



Advocates for Community and Rural Education

Turrell Gentlemen of Distinction among many assets of small Delta school

If you were a senior citizen in Turrell, AR, you might receive a call in the next few days from a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior at the high school inviting you to take part in an activity entitled "Honoring Our Seniors."

If you were out and about on business in the late afternoon or on a Saturday, you might have noticed several young men picking up trash in an activity called "Curbside Cleanup."

If you were a student, you would have seen leaders in your school sprucing up the campus in their "free" time at lunch.

These activities are all carried out by a promising group of male students at Turrell High School called Gentlemen of Distinction.

Organized in 1990 by then principal Alfred Hogan and sponsored now by Coach Kwame Brown, Gentlemen of Distinction is perhaps the most exclusive club on campus.

Tough entry standards

The current group consists of 20 out of about 75 male high school students who have met the organization's rigorous membership requirements.

To be a member, students must first express an interest in joining. They must have a GPA of 2.0. They

must qualify for the group's "zero tolerance" policy for drugs and alcohol. They must be considered "upstanding in the community," and they must complete 30 hours of community service *before* they can even be considered for membership. If a prospective member meets all of these requirements, he can then be recommended for membership and be voted in by the group.

Nurturing and mentoring

Coach Brown says the organization is very nurturing and, as well as giving the young men an opportunity to contribute in a positive way to their community, it encourages them to go to college or otherwise develop a career and teaches them etiquette, parliamentary procedure, Roberts Rules of Order, job interview skills, and general life skills.

Brown, who has mentored the group for the past six years, says of the current members, "This is a very, very good group" of whom he's extremely proud. "They have their stuff together."

He claims the positive attitude of the group uplifts the morale of all students in the school and that they police each other to ensure that their behavior always measures up to the organization's expected standard.

Gentlemen of Distinction has made such a difference in



Turrell Gentlemen of Distinction have formed a student chapter of Advocates for Community and Rural Education. Among its members are Bruce Delaney, GeJuan Jordan, Alex Person, Travis Baker, Eric Corburn, Justin Combs, Alfred Farrow, Ben Hayes, Teverice Williams, Paul Sisk, Tauro Williams, and Larry Stepter.

the school and students at Turrell that another Delta school, Dermott, sought permission and advice on modeling a program at that school on them.

Coach Brown says his Gentlemen of Distinction think that's great, but they want to go to Dermott to "make sure they are doing it right."

Other positive indicators

Gentlemen of Distinction is just one indicator that school leaders at Turrell have their act together.

Anyone walking through the buildings of this campus that houses 389 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade will notice the clean, well maintained facilities.

There are evidences everywhere of school pride in Posters, trophy cases, and

Tee-shirts that say simply, "Turrell Family."

Turrell was recently identified as the #2 school in the state on a school performance index devised by the University of Arkansas' Department of Education Reform. The study took into account a school's test scores compared to indicators that tend to disadvantage students.

They are especially proud of a recent award won for showing the most improvement out of 62 schools in the Arkansas Reading First program.

In addition Turrell has been able to do what few schools in small Delta communities can claim in recent years—reverse a decline in (see TURRELL on p. 2)

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enrollment. The number of students in the school district went from 366 in the 2004-2005 school year to 389 today. In addition, the school serves 60 three- and four-year-old preschoolers in three different programs.

Much of this progress can be attributed to the skilled and dedicated leadership of Alfred Hogan. Hogan, a 31-year veteran of serving in the public schools, has spent the last 28 years at Turrell.

Formerly high school principal and now superintendent, he initiated many of the programs and practices that make the school a success story today.

Works for economic growth

Realizing that an effective school comes from a dynamic community, Hogan has worked with the Economic Development Board for Crittenden County to bring new industry to the town of Turrell.

One project is a tract of 24 new houses within the city limits, with the possibility of building more. At a critical new exchange of two major interstates just outside the town, a new truck stop is being built. And Hogan is working with real hopes of success at getting a branch bank located in the town.

There is at least one other economic development project in the works that could be a major boon to the town and provide many jobs.

Community involvement

Hogan himself is a longtime resident of Turrell and thinks it important to maintain a good relationship with the community.

He says he often talks to former students at the school and tries to get them to come back there to live. He also actively recruits good teachers and tries to encourage them to stay in the district on a long-term basis.

He does frequent walk-throughs in the buildings to make students feel wel-



Teverice Williams returns from classes at Mid-South Community College in W. Memphis. Last year two Gentlemen of Distinction, Kevin Dixon and Doug Andrews, earned their two-year Associate's Degree from MSCC the night before they received their high school diploma at Turrell.

come. He tries to create a sense of family at the school.

Having a school at Turrell—a good school—is crucial to future growth for the community, Hogan says.

Certainly many indicators both in the school and the community point to the school's and the community's continued success.

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Education Reforms Civil War

By Debbie Pelley

Remember when education and the little red school house were the glue that held the communities together, bringing unity and well being to our entire nation—making it possible for the United States to become the greatest nation on earth?

Compare that to the present when education reforms have brought bitter divisiveness to our state, literally to a Civil War—brother against brother. Two brothers, a superintendent and a mayor, both from Biggers-Reyno, publicly battled a few weeks ago as they both petitioned the State School Board.

The superintendent of Corning (former superintendent of Biggers-Reyno) petitioned the board to close campuses at Biggers Reyno K-12, and the mayor, his brother, petitioned the Board to keep the campuses open.

This battle in the community has become so acrimonious that the Mayor, opposing the consolidation, presented the State Board statements from parents of 100 students saying they would never send their children to Corning if their school was closed but would find another school or another way to educate them. That would cost the Corning District \$40,000 a year.

Although the brothers were very respectful in their presentations, using humor to cover the tension, it doesn't take much imagination to visualize the pain and anguish this community and family have endured—the same pain and acrimony repeated in at least 31 other communities where campuses have been closed.

The students in one area will be riding the bus 80 miles a day and in another area will be riding 70 miles a day to and from school as a result of the closure of the isolated school district of Biggers-Reyno.

In another closure of isolated schools Alread and Scotland permitted by the State Board at their January meeting, kindergarten students will be riding the bus three hours a day on dangerous curving roads, catching the bus before dawn and getting home after dark, a ten and a half hour day.

In the name of education, there have been numerous other divisions and bitter disputes in the state: school districts against the state, small districts against large, urban against rural. . .

Legislators have succumbed to fear and intimidation, the State Board of Education has let their agenda for consolidation and reform override common sense where the children are concerned, and the general public doesn't have the resolve to protest the takeover of their schools.

Who will stand up for the children?

Alpena does it again: Katie Good wins national science competition



Alpena sophomore Katie Good (right) receives her award from the Southeast Region Vice President of Future Farmers of America. Katie's awards since winning first place in Environmental Science in the Alpena Science Fair last February:

- March 2005 — 3rd place Environmental Science, Senior High Division, Northwest Arkansas Regional Science & Engineering Fair
- March 2005 — 2nd place Environmental Science, Regional Junior Academy competition
- April 2005 — 2nd place Environmental Science, Arkansas State Science and Engineering Fair
- April 2005 — 3rd place Environmental Science, State Junior Academy Competition

Special Awards won at the Arkansas State Science and Engineering Fair:

- Association of Women Geoscientists' Award
- Martin Luther King/Daisy Bates Award
- U.S. Metric Association Award

- June 2005 — 1st place 4-H Environmental Stewardship, District O'Rama
- July 2005 — 1st place 4-H Environmental Stewardship, State O'Rama
- June 2005 — 1st place Environmental Science, State FFA Agriscience
- June 2005 — Overall Best of Show, State FFA Agriscience Competition
- October 2005 — 1st place Environmental Science, Division 1, National FFA Agriscience Competition

By now Alpena student Katie Good needs a suitcase just to carry her awards in, and she's only a sophomore.

Racking up 12 wins in the past year, Katie's crowning achievement has been a coveted and difficult to obtain first place in the National F.F.A. Agriscience Competition.

Katie received her award at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky., this past October.

The award-winning project was a "crossover" environmental project — one that can be adapted for conventional science fairs or for other competitions in, for example, 4-H and F.F.A. It featured a study to determine the effects on Baker's Prairie, a pristine, untouched tract of original prairie in Boone County, of the newly constructed Harrison Middle School, located adjacent to the prairie.

Katie says she was excited about the prospect of working with the beauty of

the prairie, "free, never-been-touched, never-been-farmed" that was still in the state it would have been in "when the Indians ran on it."

Her project was to measure the effects of runoff with pollutants from the parking lot at the new middle school on a certain wildflower called the royal catchfly.

Locating colonies of the royal catchfly, taking soil samples, monitoring changes—Katie can recite an impressive array of methodologies that she clearly employs with skill and accomplishment.

Katie is part of a proud tradition of outstanding science achievement at Alpena High School in western Boone County. One of the first sights to greet visitors to this small, rural campus is its "Wall of Fame," which displays 350 awards garnered at regional, state, and international science fairs since 1997.

In 2004 the 550-student district ranked first in the state in the Science and Engineering Fair, beating out dozens of much

larger schools.

Katie—a bright, confident, well-spoken young woman—says of her small school experience: "Little schools provide so much more of a one-on-one environment. Your superintendent can walk down the halls and visit with you, you can learn more because your teacher is willing to sit down and work with you, it's just a much more intimate setting."

Having attended a larger school before moving to Alpena, Katie believes students "become anonymous" and "get lost in all the people" in a large school.

The best thing about her success with her science projects has been the opportunity to meet and interact with lots of different people, she says.

Katie is the daughter of David and Kathy Good. Besides science fair competitions, she enjoys Beta Club, volleyball, F.F.A., F.C.C.L.A., Student Council, basketball, track, and Quiz Bowl.

Save Our Schools

4408 Blankenship Road
Everton, AR 72633

Phone: 870-429-6543
Fax: 870-429-6543
Email: lavinagrandon@aracre.org

Advocates for Community and Rural Education

www.aracre.org



Eudora citizens battle state for school

ACRE chapter leader Verlin Butler and Eudora PTA president Walter Cook confer at community meeting.



An intelligent, committed group of community members have put up a valiant year-long battle to save their school in Eudora. They will soon know their fate.

The school's woes started with tangled finances and improper coding. Beginning in the fall of 2004, school patrons began trying to hold school officials and school board members more accountable.

The superintendent was replaced and the school board finally brought to see that more responsibility must be brought to bear on school spending.

However, it all may be too late unless the State Board rules in their favor. Using the Omnibus Education Act of 2004, the state removed the school board on January 21 and threatens them with consolidation on July 1.

What a shameful way to reward a dedicated group of citizens who are doing what experts and policy makers say the education system needs more of—getting involved. Eudora is a healthy, thriving community that doesn't deserve to lose its school.

SOLD OUT!



A piece of the Grady community went on sale in November, courtesy of Act 60.

It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood. Tradition was on sale and going cheap.

The auction for Grady schools was held in the cafeteria of the elementary school on Highway 65 in Grady on that November day just 20 months after the passage of Act 60 made consolidation of school districts with fewer than 350 students state law.

Though Act 60 purported to only require "consolidation of administrations," it has led to closures of more than 31 campuses to date, including Grady.

About 25 people were present for the demise of the former Grady School District, 10 of whom were from the town itself. Only three were bidders.

In the crowd were Randy Hardin of Har-

din Farms, whose great-uncle had donated the land for the football field which sold for \$21,000, and Janice Maroney, who said she felt sad because she attended school there and was business manager for 20 years.

The elementary building and an 11-unit apartment building sold for \$32,000 to Jason Sanderlin of Greenbrier, the bargain king of the day.

