

Pocahontas County Highlights

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County Chefs Compete in 2016 Cast Iron Cook-Off

Published On: Wed, Feb 17th, 2016 by: Cailey Moore



The Pocahontas County High School ProStart team, from left: Brandall Carr, Brittney Sharp, Courtney Coetzee, Kim McComb and Teresa Mullen. The team won the Best Teamwork award at the Junior Cast Iron Cook-Off, held in Charleston February 5-6.

Photos courtesy of ProStart

The Pocahontas County High School ProStart competition team travelled to Charleston as one of eight teams selected to compete in the 11th annual Junior Cast Iron Cook-Off.

Similar to Saturday, February 6's main event, the junior Cast Iron Cook-Off, required each team to use locally grown and harvested ingredients to prepare a traditional Appalachian meal – consisting of an entrée, a side dish and a dessert. Additionally, the high school competition went one step further in that the dishes prepared by the ProStart teams follow the guidelines laid out by the Office of Child Nutrition.

“The goal of the competition was to encourage students to work with locally grown ingredients,” instructor Teresa Mullen explained, “as well as open their eyes to the possibilities that could be offered in their school cafeterias.”

According to the HHFKA Lunch Meal Pattern found on the Office of Child Nutrition's website, ninth through 12th grade students must receive a daily minimum of two ounces of meat or meat alternative, two ounces of grains, one cup of fruit, one cup of vegetables, and eight ounces of either fat-free or one-percent milk. Prior to the competition, each participating team sent its menu to the Office of Child Nutrition to ensure that the planned meal would meet the required guidelines. “That was probably the hardest part for us,” Mullen said, “just being able to find ingredients that looked and tasted good, were traditional West Virginia foods, and would meet the nutritional guidelines.” Teams were made up of ProStart students and their instructor, a member of the school's food service personnel and an agriculture education student.



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The PCHS team consisted of senior Courtney Coetzee, junior Brittney Sharp, food service personnel Kim McComb and Mullen, while junior Brandal Carr rounded out the team's requirements by serving as both a member of the ProStart competition team and as the team's agriculture education student. True to the competition's name, contestants used a mixture of cast iron and regular cookware to prepare each dish and were only able to use butane burners as their heat source. With the exception of certain appliances – such as immersion blenders and mixers – teams were not permitted to use electricity. During the competition, each team was given half an hour to set up their station prior to the competition, and once the clock began, the teams had an hour to prepare and plate their dishes before presenting them to the judges.

A pan-seared rainbow trout fillet – prepared by Carr and coupled with a maple butternut squash puree – served as the team's entrée. McComb and Sharp worked together to prepare a side dish of spicy quinoa and corn fritter, while Coetzee and Mullen prepared an iced cinnamon roll, served with a salted caramel sauce and topped with crushed walnuts.

of March, Mullen and her students will travel to Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown to compete in the Hospitality Cup.



The Pocahontas County High School ProStart team, from left: Brandal Carr, Brittney Sharp, Courtney Coetzee, Kim McComb and Teresa Mullen. The team won the Best Teamwork award at the Junior Cast Iron Cook-Off, held in Charleston February 5-6. Photos courtesy of ProStart.

"This is the second year Brandal, Brittney and Courtney have worked together," Mullen said of her students, "and they were great. In terms of their upcoming competitions, this was their most relaxed competition, but it was still a wonderful experience. It helped them figure out their teamwork, gave them a sense of compatibility and gave them a chance to better equip themselves for the future." While the team did not place, they were awarded Best Teamwork for the second year in a row. At the beginning

Snowshoe Mountain Resort Executive Chef Scott MacGregor prepares a plate of Venison Pot Au Feu to present to the judges. A variation of a French stew, MacGregor's dish substituted an Appalachian favorite – venison – for beef and was served over a bed of sautéed root vegetables.

Of eighteen chefs nominated to participate in this year's Cast Iron Cook-Off, Snowshoe Mountain Resort Executive Chef Scott MacGregor was one of five chefs chosen to compete and was joined by Mullen – his sous chef at Snowshoe – and Coetzee for Saturday's event.

Per the competition's guidelines, each team was required to have two professionals and six additional team members. Of the available spots, one was designated to allow a ProStart student to compete – in this case, Coetzee – while the remaining spots were sold to the competition's sponsors.

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Once purchased, each sponsor would provide employees – often with minimal cooking experience – to round out their chef's team. Buzz Food Service, out of Charleston, purchased MacGregor's spots.

"Working with them went well," Mullen said of her Buzz Food Service teammates. "Scott and I assigned them tasks that we knew they could complete, and we had a meeting the night before. We went over the menu, assigned each member a job, and talked with them about how they would do that job. We know things can get stressful, but this is supposed to be a fun activity, and we wanted to keep it that way."

With their teammates hard at work, MacGregor focused his attention on the meal's starter and entrée. First, a Fish Bone Soup was prepared, followed by Venison Pot Au Feu – a variation of a French stew – and sautéed root vegetables.

For dessert, Mullen prepared a chocolate-filled pear dumpling, accompanied by an amaretto crème anglaise, a vanilla crème anglaise and a scoop of maple syrup ice cream.

Like with the PCHS ProStart team, MacGregor did not place but was presented with the Best Teamwork award.

When Mullen was first introduced to the culinary world when she began working in restaurants while she was a

high school student. Upon graduating, Mullen went on to attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania Academy of Culinary Arts, where she participated in the pastry program.

In time, Mullen made her way to Snowshoe Mountain Resort, where she became a sous chef under MacGregor.



PCHS ProStart instructor and Snowshoe Mountain Resort sous chef Teresa Mullen works diligently to create homemade ice cream without the use of electricity. She was in charge of preparing the team's dessert – a chocolate-filled pear dumpling, served with two variations of crème anglaise – amaretto and vanilla – and a scoop of maple syrup ice cream.



PCHS Singers Unite Voices at WVU Honor Choir Festival

A total of 606 high school students from West Virginia and surrounding states joined their voices together for the inaugural West Virginia University Honor Choir Festival February 20. Six of those students – Amber Sisler, Layla Shinaberry, Xenobia Varner, Chyenna Campbell, Allison Turner and Andrew Sipe – were from Pocahontas County High School. Band and choir director Bob Mann selected the students to participate in order to gain experience in the choral field and to perform in a large-scale choir.

“It was a really big deal,” Mann said. “So many people were there. They did manage to get six hundred and six singers on stage to perform.”

Unlike honor band, the choir students only had one day to prepare for the performance.

“The honor bands were a three-day, two night event,” Mann said. “The honor choir took place in one day. They didn’t have an audition process. It was very much by band director/choir director in this case.”

An added obstacle was that PCHS choir was first semester and Mann did not receive the music until near Christmas-time, when the semester was ending. The students spent personal time looking over the music in order to be ready for the event. “I had the music out a month in advance so the students could review it, but I didn’t have a lot of contact with them,” Mann said. “So for many of them it really was like sight reading.”

Going from a 12 member choir to a 606 ensemble, the students had a lot of learning to do. While they were prepared to sing and to match pitch, they weren’t prepared for the sheer power behind that many voices joined together in harmony. “When the sopranos sang, I got lost in what I was singing,” Sipe said.

“It was ear splitting, depending on what section you were in,” Sisler agreed. “I was right in the middle of the soprano section and it was ear splitting.”

The ensemble performed two songs which were composed by visiting director Eric Whitacre, Grammy Award winning composer and conductor. “It was a big feather in the cap of WVU to get him there,” Mann said. “The cool thing is, he’s very humble. He’s entertaining. He can really grab the attention of the room. [Kristy] Tritapoe was in attendance at this event also, and one of the first things she said was, ‘how in the world can he get six hundred people to silently listen to him?’” It may seem impossible to get a room of 600 teenagers to pay attention, but Mann said he thinks the students were an exception because they were musicians.

“Music students are some of the best people you could ask for,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if it’s choir or band, they’re disciplined and they’re just good people. They have the respect to make something like this happen.”

Mann plans to continue the school’s participation in the honor choir event.



Pocahontas County High School choir members participated in the first annual West Virginia University Honor Choir, led by Eric Whitacre. Attending the event were, front row, from left: Chyenna Campbell, Allison Turner, Xenobia Varner and Layla Shinaberry. Back row, from left: Kristy Tritapoe, Amber Sisler, Whitacre, Andrew Sipe and Bob Mann. Photo courtesy of Bob Mann.

BOE Approves Costa Rica Trip

Published On: Wed, Feb 24th, 2016
Suzanne Stewart, Staff Writer

At Monday night's Pocahontas County Board of Education meeting, Spanish teacher Shirlene Groseclose addressed concerns about plans for a trip to Costa Rica. The trip would involve six students and three chaperones.

At its February 8 meeting, the board tabled approval of the trip due to concerns about the Zika virus which is thought to cause birth defects and other health related issues among those who contract the virus.

While there are unknown factors about the virus, medical experts say it is primarily transmitted through mosquito bites, and it is prevalent in South American countries.

Groseclose said she has done some research and she is up-to-date with the news about the Zika virus, and does not feel it is a concern for her students or the adults going on the trip.

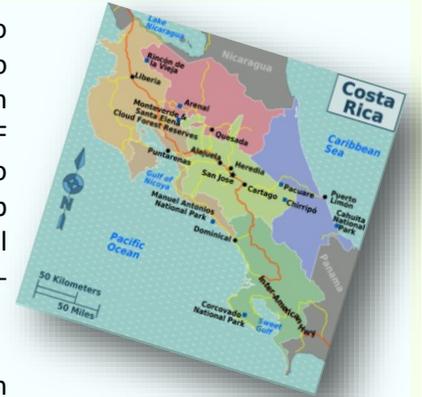
"It would be a concern for pregnant women because it's theorized that it's a cause of microcephaly in some pregnant women," she said. "But, if you have been keeping up with the news, it is now believed that the actual cause of the microcephaly in the Brazilian women is the use of larvicide in the water."

Groseclose said there is a misconception about how often people are bitten by mosquitoes.

"For example, in Puerto Rico there is Dengue [Fever] which is transmitted by a mosquito bite," she said. "I lived there many, many years and I never once got Dengue."

Groseclose has kept the parents and everyone involved in the trip informed about concerns and issues

that may arise prior to the trip. She has also kept in contact with the travel agency, EF Educational Tours, to make sure the group will be safe to travel to Costa Rica and Nicaragua.



"With the information we have, EF did say if there are any pregnant women or women planning on getting pregnant, they would then refund them, but there's not really a concern for the groups that are traveling," Groseclose said. "I truly understand your concern, and I understand that it was something that, just knowing the facts out there, that you couldn't just say, 'yes, let's approve it.'"

Groseclose has posted information on the Costa Rica trip Facebook page and has kept in touch with parents through social media to help them better understand the situation. She said only one parent voiced concern, but after learning more about the virus, she is no longer worried about sending her daughter on the trip.

"I also had a meeting last week and I asked if anybody was concerned and no one had concerns," Groseclose said. "It's not a big group. If there's anybody that is going to keep them covered in bug spray and protected, I'm going to do it."

The six students will be accompanied by Groseclose, Diana Collins and Emily Gibson.

The board thanked Groseclose for addressing its concerns. Board attorney Bob Martin said he felt the board should have everyone going on the trip sign a release form which states that the trip is a voluntary event and clears the board of education of any liability for any incidents which may happen during the trip.

Martin has been working on a release form for all events which are voluntary but still school related. The board approved the Costa Rica trip with the stipulation that all those going will have to sign the release form.

A Stanza Above the Rest – Poetry Out Loud Winners

Published On: Wed, Feb 10th, 2016
Suzanne Stewart, Staff Writer

Pocahontas County High School English students showed their prowess for poetry during the annual Poetry Out Loud competition. Students were tasked with memorizing and reciting a classic poem from the Poetry Out Loud Anthology.

This year, senior Emily Boothe placed first with her recitation of “The Rain” by Robert Creely. Second place went to sophomore Mary Grace Rich for her recitation of “Candles” by Carl Dennis.

Both students said they selected the poems based on familiarity and meaning.

“I did ‘The Rain’ in eleventh grade and I just really liked it,” Boothe said. “That’s why I stuck with it.”

“[‘Candles’] has a lot of meaning to it and it felt kind of personal,” Rich said.

Boothe will represent PCHS at the state competition in March. The competition requires students to recite three poems – one that is pre-19th century, one that is 25 lines or less, and one that is a combination of both criteria.

“I’ve selected ‘Floating Island’ by Dorothy Wordsworth, ‘Echo’ by Christina Rossetti and ‘The Rain’ by Robert Creely,” Boothe said.

Rich said she plans to compete again next year.

The Poetry Out Loud website, www.poetryoutloud.org, states that the competition is designed to encourage “the nation’s youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation.” The program helps students build their public speaking skills, as well as their self-confidence.

Poetry Out Loud is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation and U.S. state arts agencies. is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation and U.S. state arts agencies.



At the Pocahontas County High School Poetry Out Loud recitation, senior Emily Boothe, left, won first place, and sophomore Mary Grace Rich, right, won second. Boothe will compete at the state level in March.

S. Stewart photo

BOE Pursuing Technology Grant

At Monday night's meeting, the Pocahontas County Board of Education gave technology coordinator Ruth Bland permission to pursue a grant through Polycom and Frontier.

Bland explained that the grant – which ranges from \$50,000 to \$500,000 – is a joint grant with Webster County Schools and, if received, will be used to purchase new technology for the schools.

"I've taken on the responsibility of being the heavy lifter in this grant writing endeavor with Frontier and with Polycom," Bland said. "We could get up to six or seven Polycom units which are video conferencing units. We're looking at having STEM [Science, Technology, Engineer and Math] activities for our after-school programs. There are other entities in the state that are asking to be a partner in this to be able to provide those programs for those students."

The grant will also be used to purchase laptops, smartboards and any other technology needed to implement the Polycom units in the classrooms.

The units will allow events to be "beamed" out to other schools and could be used for professional development with RESA IV, Bland said. Instead of driving to Summersville for training, teachers could watch the training at the board office.

The technology is currently used by Spanish teacher Shirlene Groseclose who teaches Marlinton Middle School and Green Bank Elementary-Middle School Spanish students from her classroom at Pocahontas County High School.

"Webster County is very, very interested in how we are doing our Spanish Level 1A and 1B," Bland said. "They actually had to hire another teacher to be able to do middle school Spanish, and we are doing it with one teacher, and we are beaming it out to the middle schools."

Applications for the grant are due by March 16.

Published On: Wed, Jan 27th, 2016
Suzanne Stewart, Staff Writer



PCHS Shares Codes at MMS



PCHS senior Samantha Collins assists a MMS student during their Hour of Code. Sponsored by code.org, Harvard University and MIT, the program is designed to inspire and excite students. Photo courtesy of Cailey Moore.

Students at Marlinton Middle School were treated to a morning of computer programming, thanks to an instructional visit from the Pocahontas County High School Computer Science class.

“We are from the Computer Science class at the high school,” instructor Laurel Dilley explained, “and I think this is probably the first computer science classes in the state.”

Advanced Placement – AP – Computer Science classes are offered at larger high schools throughout the state, but PCHS is fortunate enough to offer a similar course with experienced volunteers to help the students, as well.

“We just think it’s really important to start teaching this subject,” Dilley said. “Everything in our world is going to computer-based learning at this point, and if we don’t know how to use computers, that’s really scary for our future.”

After seeing interest expressed in the subject by some of Dilley’s current Computer Science students, she spent a week in Delaware this past summer training to teach the UCLA-developed course, Exploring Computer Science.

“We’re using the Exploring Computer Science curriculum,” she said, “and Ray Creager comes in once a week from the observatory and teaches us Python coding, which is an amazing opportunity that probably doesn’t happen anywhere else in the United States. We have a true computer engineer and scientist that dedicates two hours a week to come and teach these kids.

“It’s like having a private tutor for Computer Science, and it’s amazing. The observatory has donated flash drives with new operating systems so that these kids can program in any language they want. The observatory has been like a dream come true.”

For students in the class, math concepts are being introduced in new and exciting ways, and the class itself has opened doors that might not have been opened otherwise.

“If it wasn’t for this class, I probably wouldn’t have known what I’m going to major in,” senior Dalton Irvine said. “As soon as I took Computer Science, it kind of opened my eyes to what I wanted to do and what I would love to do. It helped me to look at schools that had good Computer Science departments and programs and made me aim for the future.”

In addition to Creager, Paul Marganian spent two weeks working with PCHS students in Python, replicating an early arcade game known as Pong.

“He’s been teaching us different operating systems like Linux, rather than Windows,” senior J.D. Hensler said, “and we’ve been frustrated, pulling our hair out every Friday, because he’s overwhelming us with Python. Then we finally get to where we understand it, and we get a pixel to move around and bounce off walls. It was the biggest deal. We saw that we’ve improved. We got to see everything that we’ve learned, and we got to apply it. That’s the best thing – seeing what you’ve accomplished.”

Eight students traveled to MMS to present on four topics – Binary, Cryptography, Python and Scratch. Each presentation team consisted of two students with an affinity for their specific topics.

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Seniors Austin Hubbert and Kaylin Murray began by explaining the differences in Decimal and Binary numeration.

“Decimal numeration starts with a base of ten,” Murry explained. “The prefix dec- means ten. We have ten fingers, so naturally we use a base of ten.”

With the decimal system, students use ten numbers, numbering from zero to nine, and have the ability to rearrange and add the numbers in whatever manner they please. It is this ability that makes every number in the decimal system possible. The binary system is different.

“Instead of having numbers from zero to nine like a decimal system would, the binary system has two numbers – zero and one,” Hubbert explained. “It’s like an ‘on and off’ switch. Zero represents the ‘off’ button, and the one represents the ‘on’ button.”

“All computers are able to understand is some form of on and off – true or false, on and off, yes or no,” Dilley added.

The second rotation brought students to Cryptography with Hensler and Goldie McClure, where they learned about ciphers, using events from World War II as an example.

“During the war, the Germans created a famous cipher known as the Enigma Code,” Hensler said. “It was created to hide messages from the Americans, and it wasn’t until the 1940s that a team of mathematicians broke it.”

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According to Hensler, similar codes and ciphers have been created and used throughout history to hide messages from enemies, and one example comes from Julius Caesar.

"The Caesar Cipher is a shift cipher," he explained, "and it is a very basic cipher created by Julius Caesar. He created it because his enemies were very illiterate. They didn't know how to spell, and they didn't speak very well, so all Caesar had to do was create a simple code."

The Caesar Cipher allows our 26-letter alphabet to shift anywhere between 1 and 25 times, with three being the most common shift used.

"Shifting between one and twenty-six would be pointless," McClure added. "All the letters would move right back into place."

After the students finished with cryptography, they joined Chase Alkire and Michael Leyzorek in the library for a lesson in Python, a general-purpose, high-level programming language.

"What we're doing in here is working in Python, a program Michael and I used up at the NRAO," Alkire said. "We were mentored up at the NRAO for a summer, and if it wasn't for Ms. Dilley, we would have missed out on the opportunity. They helped us understand Python, and we now know Python more than ever before."

"What we're teaching kids today is a simplified version. Python is one of the simplest [programming] languages you can learn in Computer Science. It's fun, educational, and all around one of the best [programming] languages out there."

Students were then given the chance to play games designed and programmed by Samantha Collins and Irvine using a program called Scratch. When asked what went into designing a game, Irvine said, "Scratch is pretty much knowing the function, knowing what to do with the function and creativity."

"It was more like drag and drop," Collins added. "It wasn't like we were doing any hardcore coding. The program had little places where we could code each aspect."

Students reconvened in the computer lab following their final presentations to participate in an Hour of Code, sponsored by code.org, Harvard University and MIT.

"They're going to learn the basics of programming," Collins explained. "It's kind of like Scratch where you drag and drop each piece of code, and the program starts moving. If a code isn't right, it sets you back. It's almost like a game or puzzle that teaches."

"It tries to get kids excited about coding," Dilley added. "Like Samantha said, it's drag and drop code. Typing in code is way too advanced, so by dragging and dropping, there's a sense of immediate satisfaction. They go through a whole thing that code.org has set up, and once they've completed it, they get an 'Hour of Code' certificate."

Following their presentation at MMS, Dilley and her students traveled to Marlinton Elementary School to meet with Brian Smith, who has been working on coding activities with his fourth grade class throughout the year.

"I feel very passionately about this," Dilley said. "I feel like we're cheating students out of an amazing, educational opportunity if we don't offer this class to them."

Thanks to Christina Smith for her generous submission of articles for our use.