Interview with President Keith Brown

By Laura Smith

On Thursday, May 30, I had the pleasure of interviewing the President of Jefferson State Community College, Keith Brown, to gain more information on Jefferson State’s future plans for the school. According to President Brown, Jefferson State is committed to providing students with the tools they need to meet job market demands. With expansions of new career programs and renovations to the Jefferson Campus underway, students can be sure to expect a quality education. Workforce Education is being enhanced by a projected addition of in-demand construction-based programs that include carpentry, heavy equipment operations, and industrial maintenance. A new building for Workforce Education Center is expected to be built at the Jefferson Campus to house these new programs. Students can also expect expansions in other certificate programs that could possibly include Surgical Technician, Dental Hygiene, and new Information Technology programs. Brown says the purpose of expanding and adding certain programs is to meet the demands of the current job market.

Jefferson State strives to provide a quality learning environment for students. In addition to the expansion of Workforce Education programs, construction for renovations at the Jefferson Campus has already begun. Brown states that the Jefferson Campus is expected to be completely renovated within the next five to seven years. Along with improvements aesthetically, Jefferson State also is continuously looking for new ways to improve the quality of instruction. As of June 2019, instructors can volunteer to be a part of the Instructional Leadership Academy. Brown confirmed that the purpose of this year-long program is to teach instructors of Jefferson State new and improved ways of teaching that will hopefully result in a better learning experience for students.
It was my first semester of college at Jeff State, and as I was becoming more involved on the campus, I found myself increasingly bothered that there was no apparent mascot for the school nor did I know what the school’s official colors were. Naturally, I began inquiring for these answers only to realize that I was not alone in this lack of knowledge. After much archival research and interviewing senior faculty, I have finally discovered these answers. Over these next few issues, I will unravel many of the mysteries regarding the history and origin of Jefferson State Community College.

The doors of Jeff State opened for its first class of students on September 30, 1965. Storms from a hurricane off the coast of New Orleans had ravaged the area in the days prior turning the parking and roads leading to the campus into a swamp. Faculty and students needed to park some distance away as their cars could not traverse the mud and water. Fitting conditions for what would be the first of many Jefferson State Community College Pioneers.

Many names were debated upon before the decision was made. Governor at the time, George Wallace, believed it was fitting to give the junior colleges of Alabama names that would honor American heroes of the South. Under his recommendation, the name Jefferson State Community College was chosen in honor of Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States. The buildings of the campus were appropriately named to honor the great contributors to the genesis of the institution.

Dr. Leroy Brown, Superintendent of the Anniston City Schools, was chosen to serve as the first president of the new college. Dr. Brown felt that a seal was needed to portray the image of the college and requested James L. Moncrief, Academic Dean, to help develop ideas. The original sketch was composed by Moncrief’s wife, Sandra, and was adopted after slight revision.

The original seal was representative of the past and future merging together. The pioneer with his rifle symbolizes the spirit of adventure possessed by the early settlers of our country. The rocket flying over Birmingham’s Sloss Furnace depicts an age of science and technology. All of this is complemented by the written motto for the school: THE PAST AND THE FUTURE JOINED BY EDUCATION.

Last to be selected were the original school colors. White and green were chosen, representing purity and growth, respectively. It was not until the Presidential office was held by Dr. Judy Merritt that the colors were changed to raisin and slate. Adhering to the school motto, these changes were made to update and modernize the school’s image.

It was the belief of Dr. Brown that the college seal has been an appropriate emblem to convey the Pioneer spirit in what he described as “learning and living during an ever-changing dynamic period in the history of mankind.”

Next issue, we will examine some of the social norms and cultural ideals of the time that affected the faculty and student body. One in particular which sparked a court case that forever changed the college and ushered in a new generation.
The Pioneer

—The JSCC Speech and Debate Team Excels in International Competition—

By Zac Alexander

The Jefferson State Speech and Debate Team traveled to Berlin, Germany on March 8-16, 2019, to compete in the International Forensics Association Speech and Debate Tournament, held in the Park Inn Alexanderplatz Hotel. Students from two dozen colleges and universities competed in individual public speaking and dramatic events as well as IPDA (International Public Debate Association) debate. Jefferson State sent three second-year team members and all brought home awards.

Individual Event Captain Atiyah Muhammad won 5th place in Prose Interpretation. Regarding the tournament voyage she stated, "Our trip to Germany was exciting, nerve-wrecking, and something I hope to never forget.” She also noted, “the competition itself was really fun, despite the stress. I met people from Montana and Utah to New York City. It also felt great to perform on a national level and come back successful. Overall, I will always be grateful to my coach and to Jeff State."

JSCC Debate Captain Jacob Humphries was a semi-finalist in Extemporaneous Speaking. Of the tournament experience he stated, “From the beginning of the competition we all knew it was going to be tough and we would have to have our best run through ever in order to place.” Furthermore, he said, “my favorite part of the whole trip (besides karaoke of course) was how we all managed to place in at least one event! Germany was amazing and I truly never will forget the times we had!

The third competitor for the squad, Team President Rich Quarles, also had a strong tournament performance. He went undefeated in debate preliminary rounds and was ranked 7th of out all 64 open-division debaters at the tournament.

The team’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Janice Ralya, said of the tournament “It was a pleasure to travel to Berlin with Atiyah, Jacob and Rich. They all have done such a fine job over the past two years that this trip was a fitting reward.” She added, “I was very proud of all of them for how they represented Jefferson State. For each of them to bring home an award from this prestigious tournament was very exciting and a testament to the hard work and dedication they have displayed on the team.”

The team is looking forward to the start of a new tournament season. They will attend a debate workshop in Baytown, Texas in July and begin Fall competition in September. Please contact Dr. Janice Ralya (jralya@jeffersonstate.edu) for more information about the Speech and Debate Team.
—Spotlight Drama Club Shines Brightly—

By Lesley Warren

The Spotlight Drama Club had a busy year filled with projects and performances, and it’s already making big plans for next year! Members of the group participated in The Amazing Race, performed a dramatic reading at PioneerCon, AND presented two fully-mounted productions, The Curious Savage and The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, in collaboration with CEPA, a nonprofit community theatre in Pell City.

The highlight of the year was Spotlight’s production of Almost, Maine. The show was entirely student-directed and involved 18 members from three campuses. Students began rehearsing in November and worked tirelessly, putting in over 50 hours each, until performances in March. As if this huge undertaking wasn’t impressive enough, Spotlighters packed up the set and traveled to three campuses to give free performances for all students and staff.

Spotlight membership has grown steadily over the last several years with 30 active members currently participating. Plans for the 2019-2020 school year are already underway and include two more joint community theatre productions, an evening (or several) of one-acts, and joining the Clanton campus for their Halloween celebration.

In addition to the many wonderful projects that Spotlight has hosted or participated in, The Theatre Department is pleased to offer THR 131 – Acting Techniques I in the fall. Students will do monologue and scene work, learn vocal and movement techniques, and study the fundamentals of acting. There is no prerequisite for the course, but with a maximum capacity of only 16, students are encouraged to register early.

Membership in The Spotlight Drama Club is open to all students. Email Spotlight co-sponsor Lesley Warren for more information at ggray2@jeffersonstate.edu and “like” the Jefferson State Spotlight Drama Club on Facebook.

Email: ggray2@jeffersonstate.edu
Phone: 205-552-9584

—Student Artists Featured From ART 113—

By Joseph Honeycutt

Instructor: Patrick Mayton

Class: Drawing 1 & 2 ART 113-114

Drawing class is a required foundation class for any Studio Art Concentration at four year institutions and serves as a General Humanities credit at Jefferson State Community College. Throughout the course students will learn how to draw representational realism, expressive, and conceptual themes using graphite, charcoal, india ink, pen and subtractive techniques. As students advance they will be introduced to larger drawing formats, relief printmaking, grid techniques, an colored media like pastel, prismacolor, conte, and colored inks.

Student Artists Featured from ART 113:

Sharon DeVaney-Lovinguth - Pablo Phil 1 & 2; Big Bang Color
Sahwot Koirala - Native American Heritage, Photomontage
Hayley Kubler - Supercell; Material: Graphite and Colored Pencil

*(See online copy of the Pioneer for slideshow of featured works @ jeffersonstate.edu)
—Looking for Art Events?—

**Birmingham Museum of Art**

- Slow Art Sunday from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Hagar and Ishmael Said by the Angel - June 30, 2019
- The Spirit of Revolt - July 7, 2019
- Portrait of a Lady - July 28, 2019
- Pure Land of Amitabha - August 4, 2019
- Figural Jug - August 25, 2019

**Birmingham Museum of Art**

- Art on the Rocks - June 14 - August 9, 2019
- Ways of Seeing: Fashion - April 13 - August 11, 2019
- Blackout: Silhouettes Then and Now - Sep 28, 2019 - Jan 12, 2020

**Birmingham Art Crawl**

The Pizitz

1821 2nd Avenue North in Downtown Birmingham

First Thursday Every Month

**Birmingham Art Walk**

Sep 7 and 8, 2019

Downtown Birmingham

**Moss Rock Art Festival**

The Preserve in Hoover

Nov 2 and 3, 2019

*(Art Instructor Patrick Mayton has provided the preceding list of art events)*
“A Servant’s Heart”: Local celebrity gets personal at JSCC.

By: Christopher Paul McKee

“There’s a lot of blood on my hands.”
The tone in his voice was earnest, irreproachable... troubled. It was Tuesday, June 4th, nearing noon, and Sigma Chi Eta’s invited guest speaker, James Spann, was opening up, and getting real.

Upon arrival at JSCC’s Shelby-Hoover Campus, his demeanor had been cordial, and somewhat reserved. As introductions were made, his humorous wit and humble nature were soon apparent, swiftly dispelling with any possible notions of hubris or pretension.

Stepping to the lectern, he adjusted his laptop, double-checked the projector, cleared his throat, then in front of the Zeta Chapter of the National Communication Honor Society, he opened with the surprising declaration, “I know absolutely nothing about communication; TV, radio, social media... nothing,” setting the tone for what would be a different kind of lecture; one I never saw coming.

“I learned a lot of things in the woods of Butler county.” Growing up in the small, rural town of Greenville, Alabama, Spann spent much of his time exploring the forests around his home. An only child, abandoned by his father at age 7, a strong sense of self-reliance quickly emerged as he came to know the rewards of hard work, while finding much needed solace in the refuge of nature. Even now, the deep affinity he holds for the hometown that shaped him is evident; “It broke my heart to leave... My whole world was Greenville.”

Fast forward a few years. The 70’s were well in bloom, and the growing mood of experimentation was grooving its way into FM radio waves all across the country, as scores of station managers abandoned their usual formats and began programming in freeform. Spann, a senior in high school, had been volunteering at the local radio station, and soon found himself deejaying on weekend broadcasts, spinning everything from Lynyrd Skynyrd and Led Zeppelin, to The Carpenters and Bee Gees. “It was a weird decade,” he said smiling, with a look and tonality of one privy to its true depth of bizzarity.

April 3rd, 1974...
“I Lost my innocence that night,” Spann said. It was now only weeks from graduation, and the eclectic sounds of random tunes had been abruptly silenced. The station was covering a band of storms that had begun moving through the state, and they needed reporters on location. Spann was sent with his ham radio to a hospital emergency room in Jasper, where nearby, an EF5 had had just torn its way through the landscape. As the injured were brought in, he would see things he could never forget, stating, “I had night terrors for five years.” Weather had become a part of who he was, as a day of deadly April storms had forever changed him... though it wouldn’t be the last.

April 27th, 2011...
It was early afternoon, and the nasty squall line that had moved through earlier in day, producing straight line winds and embedded F2 and F3 tornados, had wiped out much of the state’s power grid, phone lines, and weather monitoring systems, greatly hindering meteorologists’ desperate efforts to warn the public, and leaving thousands of residents completely in the dark as to what was coming. “We were crippled,” said Spann.
Reports started rolling in from Mississippi of whole sections of highway being peeled from the ground like unrooted sod. A dreaded EF5 was ruthlessly and indiscriminately rearranging earth, and headed this way fast. The largest tornado outbreak ever recorded had begun, and what was to follow would again change Spann’s life dramatically, as 216 tornadoes would touch down on that day, killing 252 in Alabama alone, and causing catastrophic damage from Mississippi all the way to Virginia.

“History will judge me for that day… there’s a lot of blood on my hands.”

With those stirring words, I realized the famously suspendered, kind-smiled weatherman I had watched on television my entire life, carried a burden—a heavy one.

It was here that the direction of the presentation shifted, as Spann began recalling the timeline of events, detailing the science of what nature had unleashed, and how it had come to be. Then… the people.

The depth of anguish he feels for victims is visceral, and obvious in every word. One by one, the projector slides were changed, each with a photograph of those lost. A college senior only days from graduating, a growing family loving life… a child. As the slides continued, Spann stared forward. He has every name and story memorized. He knows the faces.

“Everything that has ever happened to you, good and bad, will lead you to one or two days in your life and career that will define who you are,” he said with palpable conviction.

Emmy winner, Broadcaster of the Year, nearly half-a-million followers on Twitter alone; he mentioned none of these. The purpose was focused, pointed, and straight from his heart, as he spoke passionately on improving warning systems and public awareness, getting weather radios in every home, and finally doing away with antiquated tornado sirens, which he said greatly contributed to the death toll on April 27, as residents waited to hear their ominous wail before sheltering, and by then, it was too late. “I wanted to climb up every pole and burn them all.” He was serious, not about climbing the poles, but rather his intent to forever do all he possibly can in order to protect those living in the state he loves… and all who love them.

It’s 4am, and still dark. After three hours of rest, Spann rises and readies for work; A daily routine he’s lived for years now, and in similar forms and timeframes, for over four decades. What the new day may bring his way is as unpredictable as… well, the weather. Nevertheless, he’ll try his best. That’s his job, he’s good at it, and Alabamians’ lives could very well depend on it.

Spann told the audience, “All that matters is what we do for the people we serve. We are servants. If you don’t approach our job with a servant’s heart, you won’t be successful. If you don’t have a heart for people, you won’t be successful.”

As his speech drew to a close, and the room slowly emptied, a small group huddled around where he stood gathering his things. He patiently took time to converse with every one of them, listening intently and speaking openly. His arrival, lecture, and departure had all been the same: sincere.

The unexpected is an inevitable force of change we all must face, and how we prepare for it, and react to it, will likely define us. Thankfully, when nature is that force, we have an ally on guard, as one comforting forecast remains certain: Early, late, or any time severe weather threatens, James Spann will be up, working, serving, and tirelessly doing all he can to help save Alabamians homes, hearts, and lives.

And he will.
—Achiever’s League—
By Joseph Honeycutt

In the South, the longer days of spring mean many things. For some, it is the blooming of wildflowers that cover our vehicles with pollen and leave empty shelves in the allergy section at the local drug store. For many others, it means shaved ice, sunflower seeds, and the beginning of baseball season. Often, special needs children are left out when it comes to sports, but not in Hueytown.

The Achiever’s League allows players of all abilities to play baseball, and this year, members of Jeff State Student Groups helped make their dreams become reality.

The Achiever’s League was started in 1994 by Kay McKinnon as a program that invited children with special needs to have a place to enjoy teamwork, comradery, and most importantly, baseball. In 2010, the leadership role was passed on to volunteer Bonnie Burns who still serves as acting President for the league.

The league has had several sponsors come and go over the years, but Bessemer Elks Lodge #721 has supported it since its inception 25 years ago. The Bessemer Elks Lodge has helped provide uniforms, trophies, supplies, and funding for things like field insurance. Games were initially hosted in Pleasant Grove until the move to Hueytown in 2016.

This year’s season hosted 32 players, each with their own introductory song welcoming them as they approach home plate to bat. “Our mission is to make the players feel important and have a sense of normalcy and accomplishment,” Burns shares. Every player has unlimited strikes, and all hits are home runs. Since the score is not kept, each game necessarily ends in a tie, settled after the game with a “dance off” that ultimately always gets pushed to the next week in the spirit of friendly competition.

To keep players safe, each player needs a “base buddy” to help them bat and run the bases. When players are out in the field, base buddies also keep their players safe when big hitters are at the plate. Despite some limitations, some players can really slug the ball. Several students from Jeff State came out to serve as base buddies, including SGA, Sigma Chi Eta, and Sigma Kappa Delta.

The Achiever’s League is a non-profit organization with games hosted in Hueytown at Allison Bonnet Memorial Park. Registration begins January 1 and continues through the close of the month. Games begin on the second Saturday in March and last until May. For those interested in participating, volunteering, or any other general concerns, please contact achieversleaguesoftball@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page.

—Honors Convocation—
By Joseph Honeycutt

For over thirty years Jefferson State Community College has hosted its annual Honors Convocation acknowledging exceptional students and their achievements. The 2019 event took place on April 19 at the Shelby-Hoover campus and was emceed by Mike Royer. This year’s event recognized almost 150 individuals including 73 students honored with transfer scholarships to 4-year schools along with numerous student group and faculty awards.

Scholarships from benefactors were awarded, including those from EBSCO, the Dr. Connie Beddingsfield Memorial, the Chad Prior Memorial, and the Walter and Mary Harris Memorial. Major awards such as the Carson, Allen, and Fitzgerald awards were presented as well as the Merritt Scholarship. In addition, two new benefactor awards were added this year – the Dora Virginia Hestley Memorial and the Dr. Shailesh Upadhyay Memorial.

Divisional Awards, as well as awards from the Center for Professional, Career, and Technical Education were given; along with the Center of Workforce Education. Outstanding Faculty achievement was awarded to Jacob Melvin. Jefferson State Community College takes pride in acknowledging and rewarding its student body and faculty for their outstanding achievements. Each year, thousands of students find their place at Jeff State. Even more carry with them the experience acquired from Jeff State in moving forward with education and in the workforce.
—Phi Theta Kappa—

For the third consecutive year, the Shelby/Clanton chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, Beta Lambda Delta, was named the Most Distinguished Chapter in the state of Alabama. The chapter was also one of seven chapters (out of 1,300) to be named a Distinguished Chapter internationally for three consecutive years.

This year, members of BLD conducted the Birmingham Youth Peace Summit for over 150 area high-school students. At the summit, students learned how to use art, writing, and civil debate to change the world. BLD officer Brian Lavett said:” Today, our society is more divided than ever before. So, finding constructive ways to bring people together is important. Being a part of that process in our community was a great experience and it’s something that I’m very proud of. Events like the Peace Summit have the potential to start dialogue, bridge gaps, and ultimately be a catalyst for real change.”

BLD members also worked closely with the Horizons School. Horizons teaches employment and life skills to young adults with learning disabilities. The chapter helped Horizons conduct a fundraiser dinner, and they also worked closely with Horizons students who are now enrolled at Jefferson State. BLD student Adam Patterson commented: “As someone with cognitive disabilities I didn't really know what to expect from this event. What I learned was that even with disabilities, people can become productive members of society. One student that was in my group managed to get a job at UAB’s Recreation Center thanks to the money raised at the Horizon's Dinner. With our money, the Horizon's school was able to expand and help a much larger student body. That alone is a major accomplishment.”

Phi Theta Kappa, the official honor society of two-year schools, is the largest and most active honor society in the world. Jefferson State is proud to sponsor two strong Phi Theta Kappa chapters. For more information, please contact:

Jefferson and St. Clair - Pell City Campuses

Matt Boehm, mboehm@jeffersonstate.edu

David McRae, dmcrae@jeffersonstate.edu

Shelby - Hoover and Chilton - Clanton Campuses

Liesl Harris, lwharris@jeffersonstate.eduu

—Sigma Chi Eta and Sigma Kappa Delta Induction Ceremony—

By Cody Vick

Inductees, families, and friends joined together for the Sigma Chi Eta Zeta Chapter and the Sigma Kappa Delta Eta Epsilon Chapter Induction Ceremony. The event was held at 2 p.m. on April 4, 2019, in the multipurpose room in the Judy M. Merritt’s Health Science Building at the Shelby - Hoover Campus. Following the ceremony, guests enjoyed cake, punch, fruit, and cheese that was prepared by Jefferson State’s culinary program. Students interested in learning more should visit the Jefferson State Community College page, under the services tab.
Since I decided I wanted to attend college, friends and family told me to join clubs and teams, that it would help me make friends who shared my common interests. Joining the Jefferson State Speech and Debate Team helped me make friends, with our shared interest in becoming better at communicating. I am grateful that I was able to gain a better knowledge of communications, and experience things I will never forget.

Being a part of this team is not easy. You have to put in hard work, but I promise you it is worth it. I was a judge this season for the team at IPDA (Individual Public Debate Association) debate tournaments. Most tournaments I went to had six preliminary rounds and several elimination rounds. Driving to the tournaments in the team van, we had many interesting debates, and we told stories as ways to practice before the tournament. Serving as a debate judge taught me how to look at both sides of an argument even if I have opposing views. I also helped my teammates research topics before they went to their rounds. In less than half an hour, we had to find enough information on a topic so that they could go up and speak about it as if they were experts on the subject. Debate topics could be about politics, philosophy, or even pop culture. On the way back to the hotel each night, we would talk about ways everyone could improve and how they felt they did during their rounds. The things I learned from being on this team not only helped me on the team but also in my other classes and life in general.

Being on the team is not only about working hard. If you are on this team for any amount of time, you'll see just how much everyone cares about each other. The team is always willing to help one another, whether it be during practices, tournaments, or outside of it all. Heaven Sheppard, the Team’s Secretary/Treasurer, said this about this year's team, "My experience with the Jefferson State Speech and Debate Team has been a huge turning point in my life. It has allowed me to not only expand my education but also to have a family and get out of my comfort zone. This is not just a team, and it's not just a club. It's a family, and every new experience that I have gotten from this family has made me a better speaker and person." Every single team member I spoke to about their experience on the team has similar statements.

If you'd like similar experiences, every semester the team travels to different tournaments all over the country, competing in IPDA Debate and individual events. For more information regarding the Speech and Debate Team, you can contact Dr. Janice Ralya at jralya@jeffersonstate.edu.
—Student Organizations—

-Below are links to all student clubs and organizations ... Find Your Place!

-Ambassadors

-Art and Animation Guild

-Association of Radiologic Technology Students

-College Scholars Team

-Communication Honor Society – Sigma Chi Eta

-Designers and Builders Club

-Distinguished Collegiate Young Men and Women’s Club

-Enactus

-Jefferson State Singers

-Golf Team

-Kappa Beta Delta

-Multicultural Students Association

-National Association of Veterinary Technicians

-Phi Theta Kappa

-Queer Straight Alliance

-Sigma Kappa Delta

-Sigma Phi Sigma

-Student Government Association

-Student Nurse Association

-Speech Team

-Writer’s Round Table

-Wingspan Literary Magazine

---Staff---

- Connie Caskey, Communications Department Chair
- Joseph Honeycutt, Chapter President
- Christopher Paul McKee, Vice President of Communication
- Anna Jett, Vice President of Service

~Thanks for reading!~