



college has been recognized as the state provider of advanced hemodialysis training.

The program was started about a year ago at the request of the dialysis industry, says Constance Rowan, director of the Health and Human Services division of Atlanta Tech. Following two quarters of training, technicians wind up in private and hospital-run dialysis centers, earning between \$12 and \$15 an hour, depending on experience, Rowan says.

Columbus Technical College is teaching Fire Department employees to become EMTs. The consolidation of Columbus' emergency medical services and fire department spurred the desire to cross-train the fire personnel, says Linn Storey, chair

of the college's Health Science department.

Firefighters receive the same instruction offered on campus, but the curriculum is taken to the fire hall during workers' shifts.

Currently, firefighters who want to advance into the paramedic technology field must attend classes at the college.

But Storey says that might change if the number of firefighters who desire advanced training increases.

"I don't think the public has an appreciation of how rigid and demanding the EMT program is," Storey says. "It takes a lot of clinical experience and a lot of classroom work to be able to react quickly when the situation demands it."

Whether it's EMTs, nurses, radiologic technicians or surgical technicians, the need for well-trained healthcare professionals is ballooning — and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

"The crisis of healthcare is on us," says Ken Beverly of Archbold Medical Center, citing the aging population, the increased demand for health services, and what Beverly calls the "unbelievable" demand for chronic disease care. He notes that healthcare is the largest sector of the economy, accounting for 15 percent of the gross domestic product.

It will take several years of dedicated resources for the healthcare industry to keep pace with the growth, he says, adding, "Only with the DTAE will we catch up." **R**

## FROM JEANS TO NURSING

**W**hen the Levi plant closed in June 2002, Fannin County lost its largest employer, and 400 people lost their jobs.

For 19 of those former employees, the future looks bright, thanks to a cooperative effort among several local, state and federal agencies that brought a special, one-time practical nursing program to an empty storefront in Blue Ridge.

Students will graduate in December, "and job prospects appear to be good," says Glenn Rasco, VP of economic development at Appalachian Technical College, which helped set up the class. A survey of displaced workers showed interest in healthcare fields, but respondents were unwilling to drive the 35 miles from Blue Ridge to Appalachian Tech's Jasper campus.

The solution? Bring the classroom to them.

Immediately after the plant closure was announced, Fannin County officials formed a task force to find ways to help. For the nursing program, Appalachian Tech staff worked with the Fannin County Economic Development Authority, the Georgia Department of Labor and the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center to secure federal

Workforce Investment Act funds. The money was used to set up the classroom, find an instructor and receive state approval to offer the one-time class exclusively to laid-off Levi workers.

"There's no one individual you can credit the effort to," Rasco says. "It was just through working together that we made this happen."

Nancy Smith had just moved with her family to North Georgia when the registered nurse applied to lead the program in Blue Ridge. "They're just a great group of ladies," Smith said. "They're totally dedicated to this training. They have a great work ethic, and are used to showing up on time and getting the job done."

Nearly 100 other displaced Levi workers are taking classes at Appalachian Tech, which provides transportation to the main campus from Fannin County for students enrolled in other courses of study.

Lynn Henry, 51, who worked for 22 years as a mechanic at the Levi plant, is looking forward to her new career as a practical nurse.

Henry and her daughter Julie Townson started taking core classes together before splitting to start nursing studies — Henry to Blue Ridge and Townson to Appalachian Tech's main campus.

Henry hopes to work at Fannin Regional Hospital or become a home healthcare nurse. She says she's "doing fine" with her studies.

"It's quite a bit different than fixing a sewing machine," Henry says. "People are a lot more complicated than machines." **R**

## ABOUT THE WINNERS

At age 16, **CHRISTINA DIXON** pondered her choices for a future career and narrowed them to law and cuisine. A friend asked her what profession she would enter if she wasn't paid but loved the work.

Already zealous about cooking, Dixon knew which choice to make. She completed the Certified Customer Service Specialist course at Atlanta Technical College, then pursued an education there in culinary arts.

"It's hard work," she said, "but I love people and I love food, so I know I made the right decision." Dixon, who enjoys fine arts, is especially intrigued with the presentation aspect of culinary arts, whether shaping a melon or creating an eye-pleasing canapé.

After earning an associate degree in culinary arts, Dixon plans to attend DeVry University using the scholarship she received as a college GOAL winner to study business administration with an emphasis on small business. She says that will dovetail nicely with the Customer Service course she took at Atlanta Technical College, giving her a solid foundation on which to build her dream: a catering business in Atlanta.

Articulate and animated, Dixon exudes enthusiasm about her upcoming year as an ambassador for the technical college system. "My message to others will be to find something you truly love doing," she said, "and technical education can help you achieve that goal."



**"I made history tonight!"**

**CHRISTINA DIXON, the first culinary arts student to win the GOAL in its 32-year history**

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the president pro tempore of the Georgia State Senate, delivered the keynote address to a 900-strong audience consisting of dignitaries from government and civic groups throughout Georgia, as well as faculty and staff of the technical colleges.

Referencing the education budget protected in the last legislative session, Johnson said, "Your Legislature knows how hard you work and what you deserve." He also commended the "motivated students, talented faculty, and dedicated DTAE staff and board members" present at the ceremony.

With excitement mounting, Assistant Commissioner Chuck Beall introduced the finalists for the Rick Perkins Award, and Commissioner Ken Breeden announced Holloway as the winner and presented her with a check for \$1,000.

"Technical colleges have the hardest-working and most dedicated people I've ever met," Amy Holloway said. Acknowledging Middle Georgia Tech, she added, "Without your love and laughter I wouldn't be here tonight. And to all the GOAL students, you're the reason we're here."

That reason became evident when the GOAL finalists were introduced and Christina Dixon was proclaimed winner. In a speech punctuated with sobs of joy and surprise, Dixon exclaimed, "I made history tonight!" She is the first culinary arts student to win the GOAL.

"When I started taking classes at Atlanta Tech, I never thought I'd be standing here tonight," she beamed. The home-schooled Dixon thanked her parents and encouraged all the GOAL nominees to be ambassadors for Georgia's technical colleges.

"Go back to all parts of Georgia and tell everyone they can achieve great things through technical education." **R**



**ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR AMY HOLLOWAY** knows that teaching humanities differs from teaching technology-oriented fields offered at technical colleges. "Verbs don't change much," she said, adding that she's not likely to consult with a local manufacturer and inquire, "How do you want your workers to use prepositions?"

Ever the pragmatist, Holloway wants her instruction to relate to the real world, to impact students in their chosen occupations. So, she always asks her students at Middle

Georgia Technical College, "Why do we study literature?"

Her own answer to that question: "We are all, first and foremost, human beings. Literature addresses universal themes. It teaches us how to handle conflict; it allows us to step inside someone else's shoes. Without literature, I wouldn't know, for example, what it was like to be a young, African-American male in the 1960s."

Holloway wants people to realize that technical colleges require standard core classes so that students have good communication and math skills when they enter the workforce. She says the best paper she ever received was written by an aircraft structural technology student on the Wallace Stevens poem *Man with a Blue Guitar*.

Teaching at Middle Georgia Tech has allowed her to interact with the community, to have contact with the public rather than being limited to a pedagogical world.

"I'm a big believer in technical education," she said, "so I'm thrilled to be a cheerleader. I can't imagine any job more gratifying than teaching in a technical college. It's amazing the difference we're making in people's lives. And after all, isn't that why we go into teaching?" **R**



**Eric Johnson, president pro tem of the Georgia Senate**



# Dreaming EAGLES

*Two inspiring students win prestigious Adult Literacy award*

HONORING  
THE  
BEST

The night air was biting cold, but inside, the banquet hall glowed with warm enthusiasm for the two winners of the 10th annual EAGLE awards competition, held Jan. 23 in Atlanta.

EAGLE, which stands for Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education, is the premier adult literacy student recognition program, designed to spotlight educational opportunities available in local communities. The event involves several hundred students advancing through local to state-level competition, where judges select a winner in each of two categories.

This year, Melissa Robinson from Moultrie Technical College won in the GED Graduate category. Cortez Scott from Central Georgia Technical College won in the Current Student category.

Robinson and Scott thus began their year-long tenure as Ambassadors for Literacy, promoting lifelong learning and encouraging others to become learners. They work as volunteers, peer tutors and recruiters of other students in local programs.

Robinson is no stranger to such efforts. Besides volunteering at the Adult Education Center and at her son's elementary school, she participates in an outreach ministry at the Tift County Law Enforcement Center, where she helps women prisoners transform their lives through education.

Robinson has firsthand knowledge of how education can change lives, as she recounted in her story in her moving acceptance speech.

"I made some bad choices," she said, after describing a life of disappointment and failure. Raised by addict parents who didn't value education, she quit school in the eighth grade and later endured an

abusive marriage. Despite a childhood dream of becoming a lawyer, Robinson ended up devoid of any self-esteem.

"My dream died," she said. "I thought I could never attain a higher education, that only the rich could go to college." But then she met her GED instructor, who lifted Robinson out of a cycle of hopelessness. "She gave me the courage and support I needed," Robinson said. "She is why I'm standing here today."

Earning a GED boosted her spirits, buoyed her self-confidence and beckoned her to return to her childhood dream. "I am now majoring in pre-law," she said as the audience cheered her accomplishment. "I see what education has done to my life."

In his acceptance speech, Cortez Scott also credited education with altering the course of his seemingly disaster-bound adolescence in Syracuse, N.Y. "I was hanging with the wrong crowd," he recalled, describing a rough street life in the company of other high school dropouts.

"My mother kept telling me I should use my talents. I guess the message stuck," he said, "because I finally came to my senses." A move to Georgia helped him embark on a new path. After receiving his GED, he plans to attend college and pursue a career in the music industry. "I want to make my mom proud."

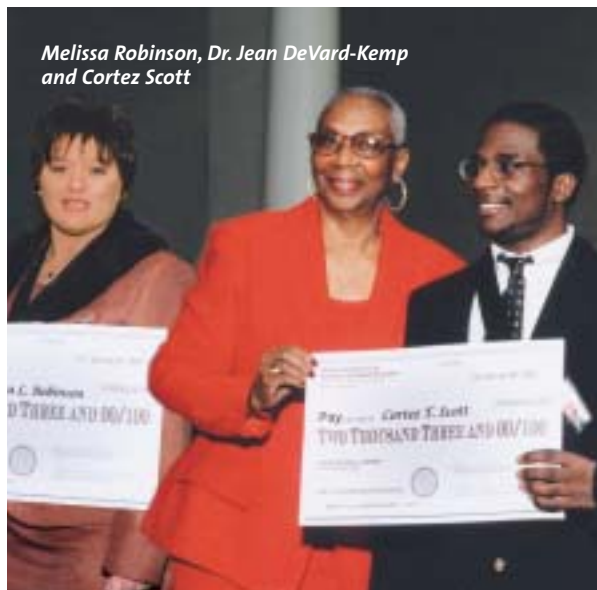
Now a role model for others, Scott talks to teenagers in his Milledgeville community about staying away from trouble. "I tell them that if they keep their heads up, they will fly to success," said the EAGLE winner.

Such mentoring is just the mission envisioned by Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp, assistant commissioner of Adult Literacy Programs. "All of you, because of your attitude and determination, are spokespersons for adult literacy in Georgia," said Dr. DeVard-Kemp, speaking enthusiastically to the audience. "Go back to your families and schools, your churches and neighborhoods, and encourage others to do what you have done."

During the banquet, DTAE Commissioner Ken Breeden visited each table, shaking hands and chatting with every single nominee. Later, speaking onstage, he noted, "Every student here is continuing their education. You're making us all proud of you."

Pride, self-esteem, education and dreams — these were the themes that pervaded the heartwarming evening.

As Scott said, "If you believe in yourself, stay focused, work hard and be persistent, you can make all your dreams come true." **R**



*Melissa Robinson, Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp and Cortez Scott*