Cusaac, Thomas lead top educator honors

Angela Cusaac was named Vance County Schools Teacher of the Year for 2018-2019 and Dr. Carnetta Thomas was named the district’s Principal of the Year at the school system’s annual “Excellence in Education” banquet held on September 11, at McGregor Hall in Henderson.

Cusaac, shown in the photo at right standing second from right as she receives her award, teaches at Vance County High School. She was selected as the recipient of the prestigious award based on her honor in being chosen last year as Teacher of the Year for Southern Vance High School.

Thomas is the principal of L.B.Yancey Elementary School. She is shown in the photo at middle right holding her awards.

Lemondre Watson was named as the district’s Assistant Principal of the Year for 2018-2019. He is now an assistant principal at Vance County Middle School. Last year, he worked at Eaton-Johnson Middle School. He is shown with his awards at bottom left with Superintendent Anthony Jackson.

Donna Stratmon was honored as the school system’s Beginning Teacher of the Year. She also is shown with Jackson at bottom right. Stratmon teaches at Vance County High School and last year was the Beginning Teacher of the Year for Northern Vance High School.

All of the award recipients were chosen from an outstanding field of their peers. In addition to Jackson, presenting their awards were Board of Education members Ruth Hartness and Ed Wilson. Kedecia Stewart assisted with Cusaac’s award and Kristen Boyd helped with Watson’s award.
‘State of our Schools’ in Vance County is trending upward

Community leaders and citizens from across the county attended the school system’s “State of Our Schools” events on September 26 and 27 that were designed to provide detailed data about student and school performances during the 2017-2018 school year and strategies for the current year.

Superintendent Anthony Jackson led presentations at each of the events that provided those in attendance with a great deal of information about their public schools.

The event on September 26 was held at the Henderson Country Club and included lunch for city and county officials, business leaders, church leaders, pastors and top local educators. The luncheon was co-sponsored by the Henderson Rotary Club, Duke Energy, Mako Medical Laboratories, the Henderson-Vance Chamber of Commerce and the Vance County Public School Foundation.

Vance County High School hosted the “State of Our Schools” during the evening of September 27. At that event, all 15 local schools set up booths for parents, students, educators, local officials and citizens to visit and receive valuable information about services and programs.

During each of the sessions, Jackson shared data about the substantial gains made in 2017-2018 by local schools including: six schools improving by one School Performance Grade (SPG); seven schools exceeding state growth standards; two more schools meeting state growth standards; the four-year graduation rate increasing to 82.1 percent; the high school dropout rate declining for a third consecutive year to around two percent; Early College High maintaining its “A” SPG; Pinkston Street, L.B. Yancey and Clarke elementaries earning “B” SPGs; seven schools with a “C” SPG; and no current schools with an “F” SPG.

He stressed that our schools this year are committed to building on the positive trend, with expectations to have all schools with a “C” or better SPG, an 85-percent graduation rate and a dropout rate of less than two percent.

Superintendent Anthony Jackson shared information at the “State of Our Schools” events on student and school performance data from the 2017-2018 school year and expectations for the new school year at the session with community leaders, top photo, and in the session open to the public, bottom photo.
Model Learning Environments

Members of the district’s Model Learning Environments Digital Convergence Steering Committee participated September 25 in a workshop to plan strategies.

The committee members had very detailed discussions about a variety of things including how to build literacy on the Digital Convergence Framework, developing a vision and theory of action on Model Learning and plans to begin setting the conditions of Digital Convergence in working through leadership success indicators.

Participants in the planning session included Superintendent Anthony Jackson; Assistant Superintendents Cindy Bennett, Jennifer Bennett and Trixie Brooks; Technology Director Marsha Abbott; Principal Carnetta Thomas of L.B. Yancey Elementary; Assistant Principal Lemondre Watson of Vance County Middle; and curriculum specialists Letisha Judd and Destiny Ross.

'Student Spotlight'

Vance County Schools is continuing its partnership this school year with The Daily Dispatch, Henderson’s newspaper, to recognize our students in the “Student Spotlight” awards program.

The program is designed to recognize a student from each of our 15 schools throughout the school year. The students are selected mostly on their good character, self-motivation and positive relationships with others.

Marisol Hernandez, a third grader at E.M. Rollins Elementary School and shown at right standing at center, is the first award winner for this year.
Early release day features variety of trainings

Educators and support staff from across the district took part in training sessions during the afternoon of an early release day for students on September 19.

Facilitators led the sessions that were held in several schools and the Administrative Services Center.

The training sessions included district-level and individual school workshops. Some schools partnered on trainings.

In addition to classroom teachers, those in trainings were counselors, social workers, nurses and school administrators.

The wide variety of training sessions included: a focus on classroom management for beginning teachers, top photo; the district’s School Behavioral Health Team leading training with counselors, social workers and nurses, middle photo; and high school teachers in a “Teach Like a Champion” workshop, bottom photo.
Co-hosts of the “Fishing University” television show talk with students at Vance County High School as part of a taping session for the show that will feature several different locations in Vance County.

‘Fishing University’ visits with VCHS Vipers

Students at Vance County High School will be part of an international fishing television show that is set to broadcast beginning in January.

The co-hosts and production crew members of the “Fishing University” television show, broadcast on three different networks including the Outdoor Channel, World Fishing Network and Sportsman Channel, came to visit the Vance County High Vipers as part of a program that will feature Vance County. The program will include fishing at Kerr Lake, as well as a focus on local historical sites and the county’s annual Show, Shine, Shag and Dine Antique Car Show.

The Vance County Tourism Department staff members have been working with the television show crew members on plans for the broadcast.

They wanted to include the visit to the high school, so that the show’s co-hosts, Ray Brazier and Charlie Ingram, could spend time talking with students about the importance of getting a good education and career opportunities in outdoor activities and businesses. State Park Ranger Bryce Fleming and local agriculture expert Paul McKenzie joined them.

Plans call for the show to be broadcast several times on all three networks.
NCCAT recognizes Cusaac

Angela Cusaac, who was selected in early September as the Vance County Schools Teacher of the Year for 2018-2019, has been recognized for her achievements by the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT).

She was notified later in the month in a letter from Dorcas Masson of NCCAT, that the center’s Development Foundation had named her as the Richard L. Thompson Honored Educator Scholar for this school year.

As a recipient of the prestigious scholar award, Cusaac can participate in a NCCAT program of her choice at no cost. Her participation will include costs for a substitute teacher in her classroom, travel expenses to the center, program instruction and materials, food and lodging. She also receives $250 to use in her classroom.

Thompson was a leader in education in North Carolina, as well as Mississippi, where he served as state superintendent. He requested his scholarship be awarded to the Vance County Schools Teacher of the Year.

Helping our community

Vance County Schools will begin its fundraising campaign with employees to support the efforts of the United Way of Vance County in mid-October.

The campaign will extend through early December.

For several decades, the school system has conducted an annual fundraising campaign with employees for the local United Way. However, the fundraising effort was suspended for 2017-2018 as United Way of Vance County worked through reorganization.

The local United Way is now led by a 12-member volunteer board of directors who will begin allocating grant funds made possible by contributions from donors during the early months of 2019. All donations received are used to help needy families in Vance and Warren counties especially in the areas of education, health and basic needs.

The charitable organization plans to continue to support such outstanding local agencies as Life Line Outreach Inc., Area Christians Together in Service (ACTS), Community Partners of Hope Inc., Gang Free Inc., the Addiction Recovery Center for Men and Smart Start.
Teacher Executive Institute ready to begin its 25th year

It was during the 1993-1994 school year that educators from Vance County Schools began their participation in the Vance County Teacher Executive Institute.

Since that time almost 500 local educators have completed the prestigious educational leadership program. TEI, as it is commonly called, will operate for its 25th year this school year. It will have 18 educators taking part in four all-day sessions that will bring them together from their different schools with plenty of opportunities to network with local business leaders and discuss their common interests of preparing students for our future workforce.

Officials with the Henderson-Vance Chamber of Commerce and the Vance County Public School Foundation are planning a TEI alumni event for early 2019 to mark the 25th anniversary. More information on the event will be shared soon.

Each year, TEI includes as its participants classroom teachers, school counselors and media specialists. Many of the TEI graduates have gone on to become school leaders and district leaders in Vance County and beyond. Some of the graduates include, Heddie Somerville, principal of Vance County Middle School, top; Regina Hilliard, a teacher at E.M. Rollins Elementary School, middle left; Crystal Richardson and Kedecia Stewart, now part of the administrative team at Vance County Middle School, middle right; and outstanding educators such as those in the 2015-2016 TEI class, bottom left.

VCS Photos
New schools, new looks

With consolidation complete and the start of the new school year in late August, the new Vance County Middle School and Vance County High School feature a lot of new looks.

School administrators report that both schools experienced smooth openings for the new year. While school officials had to work out some kinks, most notably new school bus routes and increased traffic as school days began and ended, everyone was settling in to their routine by the fourth week of classes.

Vance County Middle School features its new Jaguars mural and signage (top left photo), new school colors of black and gold and for the first time ever the building serves students younger in age than freshmen in high school (middle photo).

Vance County High School sports its new green-and-black interior paint theme (top right photo), a very impressive multi-colored cafeteria that features great art panels painted by students and a redesigned music room. The schools’ athletic teams also have impressive new gear (bottom right).