The BRAVO Employee Recognition Program was created to promote the Colquitt County schools’ shared values of excellence, innovation, continuous improvement, peer recognition, and school spirit. At this time, the site BRAVO awardees are being recognized for their outstanding individual performance and to celebrate their commitment and contributions to the Colquitt County School System.

A reception will be held on April 20, 2006 at C.A. Gray Middle School to honor each site nominee. At that time, three finalists and an Employee of the Year will be announced.

Fay Wood is the Employee Benefits Coordinator for the Colquitt County School System and works at the Board of Education office. She has been an employee for fifteen years. "Fay Wood has always demonstrated the willingness to put forth whatever extra effort is required to assure that our employees are served with care and efficiency. She plays a very vital role in the operation of this school system and at some point in time will be involved in the life of each of our employees," shared Assistant Superintendent Mickey Key. Mrs. Wood responded, “I consider it an honor to be nominated by my peers. I enjoy my job and assisting the employees of the school system. Throughout the years of assisting people with their insurance needs, I am the one who feels blessed to have met these good people.” She is married to Ricky Wood; they have two children.

Pete Johnson is the Head Custodian at Colquitt County High School and has been employed in the school system for 8.5 years. Principal Bob Jones commented, “Mr. Johnson is a man of integrity, determination and uncompromising sense of duty. He has brought to the custodial staff at Colquitt County High School an attitude of harmony that did not exist previously. His excellent work ethic became even more apparent and his work accomplishments more remarkable in the last two years, as he endured treatment for cancer and missed almost no work time.” Mr. Johnson shared his feelings on being nominated, “It means a lot. I was really overwhelmed and surprised by such an honor.” He is married to Eura Dell Johnson, and they have two children.

Mary Frances Boyd, a cafeteria cashier at Cox Elementary School, has been employed there for six years. Mrs. Boyd commented, “This honor means a lot to me...knowing that I contributed to serving the children a hot breakfast and lunch makes my job worthwhile and rewarding.” Principal Jewell Howard noted, “Mrs. Mary Frances Boyd is a rare gem! Even though she faces challenges in her life, she always takes time to be a cheerleader for others. She constantly provides excellent service to the Cox family through her genuine concern and welfare for our children. I am elated to have Mrs. Boyd as an employee of Cox Elementary.” Mrs. Boyd is married to Joey Boyd and has three children.

CRCT testing will begin on April 12th for elementary and middle school students and will continue through April 21st. Everyone has worked hard to focus teaching and learning in order to improve student performance and to create an environment that is supportive and conducive to learning. School Nutrition Services has joined the testing team by providing every student who is testing a nutritious FREE breakfast each day of testing. This is to include test days for the CRCT, Georgia High School Graduation Tests, and End of Course Tests. It is time for Colquitt County students and teachers to shine. Go for it!
Chris Lawton is the assistant cafeteria manager and head cashier for Carolyn Willis the school buses and working with the bus drivers and maintenance staff. Don and wife, Jackie, have one daughter. Vehicles and their passengers. "Don humbly responded, "It's an honor to be recognized by my fellow workers. I enjoy working on other staff members because of his work ethic and professional attitude. He has a genuine concern for the safety of all school Gehle, Director of Facilities and Construction, remarked, "Don's attitude and disposition make him a pleasure to work around. He is a paraprofessional at Doerun Elementary School. She has been employed in the Colquitt County School System for 20 years. Principal Chuck Jones shared, "There is nothing false about the love that Beth exhibits each day towards the children, parents, and staff of our school. Giving a child that extra love to overcome bad experiences is just what she does. She is like having our own caring angel right here at Doerun." Mrs. Howell acknowledged, "It almost doesn't seem right to receive an award for doing a job that I feel is part of God's plan for my life. I am so touched to be chosen by the people I work with for such an award. I do not work because of the money that I make; I work here because I enjoy caring and doing for others." Beth is married to Harold Howell and has two daughters.

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LuAnn Parker, the school nurse for Funston Elementary School for the past 3 years, received her LPN degree from Moultrie Tech and in the past has worked as a substitute teacher. "She is frequently referred to as the 'Mama' for our students and staff members," stated Principal Lynn Clark. "The compassion that Mrs. Parker shows to every person with whom she comes in contact provides a safe, nurturing, and calm spirit that comes as close to 'mama's way' as one could ever imagine in the school setting. Quality and efficiency are evident in everything Mrs. Parker undertakes! She is an invaluable asset to Funston Elementary School." Mrs. Parker commented, "I am very honored to receive this award, but my job is made much easier by the staff and friends at Funston. It takes a great team to accomplish all responsibilities on a daily basis, and I work with the best."

Chris Lawton is the assistant cafeteria manager and head cashier for C. A. Gray Middle School and has been employed there for 21 years. Cafeteria Manager Jean Flanders shared, "Chris has great knowledge and demonstrates proficiency with all her job responsibilities. She goes out of her way to see students fed and cared for. She exceeds all expectations with her kind and friendly way of handling students, parents, and staff. "Chris has been involved in continuous training which has prepared her to be a manager and an excellent leader," shared Principal Nathan Brown. Ms. Lawton shared her thoughts on her nomination, "This award means that my 21 years of service are being rewarded, and that I am appreciated by my supervisor and peers. To be appreciated by my peers is a great feeling that I will always cherish."

Willie Goble is the lead custodian at Hamilton Elementary School, where he has been employed for 5 ½ years. Principal Brenda DeMott said, "Mr. Goble is an excellent role model for our students by being a valuable member of the team, showing respect for self and others, and having great Hamilton Pride in all that he does. He instills in students a sense of responsibility for our new facility and the grounds. His work ethic is contagious to us all." Mr. G, as he is affectionately known, retired from a long career in the Navy and that of an electrician before joining the Hamilton staff. He is married to Linda Goble and they have five children. He shared what being a BRAVO nominee meant to him, "I was honored to be nominated for this BRAVO Award at Hamilton and very surprised to win it. I will do my best to be worthy and will try even harder to keep Hamilton School number one!

Don Johnson is a transportation mechanic and has been employed by the Colquitt County School System for 28 years. Rick Gehle, Director of Facilities and Construction, remarked, "Don's attitude and disposition make him a pleasure to work around. He has proven himself to be a team player by going above and beyond expectations of the job. He has been a good role model for other staff members because of his work ethic and professional attitude. He has a genuine concern for the safety of all school vehicles and their passengers. "Don humbly responded, "It's an honor to be recognized by my fellow workers. I enjoy working on the school buses and working with the bus drivers and maintenance staff." Don and wife, Jackie, have one daughter.

Carolyn Willis is a paraprofessional; her primary responsibility is that of the copier attendant at Norman Park Elementary School where she has been employed for 19 years. Principal Keith Adams shared, "Mrs. Willis is a dedicated employee with a very caring and humble attitude. She has earned the respect of the administration, teachers and staff, and especially the students of Norman Park because of her professional, caring, and loving spirit." Mrs. Willis commented, "I think this is a great honor...my goal is to do my job to the best of my ability and help everyone anyway that I can. I am so proud to be part of this Norman Park family." She and husband Tommy have three daughters.

Geraldine Manning is a paraprofessional at Odom Elementary School and has been employed for 19 years. Principal Doug Howell, noted, "Ms. Manning is a model employee. She is focused, motivated, and totally committed to the students of J. M. Odom Elementary. She is also trained in CPR and First Aid and serves as the back up nurse in the clinic when needed. She is an integral part of the J. M. Odom Relay for Life Team. Her efforts have helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for the American Cancer Society." Ms. Manning shared, "It is an honor to be nominated by my colleagues for this award. Everything we do in education, no matter who we are, has an impact on the lives of youngsters who enter our doors. I am proud to be part of the caring community of Odom Elementary. I am proud to be one of the models to help mold and shape our future."

Lynn Hamner is the school secretary for Okapilco Elementary School and has been for 14 years. Mrs. Hamner has been employed with the school system for a total of 24 years. "She has been invaluable to me...she has been the constant and stabilizing force for the students and staff alike. Lynn's pleasant personality, her professionalism, and her dedication to Okapilco Elementary School are evident in every task she undertakes," commented Principal Bobbie Key. Jill stated, "I am humbled and truly touched that they have chosen me for this honor. Working as the school secretary gives me the opportunity to touch the lives of the students, parents, and staff that I come in contact with daily. I feel I am truly blessed to work with such a wonderful team." She and husband Jim have two daughters.
Suzanne Sumner is the School Nurse Coordinator for the Colquitt County Schools and her office is located with the Colquitt County Pre-K Program on the Moultrie Technical College campus. Suzanne has been employed with the school system for five years. She has a Bachelor’s of Science in nursing and continues to keep abreast of the latest in health care through various training opportunities. Her colleague Joy Webb shared, “Mrs. Sumner takes the health and well-being of our school children very seriously. She is a strong advocate for children. She has worked hard to establish our school nurse program county-wide. She has a wonderful sense of humor that helps lighten the worry of health issues for both children and adults.” Mrs. Sumner remarked, “Being nominated as a candidate for the BRAVO award is certainly an honor for me. I have learned in my five years of experience that I have to depend on others in order to achieve in my job responsibilities. Therefore, as long as I value and respect those that I work with, I cannot help but achieve. That’s how to get the job done—teamwork.” She is married to Kevin Sumner, and they have two sons.

Edith Fuller, a bus driver for Stringfellow Elementary School for five years. “Ms. Fuller takes the best interest of our students to heart. She is genuinely concerned about the safety and welfare of all the students she transports. Her willingness to go above and beyond by getting started early or working late makes her most deserving of such an honor. Her ingenuity and creativity in coping with so many personalities in such a confined area shows that balancing responsibility and achievement while valuing others can be done. She is fair and firm with a friendly attitude. We really appreciate her efficiency in carrying out her duties,” stated Principal Barbara Stewart. Ms. Fuller commented, “It is an honor and a privilege to be nominated. It shows that people notice what you do. It also means that I must do my job well, in a fair and just manner. “ Ms. Fuller has three children.

Sylvia Hiers is the cafeteria manager at Sunset Elementary School, where she has been employed for 29 years. Principal Bruce Owen stated, “Mrs. Hiers is what I would call a “110%er”. She sets the tone and provides the leadership for an excellent food service program. We are a family at Sunset and Mrs. Hiers is one of the key players in our family. Every principal knows how important their food service manager is. If the food is not good you are in trouble, and of course our food is always very good.” Mrs. Hiers commented, “To be chosen as a nominee for the BRAVO Award is an honor to me. I love working with children. Even though serving meals to children is not as important as teaching them, we contribute a vital part to their school day. It is difficult to concentrate on learning when you are hungry. In working together, we can accomplish great things for our students.” Mrs. Hiers and her husband Hilton have two children.

Elaine Barfield is the receptionist at W. J. Williams Middle School. She has been employed in the school system for nine years. “Mrs. Barfield is the first voice or first face that much of the public sees when calling or visiting Williams Middle School. Mrs. Barfield is always cheerful and helpful. She thoroughly understands the operation of the school and is able to handle all parts of her job responsibilities efficiently and effectively,” shared Principal Scott Michie. Assistant Principal Treasea Bridges added, “Elaine is always professional and willing to meet the needs of the people that she greets. She is quiet and a diligent worker. Sometimes her job is very difficult, but I have never seen her lose her professionalism.” Mrs. Barfield shared, “This is an honor that I can truly say will be one of my fondest memories of working with the exceptional individuals and phenomenal students that make up the Williams Middle School family.” Mrs. Barfield has three children and five grandchildren.

Stacy Cardin is a school nurse at RB Wright Elementary School, where she has been employed for four years. Mrs. Cardin received her Associates of Science degree in nursing from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. Principal Marc Bell said, “At our school, Mrs. Cardin is much more than the keeper of the all-important band-aids. She is a comforter, a soother, a consoler, a role model, a cheerleader, and so much more. She is very conscientious, extremely caring, and always cheerful. Because of her genuine concern, each and every student at R. B. Wright Elementary feels comfortable about visiting the nurse’s office.” Mrs. Cardin commented, “I am honored to be recognized for my work at R.B. Wright Elementary. It is a blessing for me to have a job where I feel liked and where I can make an impact on children’s lives. My greatest reward is in helping to identify children who have health issues and helping them get the help they need.” She is married to Bubba Cardin and has two children.

Employees in the Spotlight

- Funston Elementary Pre-k teacher Earnestine Hall-Baker has been nominated to Who’s Who American Teachers for a third time.
- Charlotte Cook, C. A. Gray Choral Director, for a sixth consecutive year, was a featured instrumental soloist with the Georgia All-State Choir.
- Federal Programs Director Constance Johnson is currently serving on the Professional Standards Commission’s Board of Examiners Team.
- Norman Park third grade teacher Page Still received her Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education from Georgia Southwestern State University
- Nada Cox, third grade teacher at Okapilco Elementary has been nominated and selected for Who’s Who Among American Teachers.
- Okapilco kindergarten teacher JoBeth Key received her Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education from Georgia Southwestern State University.

Daylight Savings Time

Spring forward on April 2, 2006.

This is a great time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors as well.

New Arrivals

- James Hudson (Feb 17) son of Caroline and Sonny Glenn
- Ada Marie (March 4) daughter of Kristi and John Paul Sutton
Mr. Ramirez brings the added experience of being an ESL student as a child. Born in Mexico City, his family moved to the state of Hidalgo until he was in the 6th grade. They then moved to Los Angeles for five years. His father, also a teacher, worked construction while in the United States. School was difficult for the boy Juan. He did not speak any English. The first year, his older sister was in his class and helped him. When she moved on to the high school, Juan cried every day not wanting to go to school but wanting instead to go to work with his father. Having a wise father, he took the boy to work and made him do the hardest jobs. Every night he asked Juan if he wanted to go to school or work the next day. Juan chose work, so after only a few days his father took him to the principal and she encouraged him to keep going to school. Because of the support of the school and his family, Juan worked hard and became the top student of his class.

Mr. Rodriguez is from the town of San Juan tepa, Mpio. de Fco. I. Madero, Hidalgo. There is a large university in his home town so the majority of townspeople are professionals. His degree is also in English and he taught both middle school and secondary for five years prior to coming to the United States. Mr. Rodriguez shares that he thought he spoke English until coming to the South, “I say, ‘Hi, how are you?’ You say, ‘Hey, how you doing?’ I think doing – I’m not doing anything.” He thinks the English here is more complicated but his students say, “I speak the Spanish. I speak the English. I speak the South.”

In addition to teaching middle school students, both gentlemen are busy in our community. Mr. Rodriguez teaches GED classes two nights and is enrolled in ESL classes at VSU, plus a Math and Science course at ABAC. Mr. Ramirez teaches in the after school program, Spanish to teachers, GED classes, and is taking the same two college classes. In their ‘spare’ time, the parents of their students have invited them to parties and family meetings.

Both gentlemen want to extend special thanks to their parents and families for their support and encouragement. They also want to thank the Georgia Project, the CA Gray and Willie J. Williams’ staff and administration, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Maureen Yearta, Superintendent Leonard McCoy and the Colquitt County Board of Education, and the Board of Education in Pachuca, Mexico.

When I went to both Gray and WJW and asked for Mr. Ramirez or Mr. Rodriguez, I was greeted with the same response from administrators, teachers, and clerks, “Oh, you’re going to enjoy talking to them. They are so nice and so much help with the students.” Perhaps the biggest compliment I could pay to both gentlemen is that in talking to them, I saw into the world of our Hispanic students. That is the job of the ‘Teacher’ – to show us a world we do not know.