Shining Bright Under Friday Night Lights

Inside: The Duncanville High School Collegiate Academy Reveal shows off engaging learning atmosphere
HIGHLIGHTS

New Acton Elementary Opens
PAGE 5

DHS Collegiate Academy Celebrates Official Reveal
PAGE 7

Band Students Donate Supplies to Elementary Schools
PAGES 8

Alumni Spotlight, Kasey Cheshier
PAGE 12

Trustee, Former Coach Named to Hall of Fame
PAGE 16

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Duncanville ISD started the school year with new principals and assistant principals leading several of our schools. While these new administrators are new to their positions, they’re not new to the district.

The quality of employees already on staff allowed the district to promote from within to fill most of the leadership roles at our campuses.

Two of the assistant principals, Tijuana Hudson and Elizabeth Hunter, participated in the district’s Inspiring Leadership Academy last year, better preparing them for their new positions.

Dozens of current employees received promotions for the new school year.

New Principal Assignments:  
Bilhartz Elementary – Valerie Nelms-Harris  
Brandenburg Intermediate – Tamra Thompson  
Hyman Elementary – Brandee King  
Kennemer Middle – Monica Smith  
Reed Middle School – Pamela Wilson  
Smith Elementary – Brandi Lee

Promotions to Assistant Principal:  
Bilhartz Elementary – Elizabeth Hunter  
Brandenburg Intermediate – Terrence Chase  
Byrd Middle School – Ashley Harper  
Daniel Intermediate – Odette Beason-Bender  
Hardin Intermediate – Tijuana Hudson  
Reed Middle – Delonda Robinson  
Smith Elementary – Alicia Phillips
In front of a packed auditorium of students, families, staff and local dignitaries, Duncanville ISD Board President Renee McNeely cut the ribbon signifying the official opening of the new Acton Elementary School.

“Moving into the new school means the beginning of a new chapter,” said Lucy Hampton, Acton 2017 campus Teacher of the Year. “We are creating a legacy for many students to come.”

Acton is the second elementary school built under the $102 million dollar bond overwhelmingly supported by the Duncanville community in 2014. Bond funds provided for expansions at two additional Duncanville ISD campuses as well as upgrades in technology and security at all campuses.

Duncanville ISD Superintendent Dr. Marc Smith thanked the bond committee and community leaders who developed the bond plan. With the completion of the new Acton Elementary School, Dr. Smith said, we are now seeing that vision brought to reality.

“Back in 2014, this community overwhelmingly voted to put kids first and saw a need to address aging facilities and our schools in Duncanville,” Mrs. McNeely said. “The opening of this beautiful building signifies that we are near the end of this journey, and what a way to end.”
Duncanville ISD Board member Tom Kennedy earned the title of Master Trustee after completing a yearlong leadership program from the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB).

The designation is the highest recognition TASB offers through its Leadership TASB program.

Mr. Kennedy is in his 20th year as a trustee for Duncanville ISD and is the longest-serving member currently on the board.

“I do this because I believe public education is so very important to the success of our students and our community,” Kennedy said. “I put a very high priority on a good, quality education and believe by serving, I can help provide the quality that our kids deserve. I love seeing the successes we have had, and I want to try and make sure they continue. I also enjoy giving back to a community that has been very supportive of my family and me.”

Leadership TASB is a development program designed to take experienced board members to a new level of service and leadership by exposing them to a variety of issues, people, activities and locations. It is also an opportunity for school board trustees from across the state to work together to enhance school governance in Texas.

The program is led by nationally known speakers and experts in their field and includes visits to successful schools and those implementing innovative programs.

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- Tom Kennedy, Duncanville ISD
  Board Member
Duncanville High School invited members of the community, local dignitaries and the media to show off the renovated space where Collegiate Academy students are getting a head start on their college careers.

The renovation of meeting rooms above the DHS library now provides students a space designed just for them. There are collaboration rooms, mobile white boards, computer stations and open seating areas created to provide a college student union atmosphere.

Through the Duncanville High School Collegiate Academy more than 120 freshmen are taking college level courses. The district’s partnership with Mountain View College, ensures these students have the opportunity to graduate in four years with both a high school diploma and an associate degree.

This rigorous academic program attracts students from private and charter schools, as well as other independent school districts. As the field of education becomes more competitive, we recognize the importance of listening to our families and providing programs that meet their needs.
Duncanville High School’s band members are doing more than tooting their own horns for the start of the school year. During summer band camp, they collected thousands of school supplies for students at the district’s nine elementary schools.

Assistant Band Director Mark Teal said the ‘BANDing Together for Success’ program, in its inaugural year, had two goals: teach students the value of giving back and give students and teachers at the other schools a good start to the year.

“We have 400 kids in band,” Teal said. “I just thought, what an impact we can make on our elementary schools.”

The service project was set up as a competition between classes. Seniors collected the most supplies with 1,741 and will receive a pizza dinner as a reward. As a group, the band gathered more than 4,000 boxes of crayons, notebooks pencils and other items for the younger students.

“We all just wanted to help out and make sure they have the supplies they need,” said junior Brea Knight.

The band students say it is especially rewarding that they’re supporting students from their former elementary schools.

“I’m seeing this as something we can do every year,” said senior Malik Thomas. “We definitely want to have something to give back to our community.”
Let’s Go!

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Kaleb Berry has lived in Duncanville for 10 years, but he has never attended a Duncanville ISD school until now. He is one of 126 students who make up the inaugural class of Duncanville High School’s Collegiate Academy.

For seven years, Kaleb attended private school. For the past three years, he was enrolled at a magnet school in another district.

At the end of eighth grade, Kaleb and his family were facing a choice many academically advanced students encounter when they also excel at extracurricular activities. Should they choose advanced curriculum and sacrifice the extracurricular activities or the other way around?

“When I heard the district was adding a collegiate academy, I pretty much made up my mind right then,” Kaleb said.

The list of Kaleb’s academic accomplishments is long. As a freshman, he has already earned nine high school credits and three college credits. He scored in the 98th percentile on the PSAT. He has already completed Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 and is taking pre-Calculus as a 9th grader.

The 14-year old has declined multiple offers to skip a grade, and it could be argued he should be at a school that focuses solely on his chosen field, engineering.

But Kaleb loves to run, and he is good at it. Last year, Kaleb’s parents sought and received special permission allowing him to run for
Duncanville ISD’s Reed Middle School’s cross country team although he attended a school in a neighboring city. He didn’t just do okay. Kaleb finished the season as the eighth grade district champion. And he did it with the additional difficulties that come with attending an out-of-district school.

“I didn’t have as much time to practice because my school was further away,” Kaleb said. “I had to leave school earlier or be late for practice.”

Kaleb’s parents knew the situation could become even more complex in high school. They wanted to accommodate both his passions - athletic and academic. That opportunity arose when Duncanville High School added its new collegiate academy.

“Kaleb is hopeful the Collegiate Academy experience...will extend the academic rigor that he is accustomed to,” said Kaleb’s mom, Lakisha Berry.

“I’m looking forward to that kind of environment in smaller classes and focusing on my academics,” Kaleb said. “Sports have always been important to me, too, and I think it will be a lot better to be in sports and in a collegiate academy all in one school.”

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**Fall Programs**

- **Full S.T.E.A.M. Ahead**  
  October 18 & November 15 at 4 pm
- **Preschool Story Time**  
  Thursdays at 10:15 am
- **Nursery Rhyme Time**  
  Thursdays at 11:15 am
- **Spanish Story Time**  
  Thursdays at 5:30 pm
- **Manga Toshokan for teens**  
  October 14, November 11 & December 9 at 2 pm
- **Tail Waggin’ Tutors**  
  October 28, November 18 & December 16 at 2 pm
- **LEGO® Maniacs**  
  October 10, November 14 & December 5 at 7 pm
- **Boo Bash**  
  October 27 at 7 pm

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If you want to catch up with Kasey Cheshier, you’ll have to be quick.

The Duncanville High School graduate divides his days between running the iconic Ben Franklin Apothecary and Kitchens Deli in downtown Duncanville, serving with several community groups, training for marathons, and spending time with his wife and three young children.

Cheshier has always been an athlete. While at Duncanville High School, he was an all-state offensive lineman and member of the 1998 State Football Championship team. When he graduated DHS in 2000, he received a scholarship to play football at Texas A&M University. Those who knew him back then know he was a big guy. At one point, Cheshier says, he bulked up to 320 pounds by following a workout and nutrition plan created for him by his college coaches. Several years after graduating college with a bachelor’s degree in Business and Marketing, Cheshier took a look at his family’s health history and decided to make a change. He quit lifting heavy weights and started running. Cheshier ran his first marathon in Dallas in 2012. He didn’t enjoy it at first, but he kept at it and developed a passion for endurance running. In the years that followed, Cheshier ran a total of nine marathons and dropped more than 100 pounds.

Cheshier became determined to share his love of running with the community. Several years ago he gathered friends, family and coworkers from Ben Franklin together to create The Heart of Duncanville 5K.

“One of the main reasons we started the race is because
as a pharmacy, we are always trying to encourage people to be healthy,” Cheshier said.

“One of the main reasons we started the race is because as a pharmacy, we are always trying to encourage people to be healthy,” Cheshier said.

In the past three years, nearly 1,700 people have participated in either the 5k run or the one mile walk.

While race participants focus on their fitness, they are raising money for one Cheshier’s favorite community groups, the Duncanville ISD Education Foundation. The foundation benefits students and teachers at Duncanville ISD and has awarded grants to Duncanville ISD teachers totalling $57,000 in the past three years.

![Fright Night poster](image)

**2017 Convocation Winners**

**Acton Elementary:**
Using STEM to Grow 21st Century Leaders for $1,513.90

**Hardin Intermediate:**
Cooking with the SLC for $2,402.32

**Smith Elementary:**
Media Magic for $1,152.95

**Duncanville High School:**
This Pod’s for You for $10,572.90
Connected Classrooms for $11,760.00

![Convocation winners](image)

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![Convocation winners](image)
Students and staff at Duncanville High School gave of themselves recently to help those hurting in south Texas following the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Student Council, under the direction of DHS Chemistry teacher David Womack, held its first blood drive of the year just in time to respond to an increased need for donations.

“That’s very sad what happened with Hurricane Harvey in Houston and the rest of south Texas,” said senior Jordan Anderson. “Hopefully they’ll get our donations and it will help.”

The Carter BloodCare mobile donation buses stretched in front of DHS all day Friday to serve the 188 students who registered to give. As with any blood drive, some students were deemed unable to give.

The drive collected a total of 136 units of blood.

“Once the units are processed into components (platelets, plasma and red blood cells), a total of 408 lives will be affected by the efforts of this blood drive,” said Carter BloodCare Consultant Robin Schumaker. “The community and patients thank the students of Duncanville High School!”
**Student’s Bus Safety Artwork Wins State Award**

Syran Jolly is a fifth grader at Daniel Intermediate and also an award-winning artist.

When the Texas Association for Pupil Transportation (TAPT) recently announced the winners in their School Bus Safety Poster Contest, Syran received a third place honor in the statewide competition.

Syran’s poster submission features four safety tips including not distracting the bus driver while he or she is driving and crossing in front of the bus, not behind.

After taking top marks at the local level, Syran’s entry advanced to the state level where it was judged based on safety impact, originality, artistic quality and visual impact.

Because of her winning entry, Syran will be traveling to Austin with her family and Duncanville ISD staff. Syran will be recognized, receive a tour of the Texas State Capitol and a $50 check.

“I’m looking forward to the ceremony, getting my award and seeing who else won at the state level,” Syran said.
Phil McNeely is the most successful and longest tenured boys basketball coach in Duncanville High School history, winning three state championships during his 25 years as head coach.

As a tribute to his legendary career, the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches (TABC) has chosen McNeely to be inducted into the Texas High School Basketball Hall of Fame in 2018.

Duncanville ISD Assistant Athletic Director Robert McQuaid has known McNeely for 34 years, many of them spent as an assistant basketball coach.

“Everybody talks about his wins and losses, but I’m telling you the reason he was so successful was because the relationships he had with the kids were incredible,” McQuaid said.

“He cared for every one of his kids just like he was his own. Didn’t matter if he was a manager or a star player. It was amazing how much he did for them.”

Under McNeely’s leadership, the Duncanville Panthers not only won three state championships. His teams also made the playoffs 18 times in 24 years, made five appearances in the state tournament, scored 702 wins and claimed 18 district championships.

“Phil is very competitive. We were going to win,” said former assistant coach Dean McGuire. “But the kids knew they could come into our office if they had a problem or something. Phil would do everything he could to help them.”

McNeely retired from teaching and coaching in 2009. He and his wife Renee continue to serve the school district on the Duncanville ISD Board of Trustees.

McNeely joins seven other inductees to the Texas High School Basketball Hall of Fame, including three other legendary coaches and four former standout basketball players. This deserving group will be inducted during the 2018 TABC clinic in San Antonio on Saturday, May 19 at 6:00 p.m.

The Hall of Fame was created by the TABC in 1971 and is housed at the Texas Basketball Museum in Carmine, Texas.
Reed and Kennemer Middle Schools are continuing the tradition of excellence in Duncanville ISD’s band program. Reed’s Symphonic I Band and Kennemer’s Symphonic 2 Band received Commended Winner in The Foundation for Music Education’s 2017 Mark of Excellence contest.

It is an elite honor granted to the top bands in their classification chosen by a panel of adjudicators. A total of 278 bands from 38 states entered recordings.

This is the third consecutive time that the Reed Middle School Symphonic I Band has entered this national contest and earned this distinguished award.

The Mark of Excellence project recognizes and awards outstanding achievement in performance by high school and middle school bands from across the country. The top 25% of entrants are recognized as National Winners, with the second 25% named as Commended Winners.

Kennemer’s Symphonic I Band did not participate in the Mark of Excellence contest last year in order to prepare for the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) State Honor Band Competition where they advanced to the highest level.

“It is the first time in Kennemer’s history that the band has advanced to the state level and the first time in my 17 years of teaching,” said Kennemer Head Band Director Lucy Pascasio. “We are so proud of our kids!”

Reed’s Symphonic I Band advanced to the Area level for the TMEA contest.

“I am very proud of the Reed Band and Duncanville Bands,” said Reed band director Michelle Hanegan. “I was very proud of them for advancing to the state area level for TMEA and now this. They are such great students.”
Around the
You don’t have to tell Duncanville football fans that head football coach Reginald Samples is a winner.

Samples’ record reflects his success on the field; and with another win against Irving on September 28 he earned his place in history. Samples now has 250 career wins – the most by a black coach in University Interscholastic League history.

Chamber of Commerce president Steve Martin has been following Duncanville football for more than 20 years.

“We’ve had great coaches and good coaches but they haven’t always been able to have relationships with the kids to bring out the best in them,” Martin said. “Coach Samples is doing that.”

During his second season as Duncanville football’s head coach, the team – which hadn’t been to the playoffs in five years – finished with an 11-3 record. Last fall, the Panthers went two rounds deep in the playoffs. For the first time in years, fans are ecstatic. About football. In Duncanville.

“I’m really proud of all the coaches and players who have worked with me to get there and the support I’ve gotten from my family,” Coach Samples said. “I just think that a big part of my success is that I try to establish relationships with the kids and parents that I’m working for. It takes more than the coaches, it takes more than the parents; it’s a collaboration with all the folks that are involved with the kids.”

Coach Samples may have taken some time to reflect on his achievement, but probably not much. He’s focused on the goals he has for his football players: winning district and bringing a state championship to Duncanville.