

A man in a white shirt is speaking at a podium. The background is a warm, yellowish-gold color. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“It is a true
privilege
to work at an agency
that strives for
inclusion
and embraces the
belief that
everyone is
able.”

GVRA welcomes a new
**Executive
Director**

ablegeorgia™
October 2016



Pictured from left to right: GVRs Board Member Sandy Adams, GVRs Board Member Tom Wilson, GVRA Exec. Dir. Sean Casey, Gov. Nathan Deal, GVRs Board Vice-Chair Louise Hill, GVRs Board Chair Jimmy DeFoor, GVRs Board Member Bob Green and SRC Board Chair Kip Slade.

Sean Casey Named New GVRA Exec. Dir.

Mr. Casey comes to GVRA with a wealth of experience.



At the state Capitol on Oct. 24, Governor Nathan Deal swore in Sean Casey as Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's (GVRA) Executive Director. Mr. Casey will lead the agency in its mission to serve individuals with disabilities on the path to career success and greater independence.

An experienced public servant committed to all Georgians, Mr. Casey previously held a role as the Department of Administrative Service's Assistant Commissioner of Government Affairs. He has also served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Revenue and previously worked in Governor Deal's Office and the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. He expressed his excitement over a new chapter.

"I am honored and humbled at the opportunity to join the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency team," Mr. Casey said. "It is a true privilege to work at an agency that strives for inclusion and embraces the belief that everyone is able. I am excited to work alongside so many dedicated people as we

support Georgians in achieving their career goals."

Mr. Casey's service on behalf of GVRA extends back to 2012, when he led a team that worked to pass legislation making the agency independent of the Georgia Department of Labor. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRs) Board Chairman Jimmy DeFoor said, "Annette Bowling, Tom Wilson and I were thrilled to have his leadership as we worked together four years ago to launch a client-focused agency. In Sean, GVRA has a person of great vision and integrity. He is fully committed to disability issues and will be an advocate who looks for innovative strategies to provide excellent customer service to all." GVRA was formed by an act of the Georgia General Assembly, legislation that Mr. Casey played a large role in crafting. As the state's vocational rehabilitation agency, it operates more than 40 local offices statewide as well as the Business Enterprise Program, Disability Adjudication Services, Georgia Industries for the Blind, Roosevelt Warm Springs and Cave Spring Center.



#InclusionWorks

It's National Disability Employment Month, and we're celebrating what brings us together.

NDEAM Proceeds to Succeed (Indeed)

#InclusionWorks because we make it work.



October marks the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a time to reflect on the efforts of the previous year, educate the public about the need for disability employment and make plans to overcome the hurdles that still remain.

This year's theme, #InclusionWorks, stresses both the benefits and the need for inclusive practices in the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Gone are the days of sheltered workshops. Gone are the days of keeping individuals with disabilities *separate* from their peers, an antiquated myth that those who are different are lesser or should be kept hidden away, something to be ignored or forgotten about entirely.

And inclusion goes well beyond the workplace. According to the Centers for Disease Control, inclusivity should be practiced across all activities and disciplines. Inclusivity then “ involves more than simply encouraging people; it requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in effect in a community or organization.

Inclusion should lead to increased participation in socially expected life roles and activities—such as being a student, worker, friend, community member, patient, spouse, partner, or parent. Socially expected activities may also include engaging in social activities, using public resources such as transportation and libraries, moving about within communities, receiving adequate health care, having relationships, and enjoying other day-to-day activities.”

In this sense, when we talk about inclusion, we're talking about every facet of everyday life, from the opportunity to ride a bus to the right to simply be and exist as others are allowed without question.

Yet, beyond the realm of vocational rehabilitation and other groups and efforts that focus largely on the disability community, inclusion often comes as an afterthought.

That's why employing individuals with disabilities is so important. Study after study has shown that while only one out of five

people with a disability is employed—and some estimates put the employment rate much lower—these individuals are routinely seen as an asset in the workforce, demonstrating reliability and a passion for the work that isn't necessarily seen in the population at large.

The efforts of inclusion need to go beyond employment, though. While efforts to recognize the disability community as a valuable consumer group have increased in recent years, with some advertisements and other sponsored media predominantly featuring people with a disability, it's still an untapped market for many businesses, and inclusion means recognizing the group—and all its diversity therein—as a viable market block with plenty of buying power.

Similarly, political engagement of the disability community has increased in recent years, both in terms of individuals with disabilities becoming involved in the political realm and also politicians recognizing and beginning to address the needs of the

community, efforts can still be improved. Many precincts still aren't accessible, and simple things like the availability of ASL interpreters or braille voting options are still oftentimes neglected.

It's important as well to note that general attitudes toward inclusion are established early in life, and perhaps the best path to ensuring an inclusive society is to ensure inclusion in school settings. If inclusion is normalized at a young age, it's much more likely that those attitudes and behaviors will be lifelong.

On the whole, this month is about so much more than disability employment. It's about a conversation that a modern society must have with itself. It's about taking an inventory and seeing what can be improved upon. And while much has been done to bring about an inclusive society for everyone, there's still work to be done. And there's the rub. These efforts require those willing to do the work, and it's up to us not only to do the work ourselves but also to enlist others to help us along the way.

Inclusion Works for Opportunity

Inclusion Works for Business

National Disability Employment Awareness Month
#InclusionWorks

Inclusion Works for Innovation


OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
dol.gov/odep



“Annette was an amazing person who never stopped working to help the disability community.”

In Memoriam

Annette Bowling was a long-time disability advocate in Georgia.

Longtime disability advocate Annette "Maette" Thornton Bowling, 80, of Doerun, passed away September 28 at her home. She was the long-time director of Albany ARC (Advocacy Resource Center).

"With great sadness, we announce the passing of Annette Bowling," ARC Executive Director Sonny Slate said Wednesday. "The State of Georgia has lost a tremendous advocate and leader who dedicated most of her life to serving people with disabilities. We are fortunate to inherit Annette's legacy and are challenged to carry on her good work in her honor. We will announce memorial details as they become available."

In 2012, Mrs. Bowling was influential in crafting the legislation that brought GVRA out of the Georgia Department of Labor, thereby establishing it as a standalone agency.

Mrs. Bowling served as a strong advocate for rehabilitation and disability issues, and her resume was as broad as it was impressive. She served on boards and in various capacities with Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, Georgia Brain, Spinal Cord Injury Trust Commission, the State Commission on MH/DD/AD Reform, the Oversight Committee for Brookrun and Georgia Mental Health Institution closures, Governor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce on Community Based Services, and Leadership Albany.

She was included in the Nationwide Register's Who's Who in Executives and Businesses 2001-2002, named one of Georgia Trend's 2008: 100 Most Influential Georgians, one of the Ten Outstanding Georgia Women by Georgia Commission on Women Georgia's Legacy, received the Georgia Council on Aging Vita R. Ostrander Advocacy Award, was honored as a Woman of Distinction by Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia and with the Pathfinder Award by the Brain and Spinal

Injury Trust Fund. Representative Jay Powell honored Annette with a House Resolution in 2011 for her years of service to people with disabilities.

"She was one of the biggest advocates for individuals with disabilities in the state," said GVRA Communication Specialist Tom Connelly. "She'll be missed, but her efforts and legacy will live on for a long time. She's touched so many people in such positive ways. Her work certainly won't be forgotten. I have no doubt."

Mrs. Bowling was born in Lakeland, GA to the late L.A. and Inez Crosby Thornton and moved to Doerun, GA in 1975. She was raised in Homerville, GA, graduating from Clinch High School where she was voted, "Most Likely to Succeed" by her classmates. Mrs. Bowling graduated from Perry School of Business and moved to Albany, GA in 1971. In 1974 she began serving as Director of Albany Advocacy Resource Center and held that position for thirty-nine years. In 2001, Mrs. Bowling established A. Bowling & Associates, a consulting company in the area of Human Services. Mrs. Bowling was also a former employee of Olin Mills Studios and Georgia Power, and a member of Grace Baptist Church in Doerun, GA.

Survivors include her husband, George S. Bowling, Doerun, GA, one son, Al Connell, Albany, GA, one granddaughter, Kaycee Gilliard, two great-grandchildren, Allie Gilliard and Harrison Taft, all of Pearson, GA, one brother, Albert Thornton, Homerville, GA, one sister, Carolyn Corbitt, Ambrose, GA, and several nieces and nephews.

-Portions of this article first appeared in the Albany Herald. They were used with permission.



Robert Hammond (middle), Vice-President of Technical Operations at Stage Front Production Services, recently spoke with students at Warm Springs about the career opportunities associated with the low-voltage wiring program on campus. He is pictured from left with Audrey Fuller, Lee Brinkley-Bryan, Laquinta Plunkett and LaBarron Tate.

RWS Students on Bright Path



Low-voltage wiring at RWS could be lucrative career path

Written by RWS Historian Mike Shadix

Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) welcomed Robert Hammond, Vice-President of Technical Operations at Stage Front Production Services in Savannah, on Sept. 23 for staff and students to learn more about the opportunities within the audiovisual (AV) industry. Stage Front Production Services designs and installs AV systems for clients across the Country, and Mr. Hammond has almost 20 years of experience in the industry.

He encouraged the students towards careers in low-voltage wiring, noting that “the future is very bright” for those with skills in low voltage wiring and electronic audiovisual system planning and installation. Mr. Hammond encouraged students to specifically consider careers in AV system design, installation and in the broader AV service industry.

“Sophisticated AV systems are no longer just a nice thing to have,” he said. “They are essential to the way we work today, and the systems must work when needed.”

Mr. Hammond told the staff and students that the new low-voltage wiring classroom at RWS is “one of the best that he has seen.”

He also praised the partnership RWS has formed with Electronic Systems Professional Alliance (ESPA) that includes being a recognized ESPA testing center.

Mr. Hammond noted that the skills students master in the RWS Residential Low-Voltage

Wiring Course are foundational skills in the growing AV systems industry, and the students who complete the ESPA entry-level certification while at RWS “will be way ahead of most new hires in the field.”

He shared with the students that the number of work settings for AV professionals is vast and includes sports arenas, concert venues, corporate meeting rooms, conference centers, theaters, trade shows, houses of worship and hospitals.

With experience, employees can often find opportunities in jobs that include audio technicians, lighting programmers, lighting designers, technical directors, video technicians, riggers, project managers and AV service technicians.

He emphasized that the AV profession offers many paths to choose from that can suit a variety of interests, talents and temperaments.

The Residential Low-Voltage Wiring program at Roosevelt Warm Springs offers new sessions every 12 weeks. Enrollment is now open for the next session beginning Jan. 9, 2017.

If you have questions about this program or any of the CTAE programs at Warm Springs, please contact CTAE Director LaQuinta Plunkett (LaQuinta.Plunkett@gvra.ga.gov) or CTAE Department Head/Chairperson LaBarron Tate (Labarron.Tate@gvra.ga.gov).





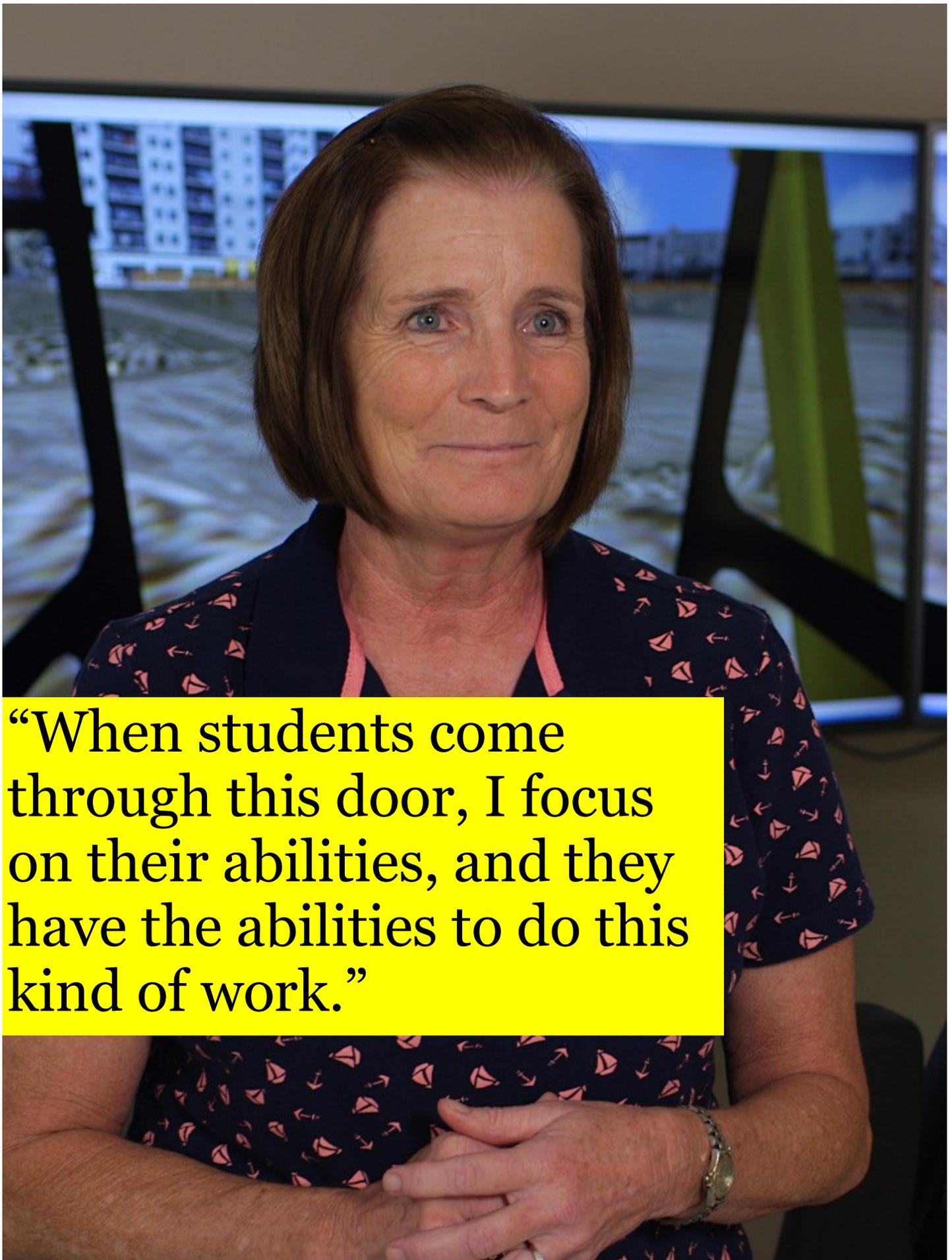
Job Fair in Covington

In late September, GVRA in association with Sen. JaNice VanNess's office played host to a job fair in Covington. By all metrics, the event was a grand success with staff on hand to provide resumé help and to ensure the event ran smoothly.

I can do anything
to achieve my goal
and complete any task
I can handle when
working on a easy job
and always show
respect and be
responsible for
the week

-Sean

Seen at RWS



“When students come through this door, I focus on their abilities, and they have the abilities to do this kind of work.”

Learning the trade



A conversation with the woman who teaches students heavy machinery

Ed. Note: GVRA External Affairs was on site at RWS during October to produce several films highlighting the activities and vocational training at Warm Springs. While the films will be available shortly, presented below is a brief interview with RWS Heavy Machinery Instructor Robin Pitts conducted as part of the project.

Q: What do you do at Warm Springs?

RP: I teach forklifting here in a classroom setting as well as a lab setting with simulators. Then we move onto a practical setting where they use an actual forklift, and from there they learn the logistics of warehousing.

Q: Tell me about the simulators you use.

RP: We get them started on the simulators first. Number one, it's safer, and they get to learn without the intimidation of the actual equipment so they gain confidence. It enhances their motor and cognitive skills. It helps them understand and pay attention to their surroundings. What it takes to do everything correctly with balance. It begins their skills and they finish their skills on the real deal.

Q: How does the kind of training you provide help students when they're in the job market?

RP: With this certification, they can get jobs in distribution centers or shipyards or warehouses. When they

come in here, I want to know what their interest level is. Most of them, it's a career goal, and it's a viable career goal. The forklift industry is booming right now. There's a need for someone to be able to operate a forklift, and it's good pay. Our students can start out at \$14 an hour. It's amazing.

Q: What's the most important thing you teach them?

RP: What's so great about this program, is that when students leave here, they know how to be safe, and that's what's so important.

Q: What would you say to someone who has doubts that people with disabilities can operate heavy machinery?

RP: When students come through this door, I focus on their abilities, and they have the abilities to do this kind of work. I don't see my students as having a disability. I see them as having a natural ability that we need to pull from. We don't say we can't do things. We say they can do these things. And they can.

Q: What do you like most about your job?

RP: When I see a student come through my door, and they're a little uncomfortable or intimidated, what makes me feel good is that at the end of six weeks, they're a totally different student. They're confident, and they know they can do great things.

Save the Date

Calendar of Events

Don't miss out on these upcoming opportunities!

November

Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE) Fall Conference

November 2 – 4
Hyatt Regency Hotel
2 W. Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

Georgia Evolution Conference

November 3 and 4
Wyndham Peachtree Hotel and Conference Center
2443 GA-54
Peachtree City, GA 30269

Georgia Statewide Coalition on Blindness 2016 Fall Convention

November 4 and 5
Hampton Inn
147 Unicoi Street
Helen, GA 30545

December

Georgia Assistive Technology in Education (GATE) 2016 Seminar

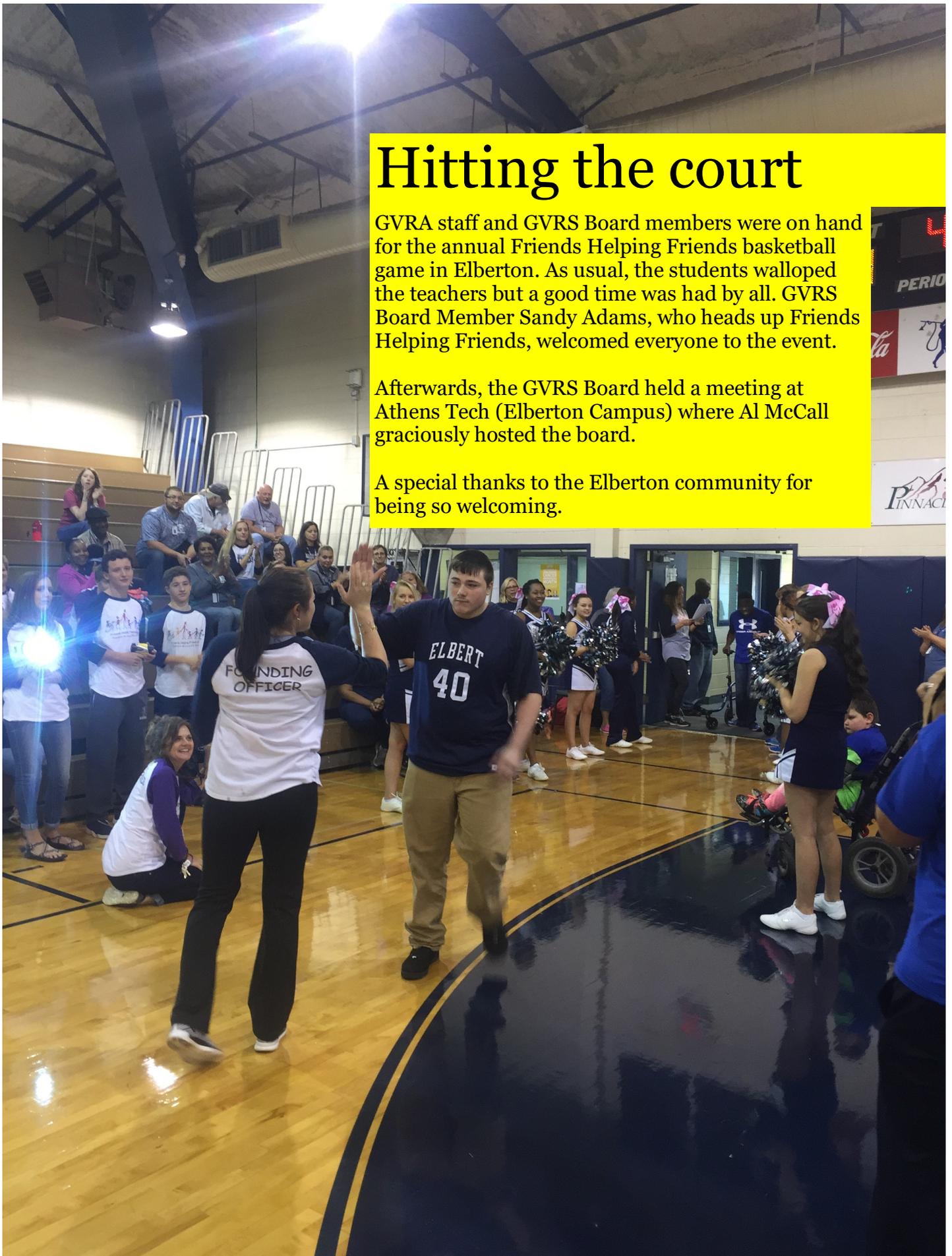
Friday, December 9
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Georgia Tech Student Center
Exhibit Hall in 3rd Floor Grand Ballroom
Atlanta, GA 30313

Hitting the court

GVRA staff and GVRS Board members were on hand for the annual Friends Helping Friends basketball game in Elberton. As usual, the students walloped the teachers but a good time was had by all. GVRS Board Member Sandy Adams, who heads up Friends Helping Friends, welcomed everyone to the event.

Afterwards, the GVRS Board held a meeting at Athens Tech (Elberton Campus) where Al McCall graciously hosted the board.

A special thanks to the Elberton community for being so welcoming.



*The secret of change
is to focus all of your energy
not on fighting the old
but on building the new.*
—Socrates

About this publication

It's your newsletter, and we want to hear from you.

As always, thank you for taking the time to read this month's GVRA newsletter. A lot of behind the scenes work goes into putting this publication together every month, and I want to take this opportunity to specially thank everyone who contributed to this publication.

We're working to expand the scope of the newsletter every month, and we're working with our design and printing professionals to ensure that this newsletter begins to feel a little bit more like a magazine and less something you'd find in a government agency's lobby.

Like the agency as a whole, we're committed to being bigger and better with each passing

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Written by Communications Coordinator John Boan

day, and that's where you come in.

Whether you're a client, an employee or one of our valued partners, you need to remember: this is your publication.

Have something you'd like to see included? Know of a particularly resonate success story? Please let me know.

As always, my office door is always open (I'm in a cubicle).

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Springs**