earns first-ever Billie Gilliland Scholarship

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

PENNINGTON — Patrician Academy graduate Emily Harry was recently named the first recipient of a scholarship given in memory of well-known rural healthcare advocate, the late Billie Gilliland.

Gilliland, who was killed in an automobile accident on July 8, 2004, was an avid proponent of rural healthcare and was active in the recruitment of physicians and other professionals for the Butler area. The Billie Gilliland Memorial Scholarship Fund was set up following her death as a way to continue her effort to promote quality healthcare in this area. The annual scholarship fund is designed to assist local students who will be pursuing healthcare professions as careers.

As a student at the University of West Alabama, Harry is currently pursuing a degree



Photo courtesy Fleming Photography
Emily Harry

in nursing.

A 2006 graduate of Patrician, Harry received many honors for her academic excellence during her high school years. She was a member of the National Beta Club, and was named to the National Honor Roll and Who's Who Among Amer-

ican High School Students.

Her other accomplishments include many honors for her athletic ability. Her softball talents earned her a position on the AISA State All-Tournament Team, Honorable Mention on the Alabama Sports Writers' Team, and a member of the Choctaw Sun's All-County Softball Team for 2006. At Patrician, she received awards as Best Defensive Player, Best Offensive Player, and the Leadership/Captain Award.

As she prepared to graduate from Patrician, Harry was a sought-after athlete, receiving offers to play softball for several colleges and universities, including Bishop State, Alabama Southern Community College, and the University of West Alabama.

Harry is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Harry, and the granddaughter of Nelda Nix and Verna Jo Harry.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

'Big Mac' writing workshop at SCES

GILBERTOWN -- Fifth grade teacher Emily Martin led parents and students toward better writing skills during the 'Big Mac' Writing Workshop held at Southern Choctaw Elementary last Thursday evening. The students, along with their parents, learned skills that they can use to write more creatively and even tried their new skills out with some paragraphs of their own. The night ended with a hamburger supper for the attendees.

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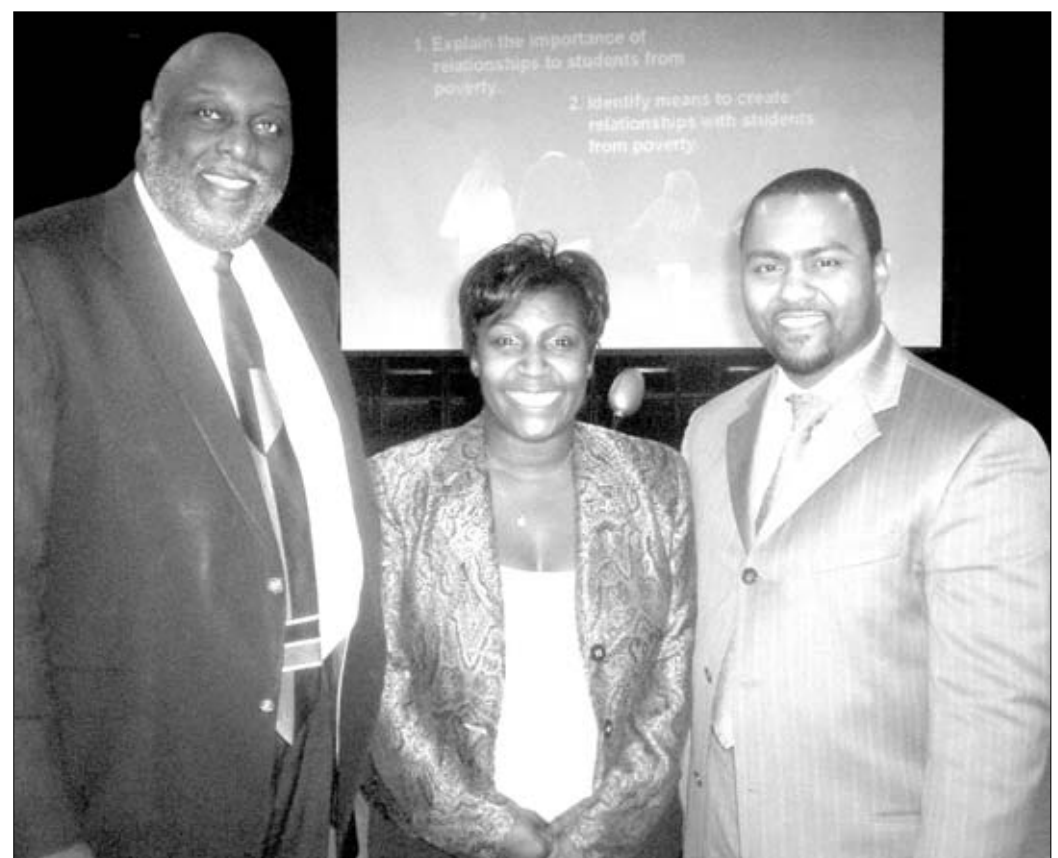


Photo by Sherry Taylor

Consultants present professional development session at CCES

BUTLER — Choctaw County public schools held a professional development day on Friday. With students out of school for the day, faculty and staff members participated in continuing education workshops. At Choctaw County Elementary, consultant and presenter Felicia Johnson, pictured in center, along with Timothy Bourne (right), presented a session entitled 'A Framework for Understanding Poverty'. Pictured on left is CCES Principal A. Wayne Longmire.

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