

HC*EXCELL E-NEWS

25th Anniversary (1991 – 2016)

“An Educated Citizenry = A Healthy Economy”

*The mission of the Hamblen County Foundation for Educational Excellence and Achievement (HC*EXCELL) is to promote educational excellence and achievement as a means of sustaining economic prosperity and improving the quality of life in Hamblen County.*

The formation of a Hamblen County education foundation was initiated by the announcement of a \$50,000 gift from Dr. Kojiro Yamaoka, chairman of the **Tuff Torq Corporation**, at their plant dedication on April 20, 1990. \$50,000 was given to endow an annual \$2,000 higher education scholarship at Morristown High Schools East and West. This endowment inspired three men, Dwight Nelson, MACC Economic Development; Earnest Walker Ed.D. superintendent of the Hamblen County School System; and Takao Ogishita, president of Tuff Torq Corporation, to begin a process resulting in the creation of the Hamblen County Foundation for Educational Excellence and Achievement (HC*EXCELL) as a 501(c) (3) foundation in 1991.

HC*EXCELL represents the community’s interest in education and workforce development. **E-News** was created as a vehicle to inform Hamblen County stakeholders of the Foundation’s work and to encourage stakeholders and citizen participation in strengthening our local education process.

The 2012-2016 “**Cradle to Career**” campaign goal was to align academic achievement with workforce needs and skills. Hamblen County has made tremendous progress, a school system consisting of over 68% free and reduced lunch students, through developing a workforce community partnership across county lines. The partnership focused on: increasing the number of student and teacher internships; raising the awareness of the importance of preschool readiness and increasing the arts in elementary schools. Although the aforementioned steps are positive, they require nurturing.

2015-2016 “Cradle to Career” Program of Work

In 2004, the Hamblen County Commission appointed HC*EXCELL as facilitator of the **Hamblen County Dolly Parton Imagination Library Partnership**, of Walters State Community College, Kiwanis Club of Morristown, Rotary Club of Morristown A.M., Morristown Hamblen County Library, Morristown Hamblen Health Care System, Morristown Housing Authority, U.S. Postal Services, Hamblen County Commission and the City of Morristown.

The Hamblen County IML Partnership with the **Governor’s Books to Birth Foundation** and the **Dolly Parton Foundation** provide free, high quality, age appropriate books on a monthly basis to over 2,200 Hamblen County children, birth to five years of age. HC*EXCELL and the Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation each provide 50% of the yearly program cost. The Dollywood Foundation manages selection, pricing and distribution of the books. Since 2004, over 240,000 books have been distributed at a cost of \$500,000.

Currently, the Hamblen County Imagination Library Partnership is exploring long-term sustainability options for this unique literary program.

Arts Build Skills (ABS) pilot art program was created to discover if elementary art programming could improve student academic achievement for identified students. Students attended ten, one and one half hour, after-school sessions in Math Art and Readers Theater. The pilot program was conducted at West Elementary from 2012-2014 and from 2014-2016 at Hillcrest elementary. In 2016-2017, the program is transitioning to Fairview Marguerite.

Program benchmarks include teacher identified math and reading components, development of a plan for merging Arts Build Skills techniques into classroom curricula, increased art programming and

HC*EXCELL E-NEWS

2016 (continued)

assemblies and improve social interaction among students. Program results are measured and recorded for feedback to sponsors and teachers. Partners include HC*EXCELL, Rotary Club of Morristown A.M., Alcoa Foundation, West Elementary, Hillcrest Elementary, Rose Center and the *Citizen Tribune*.

Junior Achievement BizTown (JA BizTown)

Entrepreneur Don Rogers, of Rogers Petroleum, Inc., and the Rotary Club of Morristown A.M. sponsored and HC*EXCELL facilitated Junior Achievement pilots for four Hamblen County Elementary schools. The program's objective was to serve as an introduction to workforce development while strengthening student academic performance through basic business skills and knowledge application.

By 2015 the program provided a JA BizTown Experience to over 800 Hamblen County fifth graders. The JA BizTown Experience includes approximately twelve classroom sessions taught by fifth grade teachers and an onsite applied skills daylong experience at the Junior Achievement of East Tennessee BizTown Center in Clinton, TN.

Fifth grade teachers use the JA curriculum which encompasses financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship – the “Economics of Life!” While at BizTown, students explore what they have learned through role play, run businesses, receive two pay checks, pay taxes, manage checking accounts, vote, and much more!

Yasuyuki Yamaoka High School Leadership Fellowship (HSL) was established by the Tuff Torq Corporation in 2005 to support the transition of the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce High School Leadership afterschool program into in-school accredited teen leadership classes at Morristown Hamblen East and West High Schools.

The HSL curriculum includes public speaking, project organization and implementation, team building, leadership skills and service learning. In 2015 roughly 50 East and West High School students took the semester course.

The partnership includes the Hamblen County School System, Morristown Hamblen East and West High Schools and HC*EXCELL contributors.

HC*EXCELL piloted an Arts and Industry Program at Meadowview to examine the impact of linking industry with middle school students.

Post-Secondary Education

tnAchieves – In 2011 HC*EXCELL convened education stakeholders to support post-secondary access and success through becoming a **tnAchieves** partner. In 2015 **tnAchieves** became **Tennessee Promise**. Tennessee Promise offers last dollar community or technical college funding to every Tennessee high school graduate. Ultimately, Tennessee Promise eliminates the tuition and mandatory fee burden associated with post-secondary completion for students immediately following high school graduation. The local programs are facilitated by County Mayors with Advisory Councils. HC*EXCELL participates as a member of the Hamblen County Advisory Council by recruiting mentors and supporting program growth.

ACT^{x2} Second Chance Grant was created in 2013 as a pilot program to explore the benefit of providing high school juniors and seniors an opportunity to take the **ACT** assessment a second time. Originally priority was given to free and reduced lunch students. In 2015, HC*EXCELL invited an **ACT** representative to meet with Hamblen County Counselors and administration to review options for increasing **ACT** participation. The result was more Hamblen County students were able to take the test a second time. The program was founded on the premise that student **ACT** scores could be improved by taking the test a second time. Morristown Hamblen East and West each received a \$3,000 grant.

Approximately 82% of the students who participated either maintained their previous score or increased their score by 1 to 6 points.

HC*EXCELL E-NEWS

2016 (continued)

Broadening Community Commitment and Investment in Education

HC*EXCELL partnered with the *Citizen Tribune* to increase community awareness of K-12 education funding through the publication of “**Funding Our Future**” Inside the Hamblen County’s budgeting process.

Additionally, HC*EXCELL convened a community partnership with MACC, WSCC, HCBOE, From Africa to Appalachia, Morristown Task Force on Diversity and Mt. Oliver Baptist Church to sponsor 3 days of “**The March Goes On**”. Presentations by 4 original “**Freedom Riders**” were made to over 4,500 middle and high school students and community residents in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act.

Hamblen County District Teachers of the Year (TOY) are selected for their instructional excellence and achievement. HC*EXCELL awards each **TOY** \$500 in recognition of their teaching excellence and dedication to their students. 2016 Hamblen County **Teachers of the Year** are: PreK-4 Jama Davidson, John Hay; Grades 5-8 Derek Voiles, Lincoln Heights Middle School who also won ***Tennessee Teacher of the Year; and Grades 9-12 Brandon Moore, East High School.

National Board Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTC) HC*EXCELL supports professional teacher development by providing funding in partnership with the State of Tennessee and Hamblen County Board of Education for **National Board Certification**.

NBPTC is a rigorous assessment of high quality teaching. Teachers who obtain certification are among the most proficient in their field. 2016 Hamblen County NBPTC teachers are: Dr. Matthew Drinnon, John Hay Elementary; and Dr. Rebecca Drinnon, Morristown Hamblen West High School, Suzanne Romines Mills, Morristown East High School, and Dr. Christy Walker, Manley Elementary.

HC*EXCELL provides grant funding for National Board Certification and a check for \$500 upon receipt of their certification and a yearly stipend of \$200 for being Board Certified. The Hamblen County Board of Education provides a yearly stipend of \$750 for Board Certification.

Volunteer and Mentorship Opportunities

The JA BizTown program, tnAchieves/TN Promise and Arts Build Skills offer volunteer and mentoring opportunities. If you are interested in being a volunteer or mentor please contact:

*Linda Ketner (423) 581-5334
lketner.hcexcell@gmail.com*

*or: Tish Jones (423) 587-9278
tjrom@usit.net*

The foundation’s work is made possible by generous and visionary community benefactors, area, state and national foundations, and local organizations and governments who support HC*EXCELL’s efforts to ensure our high school graduates are ready for post-secondary education, work and life.



5th grade students at JA BizTown day in Clinton, TN

HC*EXCELL E-NEWS

2016 (continued)

Lessons Learned from “Cradle to Career”

As a foundation we learned that many of our children enter kindergarten unprepared for success; are deficient in the critical thinking/problem solving skills needed to transition K-12 successfully; lack motivation and skills for workforce and post-secondary opportunities; and that our teachers and educators feel they are being asked to teach students life skills in addition to educational subject matter while being under-appreciated.



Before President James Craine’s term ended, he appointed a committee to review, evaluate HC*EXCELL’s 25 years of programming and impact and to develop a plan for going forward. This review resulted in the HC*EXCELL Board approving and going forward with a \$1.3 million, five year **SUCCESS** initiative.

SUCCESS stands for:

***Strategically Utilizing Community Creativity
Empowering Student Success***

The goal is to continue promoting educational excellence and achievement as a means of sustaining and growing economic prosperity to improve the quality of life in Hamblen County and the Lakeway Region.



The **SUCCESS** initiative consists of five components:

- **Ready by 6:** Bringing community stakeholders together to design, fund and implement a strategic plan to increase the number of children entering school ready for success;
- **Arts Build Skills:** Programming to stimulate elementary and middle school students’ critical thinking and problem solving skills by expanding in-school, out-of-school and after-school programming.
- **Workforce Development and Leadership:** Introducing 5th grade students to the “Economics of life” through the JA BizTown Curricula with an exhilarating, day-long simulated city experience. Improving middle and high school students’ critical thinking, leadership and workforce skills through targeted courses and activities.
- **Student Post-Secondary Education:** Providing act grants, scholarships and academic support to improve students post-secondary opportunities and successes; and
- **Herbert S. Walters Educator Fund:** Resources for staff and teacher development, recognition and appreciation.