

SmartWorks

A publication of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce and Carroll Tomorrow
in collaboration with the Workforce Education Task Force

Vol. 1 Number 3

GED honoree believes in second chances



Inside:

**LIFT focuses
on illiteracy**

**Military prepares
young adults for
workforce**

**A conversation
with Andy Camp**

**12 for Life: Go for
it and dream big**

**UWG, WGTC join
forces for seamless
opportunities**

 **Carroll County
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Contents

4



GED honoree believes in second chances

6



Military prepares young adults for workforce

9



A conversation with Andy Camp

12 FOR LIFE

10



12 for Life: Go for it and dream big

11



Seamless Opportunities: UWG, WGTC join forces

On the cover

Photo courtesy of Technical College System of Georgia
Charlene Caldwell, center, accepts the 2016 GED Graduate Outstanding Achievement Award from Gretchen Corbin, right, Commissioners of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), and Beverly Smith, Assistant Commissioner of Adult Education for TCSG.

GED statewide honoree believes in SECOND CHANCES

Charlene Caldwell, jailer with the Carroll County Sheriff's Department, was honored by the Technical College System of Georgia with the 2016 GED Graduate Outstanding Achievement Award. In the nominating process, Karen Kirchler, Vice President of Adult Education at West Georgia Technical College, told Charlene's story well and it is repeated here with her permission.

When Charlene Caldwell was 15 years old, she quit school to help her parents with their new business. They had just opened a Huddle House restaurant, and Charlene took charge of the night shift. Neither of her parents had earned a high school diploma, and though they wanted their children to finish high school, they needed help and Charlene was more than willing. At 15, she wasn't convinced of the importance of finishing high school and it was too hard to work and go to school.

Life does what it does and within a short time, Charlene found herself married, with two children. Returning to school wasn't an option as she worked and took care of her family. She began to dream of becoming a parole officer and working in law enforcement, but it required a high school diploma or GED. Her day-to-day reality didn't seem to permit that dream.

Her marriage lasted four years and she found herself a single mom, struggling to make ends meet. She worked in restaurants, she drove buses, she did whatever she could. She remarried and had two more children and then she, and her then husband, opened a restaurant. It was something she knew from the ground up, and they were successful for five years, until a highway expansion project took their property and closed their business.

In 2003, after the closure of her restaurant business, Charlene Caldwell made an important decision. It was a decision to do something for herself. She had made choices to help her parents. She had made choices to always be there for her children and husband. But this time, she made a choice for herself. Tired of dead-end jobs and limited opportunities, she decided that she was worth a second chance.

She enrolled in the Adult Education program at what was then, West Central Tech-



In 2014 Charlene Caldwell began studies in Criminal Justice at Shorter University. She will graduate with a Bachelor's degree in spring of 2017.

nical College. "That was the hardest thing - to make that first step. I was so much older," she said. But when she arrived, she found she wasn't alone - and at 45, she wasn't even the oldest student in the room.

It took some time and she struggled with math along the way, but in 2005, on her third attempt at the math section, she nailed it and earned her GED. Thanks to the LIFT (Literacy is for Today and Tomorrow) Program, the fees for her GED testing were covered which was another stumbling block taken away for her.

That year, she was presented with the "Above and Beyond" award from LIFT, the Carroll County Certified Literate Community Program. Laura Miller, the Director of LIFT, and Phyllis King, Charlene's GED instructor, saw something special in her. She worked hard, she showed grit and determination, but more importantly, she lifted others up and encouraged them along the way.

In 2006 her dream to work in law enforcement became a reality when she went to work for the Carroll County Sheriff's Department at the jail. She became a guard in the jail, and this was the start of her really having an impact on the lives of others.

She began speaking on behalf of LIFT at community functions and to civic groups.

"When Charlene speaks, she gets people's attention," said Miller. "She's a commanding presence and when she tells her story and then shares what she sees in the jails, it's really compelling. She makes the case for Adult Education better than anyone I know."

Since she began working with the Sheriff's Department, Charlene has advised, counseled, and supported many, many inmates, encouraging them to turn their lives around and always to get a GED if they haven't completed high school. "I just have a desire to see people do better and I see so much potential. Sometimes an outsider can have more of an influence than family can when someone is first starting to turn things around," Charlene said.

Several former inmates confirmed that she had tremendous influence on their lives:

"She has taught me to be strong but when you do break down, you have to pick yourself back up and move forward. When life had me at my worst, she was there to help. She inspires me to be the very best version of myself."

"She has always known what to say to me even if it wasn't what I wanted to hear. Her words have encouraged me to change my life for the better."

"She gave me hope. Her prayers and

LIFT program focuses on illiteracy rate in Carrollton's west section

When Laura Miller, director of the LIFT (Literacy is for Today and Tomorrow, Inc.) program for Carroll County, attended the University of West Georgia's "State of the Community, Carroll" program, one visual in the presentation changed the trajectory of LIFT's focus for the coming year.

"When I saw the slide that indicated that one particular section of Carroll County has a 49 percent illiteracy rate, it was like 'BOOM' - I knew we had to do something about it," she said. That section, census tract 9105.02 to be exact, is known as the west section of Carrollton and research determined that of the 2,530 adults living there, 49 percent have not graduated from high school.

The mission of LIFT is to improve the overall literacy rate throughout Carroll County, Georgia with an emphasis on adult education and to provide financial assistance to those striving to obtain their GED.

West Georgia Technical College, provider of GED (General Equivalency Diploma) and ESL (English as a Second Language) training, received a \$4,000 grant from Rotary to provide 25 GED scholarships this year. This opened the door for Miller to direct her energies and that of LIFT's Board of Directors to take these

classes into this area and the community support has been "phenomenal" according to Miller.

"Pastor Walter D'Andrea Green has opened the doors of the Church Without Walls to host ESL classes to begin by the end of the year and GED classes to begin early 2017," Miller said. "Everything we have tried to do has become a reality - people are so generous." One successful activity was the distribution of 100 back-packs loaded with school supplies during West Carroll Community Day.

Miller has utilized the research of Dr. Winston Tripp, assistant professor of Sociology and director of the Data Analysis and Visualization Lab in UWG's College of Social Sciences, to apply for grants to fund school supplies for GED and ESL students, classroom supplies and her LIFT salary.

"Following the State of Community program, I contact Dr. Tripp and told him I needed everything he had on this area of Carroll County and he shared all the research with me," Miller noted. "So armed with research from UWG, instruction from WGTC, and community support, we are all working toward the LIFT mission to improve the literacy rate throughout Carroll County."

words of encouragement lifted me up when I felt like giving up."

Her work at the jail has earned her the Officer of the Quarter award from the Carroll County Sheriff's Department and has compelled her to do more. In 2014 she began studies in Criminal Justice at Shorter University. She will graduate with a Bachelor's degree in spring of 2017. While she entered college planning on becoming a parole officer, "God had other plans," she said. She's now planning on becoming a substance abuse counselor, having seen so much of the impact of drugs on people's lives.

"That's my calling," said Charlene. "I see so many of these girls at the jail. I talk to them honestly. We all have skeletons in our closets. I'm lucky that none of my bad choices when I was younger ever landed me in jail." Her goal is to be able to better help these individuals turn their lives around.

She continues her work at



Charlene Caldwell

the jail as she moves forward toward her dream. She serves on the LIFT Board of Directors and continues to speak throughout the community. "It's never too late," she says. "It's never too late to chase your dreams and it's never too late to turn things around. Everyone deserves a second chance to get it right."

With Charlene's help, many have gotten it right, and many more will.



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Photo courtesy of Carrollton City Schools

At the close of the 2015-16 school year, seven Carrollton High School students committed to military service as their post-secondary option following high school. Dr. Mark Albertus, Carrollton City Schools Superintendent, said while technical school and college are appropriate preparation grounds for many students before they enter the workforce, the military is another way young adults can transition to good careers – not to mention have the opportunity to serve their country. Students committed to the Navy, Marines, Army and Army Reserves.

M I L I T A R Y

★ ★ prepares young adults for workforce ★ ★

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Today’s students have to have concrete ideas about the answer to that question by the time they enter high school. By the ninth grade, decisions must be made to pursue the technical or college-prep academic tract. Another career option is also available for Carroll County students to consider: the military.

Carrollton High School and Central High School both offer the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) program to introduce male and female students to the military. Major Sylvester Hendrix is in his 11th year at the helm of Carrollton High’s program that averages 110 Cadets. Students from throughout the county are transported to Central High to participate in their unit of 140 Cadets led by Lt. Col. Mike Washington.

“Just starting high school, many student don’t know if they even have an interest in

the military and are often hesitate about the uniform and grooming standards when it is a time where ‘fitting in’ is critically important to them,” Hendrix said. “The cadets wear the uniform one day a week, and adhere to the hair, nail and jewelry standards of active duty military while in uniform.”

The program is based on three elements: aerospace studies, leadership/life skills, and physical fitness/drill. As a program, it’s not just about the military or academics, Hendrix explained.

“The AFJROTC mission is to develop citizens of character dedicated to serving their nation and community,” he said. “Students learn leadership skills, common courtesy and discipline.”

Washington noted that AFJROTC is not a recruiting arm of the Active Duty Air Force and there is no military commitment for Cadets. He compared AFJROTC to a leadership laboratory.

“The Corps of Cadets is a cadet-led orga-

nization where students have the opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves, and to learn to lead their peers. I believe our program is nothing less than awesome!” Washington said.

Activities beyond the classroom include honor guard, drill team competitions, and a summer cadet leadership school. To reinforce classroom learning, CIA (Community In Action) field trips expose cadets to such locations as the Museum of Aviation, Kennedy Space Center, Washington, D.C. Air Force bases, and college ROTC programs.

“There are advantages to participating in JROTC programs if a Cadet does chose to go into the military. If students are in JROTC for at least three years, when they complete basic training they get advanced ranking. Many young people don’t start their careers by thinking about retirement, but after 20 years in the military, you have lifelong retirement and benefits,” Hendrix noted.

Another very lucrative appeal to the mili-

tary is earning college credit while being paid during training. Almost every occupation in civilian life has a military counterpart – lawyer, engineer, accountant, nursing, chemist, computer science, etc. – and after basic training, testing determines what specialized training comes next.

This is what appealed to Shelton Lewis, Petty Officer 3rd Class MMN3 (machinist mate nuclear) stationed at Naval Nuclear Power Training Command in Goose Creek, South Carolina. Although Lewis did not participate in JROTC while at Carrollton High, he saw the military as a means of obtaining a highly sophisticated education while on the same career path that his grandfather had taken.

“I am getting paid to receive college credits in nuclear engineering,” Lewis said. “I’ll have 60 transferable credits toward a degree when I leave the military.” His military training would count as major curriculum and he would take core classes to complete degree requirements.

“This is extremely interesting. I wasn’t aware that the United States used nuclear power to propel America’s submarines,” he said. “In my final step of training I will be in a modified mock-up nuclear reactor on a submarine in the Charleston River.”

Lewis has already completed several stages of training including basic training and A School (field and background knowledge). He is currently in Power School, learning the nuts and bolts of a nuclear reactor. His next step will be Prototype Training in the submarine itself.

A typical day now is 10 hours spent in class in the ‘Rickover’ – a building named for Admiral Hyman George Rickover, known as the father of the nuclear Navy. Since they deal with classified information, Lewis is not even allowed to do homework outside of this building.

“This would be a lost cause for me if it had not been for my

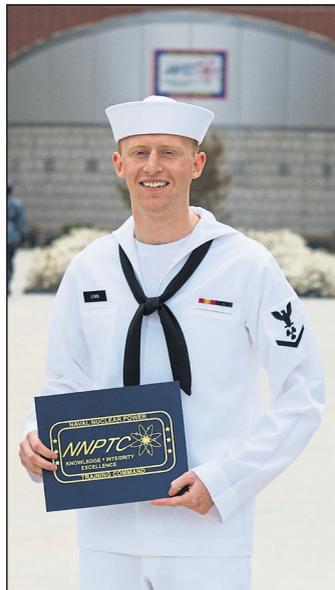


Photo courtesy of D. Lewis

Shelton Lewis, Petty Officer 3rd Class MMN3, at graduation from A School at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command.

Carrollton High School education,” Lewis said. “My thanks are extended to all my teachers, especially for my math background.”

Lewis is uncertain if he will make the Navy his career but he does want to remain enlisted until he reaches the mark of his grandfather’s rank, which will take six to seven years. His father, Mike Lewis, has fond memories of his life growing up on Air Force bases where there were beautiful homes, clean, neat surroundings, and a respect for neighbors.

“My wife and I were at first surprised with Shelton’s decision to go into the military. But after he took the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery and rocked it, he could choose whichever field he wanted and he is now in the most intellectually rigorous program the Armed Forces has to offer,” 20-year education veteran Mike Lewis said.

“I had some reservations and concerns about his safety in the military, but now I feel that my son will have the authority and ability to do something about the evil in this world,” he said. “I am very proud.”



Photo courtesy of Anissa Ly

Central High senior Anissa Ly, second from right, demonstrates her physical fitness while participating in an endurance test during the weeklong Naval Academy Summer Seminar.

Summer military experience confirms career choice

Attending the Naval Academy Summer Seminar (NASS) Program is just the first step in the application process for attending the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Central High School senior Anissa Ly can put a check mark in that box.

The six-day summer seminar for high achievers who have completed their junior year in high school was “the hardest but most enjoyable experience of my life,” said Ly. “It was a blast!”

She has always wanted to go into the military with an interest in the Navy, Marines or Coast Guard. The NASS teaches students about life at the Naval Academy, where academics, athletics, and professional training play equally important roles in developing our nation’s leaders.

Ly’s 10-hour days started at 5 am and included classes in martial arts, English, polymer chemistry and history. Sprinkled in were teambuilding activities and plenty of physical fitness training. But full days are nothing new to this young lady.

She is currently taking her academic classes at the University of West Georgia where she participates in

the “Move On When Ready” program. At Central High, she plays the French horn in the marching and symphonic bands, runs track and cross country and is on the wrestling team. She is a member of the Beta and Spanish Clubs, National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society.

“I found it so rewarding that I actually completed the week!” Ly said. “There was one part where we had to stand at attention facing a wall, not moving or speaking until an officer asked you a question. It could be anything that we had memorized such as chain of command, enlisted and officer ranks, or the Fifth Law of the Navy.”

Ly then rattled it off, “On the strength of one link in the cable, dependeth the might of the chain. Who knows when thou may’st be tested, so live that thou bearest the strain.”

Ly noted that the Naval Academy application process is strenuous but “I am called to do service and serving my country to a great way to do that,” she stated.

Fingers are crossed that this dedicated young woman will get the call in April to follow her dream. In the meantime, she will surely “live that thou bearest the strain.”

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A conversation

with Andy Camp

Vice President of Economic Development, Carroll Tomorrow

What is Carroll Tomorrow's role in delivering quality jobs to our community?

Carroll Tomorrow, as the local economic development organization, encourages, promotes and facilitates entrepreneurship; manages business retention, expansion and aftercare; pursues new markets and target industries with the support of our local, regional and state partners; and, identifies and markets new sites for expansion and recruitment of new businesses.

We regularly see projects for new or expanding businesses land here in the community due to new contracts with new customers. Part of our local economic development strategy is to work with businesses across Carroll County that have sustainable growth by both customer and employee engagement. It is our mission to perpetuate new quality job creation with every new venture.

What trends are you seeing in the local job market?

Carroll County is very fortunate and benefits from having several large businesses, along with excellent proximity to major customers and markets, as well as its interconnectivity. We also have a business friendly community that has a proven track record of success. We are experiencing employment opportunities in the advanced manufacturing, food processing,



Andy Camp, left, describes Carroll County resources to state project managers during a recent familiarization tour.

healthcare and technology fields. With the strong local leadership we have in place, sustainable job growth will continue.

What are you reading lately that helps in your work?

In 2011 Jim Clifton, Chairman and CEO of Gallup, wrote "The Coming Jobs War". If you haven't read it, pick up a copy and do so. His book hits on many strong points, but he boils all their research down to one simple and profound idea – we need more good jobs. Clifton states, "The will of the world is first and foremost to have a good job." While his definition of a good job is one "that gives them the amount of work they want," I prefer the local perspective of a good job is one that is full-time, permanent, and pays at or better than the average wage. We have lots of those, but can always use more.

How will 'good jobs' make a difference in Carroll County?

Obtaining more good jobs for our community has to be at the center of every decision considered. With more good jobs our local economy grows in many indirect ways through construction of new homes, retail trade and support of business expansion related to those good jobs.

SEE **CAMP/PAGE 14**

About Andy Camp

Andy Camp joined Carroll Tomorrow in 2015 after serving as senior development specialist for the City of LaGrange. Prior to that position, Camp was vice president of Camp and Associates Land Surveying for 11 years and also worked as a preconstruction engineer for Holder Construction Company in Atlanta. A graduate of Auburn University, Camp was a member of the 2015 class of Leadership Georgia and is a member of the Georgia Economic Developers Association.

12 for LIFE

Go for it and dream big!

Changing statistics can be a daunting prospect. About a decade ago, statistics showed that one in three students starting first grade would not graduate from high school.

Southwire, the largest manufacturer of building wire in North America, is headquartered in Carroll County and since its founding in 1950, has strived to create a positive impact in every community in which it operates. Recognizing the drop out problem, the 12 for Life program was created as Southwire's desire to help turn that statistic around for local students.

By combining traditional classroom instruction with jobs inside real manufacturing plants, the unique partnership between Southwire Company and the Carroll County Schools ensures students receive balanced educations. They get the best of all worlds by working regular hours, earning actual wages and – most importantly – learning skills they will need after they graduate.

No one tells the 12 for Life story better than Nivenitie McDaniel.

“While in high school, I was always getting into trouble – fighting, not doing my work,” she said. “I had two younger brothers and I didn't realize the influence I was having on them. Once I did, I thought OK, I've got to change my ways – this is not the example I want to be.”

A counselor at high school suggested the 12 for Life program and with several friends already working at the manufacturing plant, McDaniel decided to give it a try.

Working at different stations such as the spool assembly line or boxing wire for shipment, she said this program gave her the push she needed.

“The structure of the program was good for me. I was surrounded by students with a story like mine with a lot of negativity but we all now had the opportunity to get our lives on track,” McDaniel said. “We were encouraged to pursue our dreams – either move on to the big plant or go to college. Our supervisors, mentors and others helped us every step of the way.”

Two of McDaniel's former supervisors had nothing but good things to say about her.

“I am so proud of her,” said Debbie Jordan. “I knew we had some good students come through the program but she is one of the best! She did her job and made our job easy.”

Supervisor Rodney Turner said Nivenitie is a great example of the 12 for Life slogan of the Three D's – dedicated, determined and dependable.

McDaniel did graduate from high school and with the help of a 12 for Life scholarship, she went to Georgia Highlands College in Rome. But this didn't mean life got easier.



12 for Life graduate Nivenitie McDaniel, right, talks with former supervisors Rodney Turner and Debbie Jordan during a visit back to the plant where she worked as she completed Southwire's unique cooperative education program.

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The most recent articulation agreement will result in the Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.

SEAMLESS OPPORTUNITIES

UWG, WGTC join forces

The University of West Georgia and West Georgia Technical College are breaking down barriers to allow students to transfer seamlessly into several degree programs at UWG. Transfer Articulation Agreements exist in business and criminology and most recently, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing has been added to the collaboration.

“We continue to increase the access our local citizens have to high-quality post-secondary education right here at home,” said WGTC President Steve Daniel. Dr. Kyle Marrero, UWG President, seconded Daniel’s sentiments about the collaboration between the two institutions, “Our goal is to continue to

The Workforce Education Task Force will seek to identify, catalogue, and support all workforce and education partners, resources, and institutions, and will encourage partnerships, coordination of services, and articulation agreements.

work with WGTC to provide pathways for achievement and opportunity for our students.”

One student who is traveling this pathway is Eric Vaughn. A 2006 graduate of Temple High School, Vaughn attended UWG with the intent of becoming a band director and music teacher.

“I realize how few jobs were available in this field and dropped out of school,” he said. “I worked as a custodian at an

elementary school and wasn’t too fond of that job.”

He said he started back to college at WGTC because of the existing articulation program with UWG in general business. All but one of his credits transferred after he earned associate degrees in general business and accounting.

“The WGTC accounting program more than prepared me for the accounting program at UWG,” Vaughn



Eric Vaughn takes advantage of the articulation agreement in the business program that has been in place for several years.

said. He is currently taking upper level courses in accounting and economics.

While at WGTC, Vaughn was a 2016 finalist for the Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership (GOAL) and was

a regional and national winner in Phi Beta Lambda (collegiate chapter of Future Business Leaders of America) competitions. He hopes to start a PBL chapter at UWG.

“My future goal is to attend graduate school to earn a CPA or PhD in economics. I’d like to work with the Federal Reserve as a monetary economist,” Vaughn said.



CES String Orchestra members singing at holiday concert

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LIFE

FROM PAGE 10

“Monday through Friday, I drove an hour to campus, slept on a pallet in the back of my car, clocked in at 8 am for a campus job, went to class, drove another hour back to work at McDonalds all night and then did it all over again,” she noted.

How did she do it? “With a lot of prayer,” she said.

After Georgia Highlands, she attended Kennesaw University and completed a two year program in one year. “When I graduated, I cried like a baby,” McDaniel said. “I never thought I would complete high school, much less earn two college degrees.”

Now as an enrollment management specialist at Georgia Highlands, she is on the front lines helping students through the paperwork maze of admissions and financial aid.

“Many students are first generation college students, just like I was, and I am so humbled to be able to help them with this process,” she said. “I’ve come full circle.”

What would Nivenitie McDaniel tell high school students who are thinking about participating in the 12 for Life

program?

“Go for it and dream big. Don’t let your circumstances define who you are,” she stated. “Make your dreams a reality.”

Workforce Education Task Force Goal: Will seek to identify and recruit other businesses willing to create student work study programs such as 12 for Life, Tanner Connections and the Southwire Engineering Academy.



12 for Life graduate Nivenitie McDaniel.

CAMP

FROM PAGE 9

Where do you see Carroll County out-pacing our neighbors in creating new job opportunities?

Leadership is critical to job creation. Our business and community leadership come together on all projects, big and small, and support one another. This leads to an environment of quality job creation. We are also setting a high bar by focusing on entrepreneurship. Carroll County has a long history of spawning entrepreneurs. Not everyone is going

to become a business owner, true, but a better understanding and education of entrepreneurship can prepare someone to one day start a business or become a better employee. Along the same vein, the new buzz word is ‘innovation’ and innovation is a wonderful thing, but an innovation does not create jobs without an entrepreneur to bring it to market.

Our community’s entrepreneurial spirit and small business success has a proven track record. There will continue to be that 5 percent of our small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that make big jumps in market share. As more small businesses are able to make that jump, we need to be prepared to support their growth and subsequent job creation.

What do you envision is the future for our local workforce?

Education and retention of our youth is a local issue we cannot afford to fail to address. Every under-educated youth is an unfilled job. Every young person that leaves with no plan to return and work in the region is an unfilled job. We must continue to foster work-based learning opportunities and develop true apprenticeship options for our students as early as middle school all the way up to technical college and university. By creating these experiential learning environments, our students will see first-hand the benefits of local, high paying and skilled jobs.



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