A large audience gathered June 28 to express their appreciation and bid “goodspeed” to BRTC President Richard Gaines, whose 42-year career as an educator ended June 30. Gaines had spent 38 of those years at this institution, including 33 years as the head.

He is credited with leading BRTC from its beginnings in 1973 as a Vo-Tech School with about 40 students in modest facilities to a current enrollment level of some 2,500 students attending classes on two campuses—Pocahontas and Paragould—with a total of 24 buildings, most of them constructed during his tenure. His time and efforts at the institution also saw the transformation from a “school” to a comprehensive two-year community college offering technical certificates and degrees as well as college transfer courses and degree programs.

Gaines stressed to those gathered at the emotional event his own appreciation for a tradition of support from the community. He also acknowledged the dedication and work of the faculty and staff, repeating his belief in “hiring the right people and then letting them do their jobs.”

The reception brought together members of the BRTC faculty and staff, several of Gaines’ colleagues from other colleges and state agencies, and a host of well-wishers from the community. Several of Gaines’ family, including his wife Patti, his son Marc, and his sister Bert Fowler and family, were also present.

Guests enjoyed an extensive and festive buffet prior to the beginning the program, which was emceed by Jack McCord, former BRTC VP for Academics. The program included musical selections by the Kimbrough Singers—Joniece Trammel, Rachel Koons, and Butch Dail; the unveiling of two pieces of art (Continued on pg. 2)
Academic Distinction Scholarships Awarded for 2011-2012

Several Academic Distinction Scholarships have been awarded to area high school graduates to attend BRTC for the 2011-2012 academic year. Some of the recipients are Jennifer Alls of Delaplaine, Jeffery Shane Duckworth of Walnut Ridge, Derek French of O’Kean, Carla Money, Lesleigh Whitlock, and Andrew Trent Morledge of Pocahontas, Paige Price of Corning, and Chelsea Sneed of Strawberry.

Alls is the daughter of Jimmy and Rhonda Alls of Delaplaine and is a graduate of Hoxie High School. She plans to pursue an RN degree.

Duckworth, a Walnut Ridge High School graduate, is the son of Jeff Duckworth of Walnut Ridge and Rhonda Smart Duckworth of Pocahontas. He plans to pursue a computer networking degree.

French is a graduate of Hoxie High School and plans to work on his electricity/electronics degree while pursuing a career in farming. He is the son of Darren and Lisa French of O’Kean.

Money, daughter of Edward Money and Goldie Money, plans to pursue a career in the medical field. She is a graduate of Pocahontas High School.

Whitlock, also a Pocahontas High School graduate, is the daughter of David and Kathleen Whitlock. She plans to pursue an Associate of Arts at BRTC before studying Journalism or Video/Audio Production at a four-year university.

Morledge is the son of Mike and Julie Campbell of Pocahontas and is also a graduate of Pocahontas High School. He plans to pursue an education in sports medicine/physical therapy.

Price is the daughter of Rick and Tammy Price and a graduate of Corning High School. She plans to become an RN and specialize in neonatal care.

Sneed is the daughter of Reena Sneed of Strawberry and Dennis and Sandy Sneed of Paragould. She is a graduate of Hillcrest High School and plans to study either Psychology or Early Childhood Education.

The Academic Distinction Scholarship is awarded to individuals graduating from an accredited Arkansas high school and have earned a 24 or better on the ACT or are in the top 10% of their graduating class. The award is for full tuition and is renewable up to four semesters provided the recipient successfully completes a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester and maintains a cumulative GPA of 3.00 for the first two semesters and increasing to a 3.25 cumulative GPA for the remaining two semesters.

For more information on the Academic Distinction Scholarship, contact Natasha Rush in the Office of Financial Aid at 870-248-4000.

College, Community

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painted by Dr. Sandy Davis-Baltz, Art Instructor; a proclamation by David Jansen, Randolph County Judge, a “Key to the City” presented by Pocahontas Mayor Frank Bigger; a citation from the Arkansas State Senate presented by State Senator Missy Irvin; and a presentation of a special U. S. Flag display by Keri Wright of Universal Asset Management.

In addition, to “lighten the mood,” the event included a special gift certificate presented by Danny Ellis from Gaines’ “redneck friends” at the Junction 166 Café, and plenty of tributes and “stories” by McCord, by former BRTC Counselor Jim Ulmer, and by Kelly Grooms, Fine Arts Theatre Instructor who began his career under Gaines tenure.

A highlight was the announcement by BRTC Board Chair Mike Dunn that the Board voted to honor Gaines by re-naming the Business Technology Center the “Richard Gaines Technology Center.”

A special tribute was a video address by Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe, who is a personal friend and former classmate of Gaines.

Other tributes included remarks by Dr. Ed Franklin, Director of the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, Dr. Glen Fenter, President of Mid-South Community College; and Dr. Larry Williams, President of ASU-Newport.

Gaines, whose love of horseback riding is widely known, concluded the reception with his response by evoking the words from the song, “Happy Trails to you, until we meet again.” It was a perfect and totally unplanned set-up for the final music selection as the Kimbrough singers struck up with that very song as Davis-Baltz revealed the second piece of original art. It was a large painting of Gaines on his horse, Kojak, a special gift and surprise for Gaines from his wife.

More photos of the reception can be found at: http://media.blackrivertech.edu/
“Juneteenth” Events Bring Awareness to Community

The second annual Juneteenth Celebration to commemorate the ending of slavery in this nation brought together a large and enthusiastic audience over the two-day event held June 17-18 on the campus of BRTC and at the Eddie Mae Herron Center/Museum in Pocahontas. Sponsoring organizations were the EMH Center and the BRTC Foundation’s SEAS project, with additional funding support by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. BRTC’s Department of Continuing Education and Business Outreach assisted with the Friday evening event.

The holiday was established to mark the date in 1865 when the last of the slaves were informed of emancipation, though the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 with an effective date of January 1, 1863.

Highlights of the Friday night activities included presentations by Dr. Derrick McKisick, Assistant Professor of History and Black Studies at Fairfield University, and Cindy Robinett, local historian and Instructor in Adult Education at Black River Technical College. McKisick spoke on the African American experience in Arkansas, and Robinett presented a slide show and statistics concerning slavery in Randolph County.

The audience also enjoyed musical presentations by the St. Louis West Central Metro Singers and by Homeward Bound, a Southern Gospel group consisting of Betty Gazaway, John Dalton, Doug Sheets, Joe Stayton, and Kay McFall, accompanist.

BRTC Staff Promoted, Position Filled

Julie Edington, Trent Ingram, Dennis (D.J.) Ross, Karen Liebhaber and Ramonda Housh, have each received promotions on the BRTC Pocahontas campus, and Kathryn Lewis has been hired to fill a vacant position on the BRTC Paragould campus.

Edington, a resident of Biggers, has been promoted to Human Resources Director. She has been working as Personnel Assistant since she began working at BRTC in 2006. Prior to joining BRTC, she worked at Futrell Pharmacy and Biggers-Reyno High School. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration degree from Williams Baptist College.

Ingram, who resides in Pocahontas, has been working as Building Equipment Maintenance Repairman since 2008 and has been promoted to the position of Skilled Tradesman. He holds a welding certificate from Pemiscot County Vo-Tech and has taken apprenticeship classes at BRTC. He previously worked for Koons Plumbing in Pocahontas.

Ross began working for BRTC in 2000 as Institutional Services Assistant and has been promoted to Institutional Services Supervisor. He is a resident of Ravenden and worked previously at Thompson Construction and Murphy’s Excavation before joining the BRTC staff.

Liebhaber, also a Pocahontas resident, has been promoted to Director of Distance Education. She began working at BRTC in 2000 as an instructor of English and added the role of Distance Education Coordinator in 2003. She holds both B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from Arkansas State University. Prior experience includes teaching at ASU, working as a technical writer for Euronet Worldwide in Little Rock, and teaching at Pikes Peak Community College in North Little Rock.

Housh has assumed a full-time role as Director of BRTC’s nursing program. She has been leading the program since she joined BRTC in 2004. She is a Pocahontas resident and holds a B.S. in Nursing degree from Arkansas State University and a Master in Nursing Science (MNSC) degree from University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She is also a certified nurse practitioner (CPNP) and APN.

Lewis is from Paragould and has been hired as Administrative Assistant I. She previously worked for two years as a student worker on BRTC’s Paragould campus while working on her Associate of Arts in Gen Ed degree. Prior to that she was employed by the Surgical Hospital of Jonesboro.
Campus Commentary

We all realize that to be successful an organization needs a leader that has a positive vision for the region, and can communicate it and motivate others to believe in and achieve it. In addition, the effectiveness of the leader is enhanced exponentially by a core of other leaders who transfer that vision throughout the organization. Without the team little is accomplished, compared with what could have been.

Taking that concept and applying it to BRTC is proof of this…and it is how we will continue to progress. We will do it together. As a team, each of us has a specific role to play as it regards our “job” which will assist us in helping our students to be successful. At BRTC it is what we do…and we do it very, very well.

Richard has built a legacy that is unparalleled in the state. Our obligation is to build upon it. All of us are pleased that there is now a campus building that has his name on it to remind us all of why we are truly here. Let us not forget that the phenomenal growth of the physical facilities is not his primary legacy; it is the thousands of students that he shepherded thru the halls of BRTC—and the better lives he gave to those students, the children of those students and the economic growth of northeast Arkansas.

This is the house that Richard built—and he and Patti (you too Mark ;-) are always welcome. The house where there is no “I” in “team.”