

Manatee River News

February 29, 2008

Serving Communities North and South of the Manatee River

FREE

Buffalo Creek students teach their parents

Technology drives classroom achievement

JEFF BERLINICKE

Staff Writer
jeff@manateerivernews.com

Sometimes the students are the teachers. At Buffalo Creek Middle School, a Palmetto school in its first year of existence with bright, shiny computers similar to a four-year college, principal Scott Cooper and teacher Richard Platt have students exploring computer technology at a level that is unmatched by many Manatee County high schools.

With a partnership with Haile Middle School and Harlee Middle School, Buffalo Creek has won several awards and is vying for a chance to go to the national event in Orlando later this year.

The kids have been working on three-dimensional designs, animation and building model computer-powered cars. It is all state of the art and hard to explain unless you are a fifth-grader having grown up in the computer generation.

Cooper and Platt are the movers and shakers, but the students are the ones making a lot of the calls.

"I learn a lot from Mr. Platt, but he knows the long ways around things and how to explain it. I teach him the shortcuts," said student Jordon Giveans. "My grandfather owns a sheet-metal shop, and he always taught me a lot about technology. And now I can use it."

One of the projects students at Buffalo Creek came up with is a 3-D computer design of their school in which you can see the new campus from all angles. Another is of the train that runs through State Road 64. The students did an entire movie on that.

The students are in the midst of designing a lamp by using 3-D computer technology. Platt and Cooper came up with some recycled materials for the students

to use to create the lamp. There is nothing permanent yet, but it's waiting on the computer.

Their newest and biggest project is designing an iPod cradle that will hold the iPod. Computer images generated by the students show its design from every angle. They also designed a system where students and parents can watch Buffalo Creek school news on iPods.

"A lot of kids don't know this kind of technology after they leave college," Platt said. "You never learn this in middle school, but the kids here love it. If I stayed her until 10 every night, the kids would stay with me and the parents would stay also. They love it."

Cooper said students don't do it just for the grades — they know technology will be the most important thing to get them through college and, after college, to help them get jobs. But, he said, the best part is the fun they have.

"To the kids, designing these things is like playing one large video game. The stuff we have here is better than what you get in high school. Nobody else in the state is doing what we do here. The kids don't even look at it as school work," said Cooper.

Platt, who used to be a designer at NASA in Texas, said there are almost 300 students at Buffalo Creek taking the computer classes and they are already learning college-level computer technology.

"I know most of it is for scientists or people who make video games, but it's fun and it gets us ready for college," Giveans said. "Everything is about electronics now."

Student Nicholas Johnson's father is a teacher, but it's often Nicholas that does the teaching.



JEFF BERLINICKE/Manatee River News

Buffalo Creek Middle School students Jordon Giveans, Jonathan Gilbert and Nicholas Johnson are part of the school's Technology Student Association. The group has been winning statewide awards in the first year of the school's existence.

"My dad teaches, but he doesn't know a lot of the things I know, so I teach him," said Johnson. "It's fun teaching my dad."

The Buffalo Creek students will head

to Orlando April 23 for a statewide computer technology competition. If they finish first or second, it's off to a national competition on Orlando this fall.

Lights, from page 1

of the station but not for a post office going up next door, according to FDOT plans. The post office will open later this year.

Getting to Parrish's new post office soon might also cause a problem. If plans continue as proposed, a grass median would prevent left turns to and from the post office when that section is widened to four lanes. Medians also would block left turns at the main entrances of some residential developments along the highway, including

Veranda Springs and Forest Creek.

If plans go as expected, northbound U.S. 301 drivers would have to make a U-turn at C.R. 675 or turn left onto 121st Avenue East to reach the post office. To go northbound from the post office, drivers would need to make a U-turn at Fort Hamer Road or take 121st Avenue to 69th Street East to U.S. 301.

Jordan said that he is also hoping to host a village meeting to discuss a new sewer system for Parrish. He said he hopes it will lay a solid foundation for development along U.S. 301 between C.R. 675 and C.R. 62.