

## The high cost of dropping out

■ High school drop-outs potentially cost local economy \$3.7 million+

By Dee Ann Campbell  
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN – When they don't finish, everyone pays – and it's potentially costing Choctaw County over \$3 million.

Every day in the United States, about 7,000 students drop out of high school, and according to the Alliance for Excellent Education 2007 (AEE), more than 12 million will quit over the next 10 years. It is a decision that some 1.19 million students made last year.

Yet, their decision not to earn their diplomas not only affects their own future, but the future of the national, state, and local economy.

According to a study by the AEE released last month, the cost of students dropping out of high school is enormous. In fact, the study shows that if the 1.19 million students who dropped out last year had completed their education, \$309 billion in wages would have been added to the U.S. economy over the course of their lives.

The study based its data on research by Cecilia Rouse, a professor of economics and public affairs at Princeton University. Rouse's research shows that each dropout costs the national economy approximately \$260,000 over his or her lifetime. Using Rouse's data, the EES study calculated the monetary benefits each state would have gained over the lifetimes of just one year's dropouts – if those students had graduated.

North Dakota would have seen its economy increase by the least amount – \$425 million. At the upper end, California's economy would have gained an additional \$36 billion over the lifetime of one graduating class.

According to the Alabama Department of Education, the state has a dropout rate of about 13%, although some estimates place it much higher, up to 38%. Using the ALSDE estimate, if students who dropped out in one graduating class had earned their diplomas, the state could have added about \$3 billion to its economy.

Last year, Choctaw County schools posted a projected dropout rate of about 7.26% (not an annual rate), among a student population of just over 2,000. By calculation using the estimated \$260,000 per student, if those dropouts would stay in school, they would potentially add another \$3.7 million to the local economy over their lifetimes.

The estimates, however, do not take into account the money saved from reductions in the numbers of citizens who are enrolled in social programs like welfare and food stamps.

In addition to lost taxable wages, high school dropouts cost the local, state, and national economy in other ways as well. Statistics show that those who do not finish high school are more likely to be teenage par-

ents, more likely to commit crimes, and more likely to need state-assisted healthcare.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, dropping out of high school has a long list of negative outcomes, both economic and otherwise. For example, the median income of high school dropouts age 18 and over was \$12,184 in 2003 (the last date on record), compared to a median income of those age 18 and over who completed high school (including a General Educational Diploma, or GED) was \$20,431. Dropouts are also less likely to be in the labor force than those with a high school degree or higher, and if they are in the labor force, they are more likely to be unemployed on a regular basis.

In terms of health, dropouts over the age of 24 tend to report being in worse health than adults who are not dropouts, according to the U.S. Department of Education – costing the state millions of dollars each year in healthcare costs for non-insured families.

Dropouts also make up higher percentages of the nation's prison and death row inmates.

By contrast, those who earn their diplomas typically bring in much more than the obvious economic gains to an area. They are more likely to be productive workers, more likely to earn higher wages, and more likely to pay more taxes. And to add to the economic benefits, a more educated workforce typically means more businesses will be attracted to an area.

The impact of high school dropouts on the economy was echoed recently in statements made by the Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke.

"A substantial body of research demonstrates that investments in education and training pay high rates of return both to individuals and to the society at large," Bernanke stated. "That research also suggests that workers with more education are better positioned to adapt to changing demands in the workplace."

Bernanke also urged legislators to take actions that would focus on education and job training.

"By increasing opportunity and capability, we help individuals and families while strengthening the nation's economy as well," he said.

Although the numbers are still high, national, state, and local efforts to lower the dropout rate have resulted in more positive news in the past few years. Since 1972, rates have trended downward from 6.1% in 1972 to 4.7% in 2004, according to NCES data. Still, about 5 out of every 100 students enrolled in high school in 2003 left school before the next year without completing a high school program.

In Alabama, the numbers of students who are graduating has increased slightly since 2001. About 2.9% more of the student population graduated in the state in 2004 than in the four years before.

Throughout Alabama, efforts are being made to lower the rate for the state as a whole, and for Choctaw County, the dropout rate is projected to remain lower than the state average over the next 4 years. If the projected rates come to fruition, the larger numbers of graduates will spell good news for local students – and for the local economy.

Even with small increases in the numbers of students who stay in school, the impact of just a handful of new graduates on the local economy would be significant.

## Sun Country Calendar

There is no charge to list an upcoming non-profit or charitable event for your church, school, civic group, fire department, etc. Meetings of governmental entities may also be included. Send your announcement as far in advance as possible. Calendar items may be mailed, faxed, emailed, delivered in person to our offices in Butler or Gilbertown, or left in our drop box at The Country Corner in Butler.

**Every Tuesday and Thursday**  
CHOCTAW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER After-School Programs, from 4-6 p.m. Adult computer classes every Tuesday, beginning Feb. 27.

**Every Sunday**  
CHOCTAW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER hosts Choctaw vs. Marengo Basketball Shoot-Out, 2:30-5:30 p.m. Admission \$1.

**Through Friday, March 2nd**  
BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM, Morning Star Baptist Church, Ala. Hwy. 17N, Butler, 7 p.m. each night. Sponsored by the Indian Springs Branch of the NAACP. Rev. O.L. Sealey President, Bro. Frank Rogers, Vice President.

**Thursday, March 1st thru June 30th**  
THE 2007 JOSHUA VICTORY ASSEMBLY Ministers and Youth Ministers are taking applications for basketball and volleyball. If you and your children want to sign up – which will run from March 1 to June 30 at the Drop Inn Center, come by between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, or all day Tuesday and Wednesday. Ages 6 years to adults. For more information contact Pastor Thomas L. Jackson at 24290 Highway 10, 205-654-2254, 205-654-2624 or 205-654-2222.

**Sat., March 3rd - Sun., March 4th**  
CHOIR DAY, St. Thomas AME Zion Church, 6:30 p.m. Saturday, 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. All choirs, groups and soloists are invited. Sis. Mary Law, Choir President, Rev. Charles Phillips, Pastor.

**Saturday, March 3rd**  
RELAY FOR LIFE ROADBLOCK, Lisman. All proceeds go to the American Cancer Society.

SPRIT OF LUKE FOUNDATION, free medical screenings, free food, free medicine, free clothes! Games for the children! NO COST TO ANYONE. Gilbertown Sr. Citizens Nutrition Center, 10 a.m.

SINGING EXTRAVAGANZA, Slater C.M.E. Church, located on Slater Landing Road (off Ararat Road), 6 p.m. Fish and hotdogs will be served, everything is FREE. All groups, choirs and soloists are invited. Marjorie Bonds, Pastor.

HORSE SHOW, 1 p.m., Choctaw Co. Saddle Club Arena (three miles west of Butler on Hwy. 10) Butler. Timed events will start immediately following gaited and western classes. For more information call Dale Allen at 205-459-3245 or Pete Gibson at 251-843-5262.

DAV monthly meeting, 4 p.m. at Mitchell Helton DAV Building, East Smith Street, Butler (next to South Alabama Gas behind old CCHS).

**Sunday, March 4th**  
ALABAMA NEW SOUTH COALITION of Choctaw County, 2007 meeting, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Yantley, 5 p.m. All members and non-members are invited.

FIRST UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH on Bobwhite Road in Silas is changing their service times. Beginning March 4, Sunday morning services will be held at 10:30 Sunday school a.m. and Evangelistic services at 6:30 p.m. Thursday night Bible Study will remain at 7 p.m.

25th ANNUAL CHOIR DAY, Church of God Pentecostal, 1:30 p.m. Elder Sherwood Bradford will be the speaker. All choirs, groups and soloists are invited. Sis. Essie Ezell, Choir President.

SINGING, featuring the Golden Bells from Bailey, MS, 7 p.m., Bethel Temple of Prayer, 1709 Ala. Hwy. 17; a benefit program for Allayne Smith whose leg was amputated. For information call 205-459-3096 or 205-459-4560.

MATRON'S DAY PROGRAM, Goodwill Missionary Baptist Church, 3 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rev. Michael Howard, the choir and congregation of Truelight Baptist Church in Mobile. Rev. Robert L. Jackson, Pastor, Sis. Bobbie Jackson, President, and Sis. Elizabeth Coker, Vice President.

**Tuesday, March 6th**  
CLEAN SWEEP meeting, to organize a county-wide clean-up day for Choctaw County, 7 p.m., Gilbertown Town Hall. All fire departments, teachers, churches, civic groups, elected officials, and concerned citizens are urged to be present. The CLEAN SWEEP DAY is planned for Sat., March 31st. For more information call Tommy Campbell at 251-843-6397.

**Wed., March 7th – Sat., March 10th**  
MUSICAL CHOIR WORKSHOP, Gooden Hill Missionary Baptist Church, 6 p.m. nightly. The Workshop will climax with a concert on Saturday, March 10 at 6 p.m. The workshop presenter will be Kenneth Braxton, Minister of Music First Missionary Baptist Church, Biloxi, MS. Registration is \$10 for adults and \$5 for youth ages 5-18. For more information contact Essie Landrum (334) 736-4288 or Victor Johnson (205) 398-3037. Rev. Bobby Johnson, Pastor.

**Thursday, March 8th**  
SILENT AUCTION AND GUMBO/POTATO SOUP SOCIAL GATHERING, A Secret Safe Place for Newborns 2nd Annual Fundraiser Auction, Gumbo Gathering. Sponsored by District Attorney Spencer B. Walker, Chatom Community Center, 6-8 p.m. Children are welcome. Call 251-847-2070 or 251-275-3144 to reserve tickets, or pick them up at First United Security Bank in Gilbertown. All donations of items for auction will be appreciated. Auction items will include trips, gift certificates, home decor and much more.

**Friday, March 9th**  
CHOCTAW CO. ASSOCIATION OF VOL FIRE DEPARTMENTS, Butler Fire Hall, annual meeting to elect officers, 7 p.m.

See CALENDAR, page 3A



## Jail Log

**Driving with a revoked driver's license, expired tag, public intoxication** – Edgar Joe Barber, 52, Canary Road, Needham, arrested on 2/22/07 by Lovette and Gates. Released after paying fines.

**Shooting into an occupied vehicle, hunting violation** – Leon Collins, 57, 329 Jim Richardson Road, Leroy, arrested on 2/22/07 by Lolley.

**Possession of forged instrument (2nd degree), failure to appear, speeding, no driver's license, no proof of insurance,**

**speeding** – Brian Tyrone Curtis, 221 Violet Drive, Thomasville, arrested on 2/27/07 by Lafferty. Released after paying fines.

**DUI** – Michael T. Hammard, address and age not listed, arrested on 2/26/07 by judge's order.

**Unlawful possession of marijuana (2nd degree), possession of a pistol without a permit** – Marcus Jones, 22, 609 East Fulton Street, Demopolis, arrested on 2/23/07 by Skinner and Gates. Released on bond.

**Criminal trespass (3rd**

**degree)** – Danielle Leshea Johnson, 22, 6111 Vanity Fair Drive, Apt. 5A, Butler, arrested on 2/27/07 by Jackson and Adams.

**Minor in possession of alcohol, open beverage container violation** – Coby Allen Schooner McIntyre, 18, 413 West Pushmataha, Butler, arrested on 2/24/07 by Pinkerton and Miller.

**Alias warrant (Gilbertown Police Department)** – Marieo Lacora Reed, 24, 367 Skyland Road, Lisman, arrested on 2/27/07 by Gilliland. Released after paying fines due.



## Obituaries

### Tommy Leo Scruggs, Sr.

WOMACK HILL – Funeral services for Tommy Leo Scruggs, 87, were held on Feb. 24, 2007 at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Womack Hill with Pastor Rayford Matthews officiating. Interment was in Little Place Cemetery in Womack Hill.

Deacon Scruggs was inducted into the U.S. Army on August 5, 1942 at Fort Benning, Georgia. His Army Specialty was Airplane Mechanic. He was decorated with the Good Conduct Medal. Due to health reasons, he was honorably discharged from on March 20, 1944.

Survivors include four sons, Tommy Scruggs, Jr., Frederick Scruggs, Sr., Ronnie Scruggs and Billy Scruggs; four daughters, Florene, Shirley, Brendly, and Dinah; 19 grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren.

### Richard Galen Lucas

PENNINGTON – Funeral services for Richard Galen Lucas were held Feb. 28, 2007 at Ebenezer Baptist Church with Rev. Steve

Bruce and Rev. Randy Burns officiating. Interment was in Ebenezer Cemetery.

Lucas, 55, died at home on February 26. He was a construction pipefitter.

Survivors include his wife, Gail McIlwain Lucas, of Pennington; his mother, Fannie Lou Smith, of Toxey; step-father, Allen Smith, of Toxey; a daughter Emily (Tommy) Jenkins, of Needham; two stepsons, Kelly McKenzie of Pennington, and Tony McKenzie of Birmingham; a brother Larry (Cindy) Lucas, of Toxey; two sisters, Donna (James) Murphy, of Aquilla, Debbie (Charles) Pikeville, TN; two grandchildren and three step-grandchildren.

Pallbearers were Scottie Lucas, Colby Austin, Marlon Lucas, Raymond Young, and Ronnie McKenzie. Bumpers Funeral Home in Butler was in charge of the arrangements.

### Arthur William Beard

GILBERTOWN – Funeral services for Arthur William Beard were held Feb. 22, 2007 from the chapel of Phillips Funeral Home in Gilbertown with Rev. Leon Ross, Rev.

Doug Chapman, and Rev. Michael Boutwell officiating. Interment was in Barrytown Cemetery.

Beard, 52, died on Feb. 19, 2007 at Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian, MS.

Beard was a member of Chapel Hill Baptist Church and served in the Army National Guard for seven years.

Survivors include his wife Sybil Abston Beard, of Gilbertown; one son, Greg (Karrie) Beard of Souwilpa; one daughter, Jennifer (Mike) Beard Thompson, of Chapel Hill, and six grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his adoptive parents George and Connie Beard.

Pallbearers were Donnie Landress, Steve Landress, Scott Pickens, Gary Landress, Danny Brunner, and Ted Abston. Honorary pallbearers were James Pickens, Roy Landress, James Abston, Don Abston, Joe Bozone, Billy May, Maurice Abston, Tony Abston, Shirley Pickens, Ben Lewis, Nellie Landress, and Ruth Merchant.

Phillips Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.