

Education



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New library technology means more avenues for learning for local students

By Dee Ann Campbell
 The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — “Everything on our shelves is automated now,” says Southern Choctaw Elementary librarian Katie Barefield. “It’s so different from when we were students.”

The days of the large filing cabinets that made up the Card Catalog are long over for libraries across the country. Whether they are large public libraries or small libraries in schools, computer technology has replaced the former hand-written check-out system.

And now, that technology is going a giant step further. Today, libraries can offer access to books and information like never before, along with computerized cataloging that provides at-the-fingertip availability of literature on a scale that has never been seen before.

Like other school libraries, the SCES library has long been using computer technology to track and catalog books. But today, the school is implementing the more advanced Follett system, moving from the older Athena system that has been used over the past few years. The new program will allow more access, more availability of materials, and more avenues for learning for the SCES students.

“This program is wonderful,” says Barefield. “We’ve had it for a little while, but we are now getting all of our books put into the system so we can have it up and running in the near future.”

Although the new technology promises to be a substantial improvement over the older system, the work to implement Follett has been tremendous.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell
 For many students at SCES, as well as other schools, the library is the place to be, and with the new technology now available, they have a much greater access to literature.

“We started this about 2 weeks ago,” says Barefield. “We’ve been working almost non-stop to get all of our books into the system. The kids are helping, too.”

“We have between 3000 and 5000 books in the library altogether,” she adds. “We’re making progress. We’ve already put in over 500 books, but we have a long way to go.”

In addition to the new Follett system, the Choctaw County Board of Education recently pur-

chased the Accelerated Reader Enterprise program for the school system. According to Barefield, the program allows the students to have access to more than 95,000 Accelerated Reader tests through their website, and for those books that are not listed, the library can simply create their own tests.

“This also gives us the option to add vocabulary tests instead of just the tests on the books themselves,” says Barefield.

“It’s wonderful.”

The Accelerated Reader program is currently being used in all local schools to promote reading by granting points for each book read. Students must complete the computerized AR test on the book before earning the points.

According to Barefield, students at SCES are using the AR program in large numbers.

“Our Kindergarten through 5th grade students love to read,” she

explains. “There are fewer in the 6th grade who read regularly, but the little ones think the library is the place to be.”

Points awarded for AR books at SCES can earn the students distinctions in several categories. For 100 or more points, the students earn the right to belong to the ‘Big Chief’ club (50 points for Kindergarteners). At 50 to 99 points, students are designated as ‘Squaws’ and ‘Braves’.

Barefield adds that she is currently working to promote more reading among the older students, and also to encourage all students to read more non-fiction works.

“The kids love to read fiction,” she explains. “We are trying to encourage them to read more non-fiction, too, because they contain information that these kids need to know.”

Students at SCES are given access to the library on a set schedule, with time allotted to each classroom. According to Barefield, the schedule gives every child the opportunity to go to the library for at least a few minutes every week.

In addition to checking out books, the students are exposed to other avenues of learning in the library, including story-time that reinforces what they are learning in the classrooms.

“The teachers give me lists of different subjects that they are covering,” Barefield explains. “I may read them a story that adds to that subject. I may do something on geography for the 4th or 5th grade, or work on phonics with the Kindergarteners. I also try to help the older students with copyright rules and other research information.”

The libraries in local public schools have recently completed surveys promoted by the

Alabama Black Belt Superintendents Committee (ABBSC) to determine what each facility needs in order to bring them up to SACS standards. The ABBSC, along with Senator Hank Sanders, is working to garner funds to provide for such needs in each school library in the Black Belt region.

“Several things are needed to get us up to that standard,” Barefield explains. “We need projectors for the library, for example. We have projectors, but they are being used in the classrooms.”

Another piece of state-of-the-art technology that may soon be coming to the libraries of local public school is the InfoCenter program that will allow students to check to see if a particular book is in the library from a computer within their own classroom. The program would not only interface between classrooms and that school’s library, but will also allow each school to interface with each other to see if a certain book is available anywhere within the school system.

“We’re still working on this,” Barefield says. “If we can get this up and running, it will mean that these students can have access to books that are not just here in this library.”

And access to books, she adds, is the key to opening doors of knowledge to young people.

“I tell the kids here that the more you read, the more you learn,” she says. “The more you read, the smarter you are going to be.”

“You’d really be surprised that this library is the only source of literature for some of these students,” she adds. “Many of them do not have exposure to books at home. But they get it here.”

Cox takes honors in state literature contest

BUTLER — Patrician Academy 8th grader Courtney Cox has been awarded second place in the state in the 2007 Letters About Literature contest.

Sponsored by the Alabama Center for the Book and Target Stores, the contest is a national reading-writing competition for students in grades 4 through 12, with entrants divided among 3 age categories that include 4th-6th grades, 7th-8th grades, and 9th-12th grades. In order to enter the competition, students must write a personal letter to an author, living or dead, from any genre of literature — whether fiction, nonfiction, contemporary or classic — explaining how the author’s work changed the way the student thinks about the world or about themselves.

Courtney’s letter, which was written to Nancy Drew series author Carolyn Keene, was



Courtney Cox

judged along with those of other 7th and 8th graders throughout the state, with more than 450 letters submitted for entry in the three age categories.

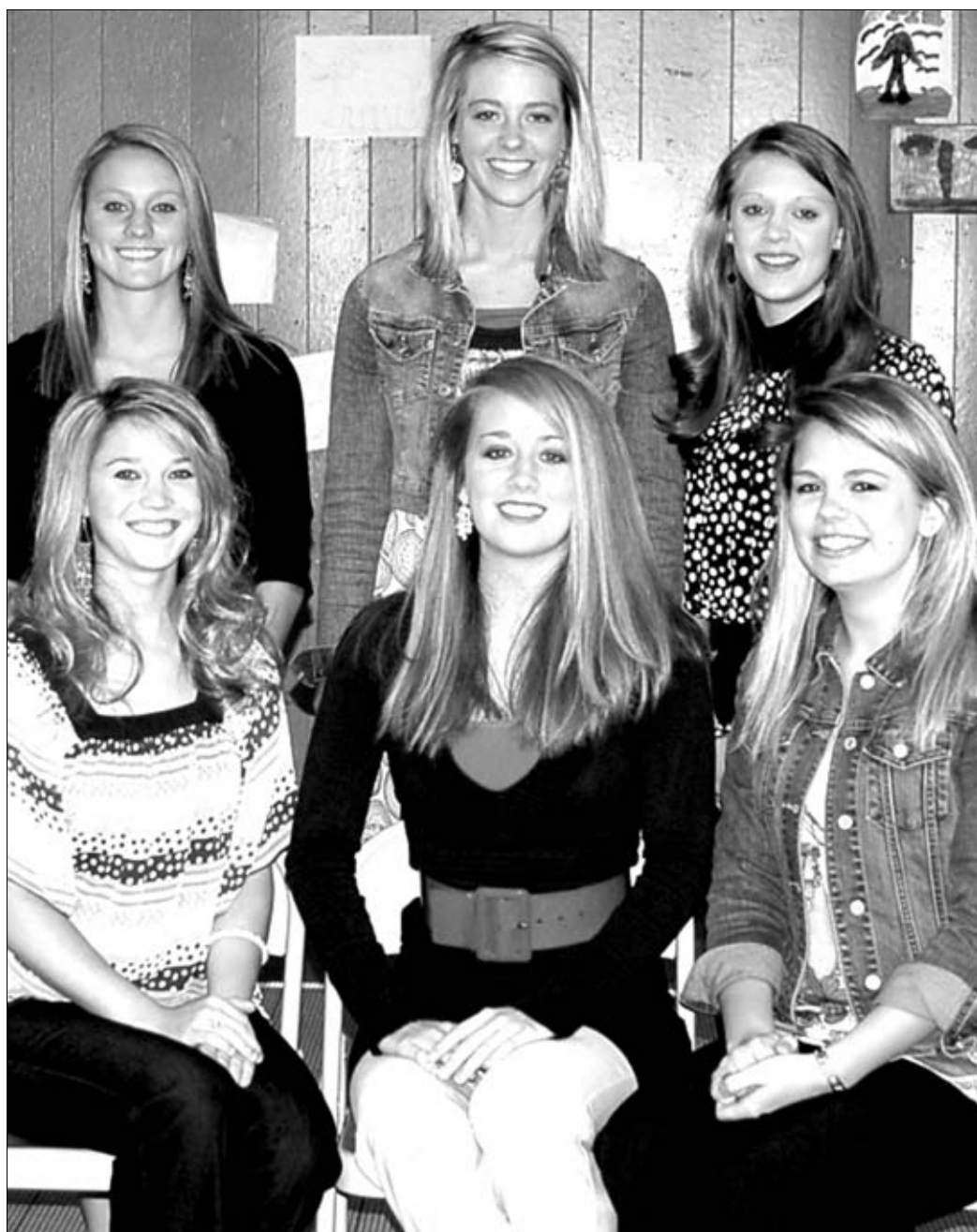
Courtney is the daughter of James and Pam Cox of Butler.

BOE’s S.E.S. tutoring shows success for local students

BUTLER -- Tutoring through Supplemental Educational Services provided by the Choctaw County Board of Education has been a huge success.

The students who chose to take advantage of the services have benefited by receiving better classroom grades, success on the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, and they are better prepared for other state assessments.

The program provided tutoring in math and reading two days a week for approximately 16 weeks, and it received rave reviews from the Alabama State Department of Education when monitored. As a culminating activity, participants were rewarded with a pizza party and a Books-A-Million gift certificate each.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

SCA picks SGA officers for 07-08

TOXEY — South Choctaw Academy held elections for Student Government Association officers for the 2007-08 school year this week, with the following students elected to serve: (seated, left to right) Cierra Giles, vice-president; Paige Gibson, president; Cortney Mozingo, secretary; (back) Koen Lindsey, treasurer; Catie Bonner, reporter; and Heather Pruitt, chaplain.

UWA plans annual alumni Crawfish Boil

BUTLER — The University of West Alabama’s Choctaw County Alumni Chapter will host its annual Crawfish Boil on Thursday, April 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the Utsey camphouse outside of Butler.

The event brings UWA coaches, staff, alumni and friends to Choctaw County, with all proceeds from the fundraiser going to help fund scholarships for Choctaw County students to attend the Livingston-based school.

All UWA alumni and friends are invited to attend. For more information, readers may contact chapter president Gayle McPhearson at 205-459-2618 or the UWA Alumni Office at 205-652-3552.

UWA awards two Trustee scholarships

LIVINGSTON — Two area students were recently awarded Trustees Scholarships to attend The University of West Alabama in Livingston. The awards, which are based on academic achievement and proven leadership potential, come from the UWA Office of Admissions.

Michael L. Thomas, a senior at Coffeeville High School, plans to use the \$10,000 grant to major in business administration.

Anna Kathryn Drinkard, of Ward, and a senior at Patrician Academy, will use her \$6,000 award to major in nursing.