

# The *Transition* TIMES

Fall/Winter 2007

## Work Hard, Have Fun!

Enjoying the Journey to Success

I have heard our superintendent Dr. Dearing often say, “*Work hard, and have fun.*” In my position as a Transition Specialist, I have found that students who work hard and have fun at their jobs and studies are the ones who will be the most successful. As you go through this edition of the Transition Times, check out Manatee High School teacher Tracey Swart’s students who were at the International Division on Career Development and Transition Conference in October. They worked hard at making and selling decorative flip flops and charmed the international audience with their hard work and smiles.

Also, what about those Soldier Snack Packs that Jim Comkowycz’s (Mr. C’s) class is sending to our troops in Iraq? (See page 5.) Mr. C. knows how to make reading, writing, and math both meaningful and fun and his



*“People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing.”*

Dale Carnegie

students reap the benefits while learning how to contribute and share with our soldiers.

Smiles are contagious and all the students in Chef Bert’s class at MTI appear as though they are having lots of fun cooking up good food. So, have fun reading the articles in our winter edition of The Transition Times. And remember: *“When you find a job you love, you never go to work again.”*

Confucius

Diane Roberts

FDLRS/ESE Transition Specialist

## Credit for FUN

Our Career Experience Program at Braden River High School has a new contract this year with The Braden River Animal Hospital on State Road 70 in Bradenton. Valeri Jorgensen, a tenth grader at Braden River High School, is earning high school credit for doing what she loves most—working with animals. Valeri is pictured here with Rascal Rogers, a mixed breed feline. Valeri’s work duties include cleaning animal cages, doing the laundry for the pets’ bedding, walking the dogs, and anything that needs to be done. She is there to help in any way she can. She often gets to observe surgeries on many of the animals that come in the clinic.



Valeri Jorgensen

## IN THIS ISSUE

When work is fun: career prep experiences teach skills and confidence.



### Page 1–2

New Employment Specialists

### Page 3

Transitions Conference

### Page 4–11

Career prep experiences and more

### Page 12

MCTIC

# Working hard...and Having Fun!

## Welcome New Employment Specialists

**T**he Department of Education Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the School District of Manatee have entered into a new three-year Third Party Cooperative Agreement to provide Community Based Work Experiences (CBWE) for eligible ESE students. This agreement enabled the district to employ seven VR Employment Specialists. Here's a chance to get to know each one.

**W**endy Holden: After graduating with a BA in sociology from Louisiana Tech in 1995, Wendy made the move to Florida. After five years with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office, Wendy worked as a Manatee County Family and Consumer Science teacher. In her new position as an employment specialist, she enjoys the ability of giving the students more one-on-one attention as it relates to their academic performance as well as their vocational future. Wendy works with students from Palmetto High School.

**B**arbara Barnes: Barbara received her Masters in Counseling with a specialization in Career Development from California State. She interned at the university's Career Development and Placement Center where she taught Career Planning and Life Goals. Her graduate work included an internship with the California Department of Youth Authority counseling youth and families in crisis. In Seattle, she worked for the King County Juvenile Probation and for the Seattle Urban League as a career counselor. With three children attending Lakewood Ranch High, it was wonderful for Barbara to come aboard as LRHS's Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Specialist.

**D**ebra Morse: A New Hampshire native, Debra attended the University of New Hampshire. She and her family moved to Florida in 1999. She has three daughters: one at the University of Florida and two in the IB program at Southeast High. After being home for 13 years, she substituted in Manatee County and later became a teacher's aide at Braden River High's ESE Department. She easily transitioned into the employment specialist job and says she enjoys guiding students through the employment process.

**S**teve Van Cott: Steve is originally from Sarasota and was a missile systems analyst in the U.S. Air Force. He is a state certified electrical contractor and has been active in local community service clubs. Steve taught Industrial Electricity at MTI and developed industry involvement by teaching on site, eventually leading to the Florida Center for Manufacturing Excellence. He also developed an apprenticeship program which now spans three counties. Steve says, "I love the opportunity to work with the students and employers."

**S**andra Craig: Sandy is a home town girl, having attended Ballard Elementary, Bayshore Junior High, and graduating from Manatee High in 1979. She has an AA degree from MCC and will soon graduate

with an AS degree in paralegal/legal studies. Sandy and husband Mike have three children—all graduates of Manatee High. She has been employed with the District for 17 years, 12 of those in the ESE Department. She now works with students at Southeast and Manatee High Schools. Sandy loves working with the kids and watching them succeed.

**J**ohn Simpson: From Knoxville, Tennessee, John served as a Bradenton police officer for 20 years. He worked for nine years as the coordinator of MTI's Law Enforcement Academy. In 2004 he became a Job Development Coach working with ESE students at MTI. John now works with Central High School students who also attend classes at MTI. After a law enforcement working environment where he issued strict commands, expecting exact results, John's biggest challenge is transitioning to students with disabilities who need "TLC." WOW! "I love seeing these kids succeed in their vocational goals after giving them assistance with various job development activities," John said.

**C**arrie Walden: Originally from Syracuse, New York, Carrie has worked with the District for nine years as a paraprofessional, ESE clerical assistant, and ESE secretary. She is a District-wide employment specialist working with students who are on the Diploma Option 2 track. She has an AA degree from MCC and is finishing her Bachelor's degree at Hodges University. Carrie's husband Rob also works with the District in network services. They have two elementary age children. Carrie enjoys working with students and wants to instill in them the love of learning and the desire to be life-long learners and contributors to society.



*Front row, L to R: Wendy Holden and Debra Morse. Back row, L to R: Sandy Craig, Carrie Walden, Barbara Barnes, and John Simpson. Not pictured: Steve Van Cott.*

# Manatee Teachers Have FUN While Sharing...

## DCDT Conference: "Building Castles, Building Dreams"

The 14th International Conference of the Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT) was held at Disney's Contemporary Hotel and Convention Center in October. The theme of the conference was "Building Castles...Building Dreams."

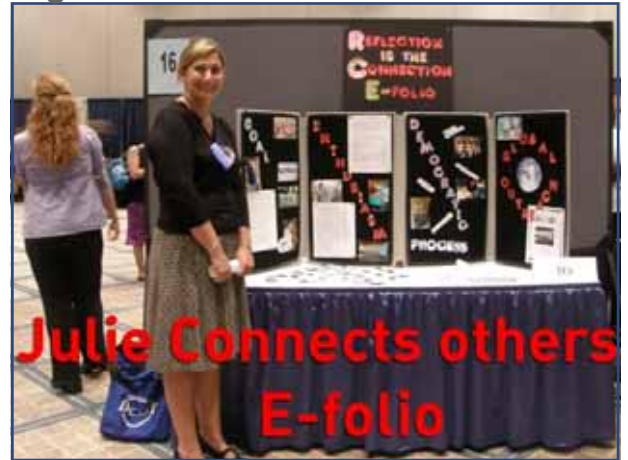
Manatee teachers had FUN sharing at the conference...



*Diane Roberts, FDLRS ESE Transition Specialist and Stewart Bergmann, Diploma Option 2 Coordinator, presented "The Ultimate Student Outcome...Excelling at a Job you Love." They presented stories about people who—despite tremendous barriers—were able to overcome them and become successful when they followed their passions and engaged in jobs that they loved. Diane and Stewart emphasized that students also do well when they work at jobs they truly love.*



*Sara Gaines, Braden River ESE Teacher, and Tammy Ralston, Braden River High Team Leader/OJT Coach, shared information about the highly successful mentoring program at Braden River High. They explained how it was started, the future of the program, and what each student achieves from participating in the program.*



**Julie Connects others  
E-folio**

*Julie Tillet, Palmetto High Teacher, shares examples of the "e-folio" (electronic portfolio) created by her students. E-folio is web based and allows students the ability to continually look back and reflect on their goals.*



*Bettie Stephenson, Manatee Technical Institute ESE Liaison, and John Simpson, VR Employment Specialist, share tips on "Giving Students a Reason to Get Out of Bed in the Morning." Some of the topics covered included procedures for enrolling at MTI, various programs, accommodations and modifications, and many student success stories.*

**"Love what you do. If you don't love it, do something else."**

*Paul Harvey*



# Fun in the Kitchen— MTI's Culinary Program



## Ryan Smith

### *From carpentry to culinary*

I was born in Sarasota Memorial Hospital and have lived in Manatee County all my life. When I was around three years old I was diagnosed with Autism.

I went to school at Orange Ridge/Bullock, Miller Elementary, King Middle School, Manatee High School, and Manatee Technical Institute. While in high school I was enrolled in the Carpentry program and now I am enrolled in Culinary Arts.



I like to travel. I've been to Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Missouri. I've been snow skiing in West Virginia as well. I have studied Tae Kwan Do and Kung Fu. I would enjoy teaching martial arts someday. I also like to write poetry. My hobby is wood working and I have my own business making custom wooden picture frames.

In the future I would like to make enough money to travel and do other things I like to do.

## Amanda Mahon

### *Amanda successfully transitions from OJT career experience to MTI Culinary Arts*

Amanda was born in Fort Wayne Indiana and moved to Florida when she was seven years old. Amanda went to Jessie P. Miller Elementary and Sugg Middle schools. She now attends



Braden River High. She has traveled around the states visiting North Carolina, Texas, Ohio, New Jersey, and Arizona. Her interests include cooking, hockey (Go Lightning!), football, swimming, movies, and hanging out with her friends. She also loves shop-

ping, especially at the mall, and going to fairs. Amanda is a very friendly person who has a lot of close friends. She enjoys going to the beach with them as well. She also has musical talent and plays the violin and trumpet.

Amanda enjoys the MTI culinary class because she cooks different things and always wanted cooking to be part of her life. Her future plans include going to college as well as becoming a chef. Then she would like to settle down, get married, and have kids.

Eventually she would like to visit Hawaii and Puerto Rico, to name a few places.

## Clifford Jones

### *Dreaming big*

I was born in New Jersey and moved to Florida when I was seven. We moved a few times so I attended different schools but now go to Braden River High School. I had a cousin who was in the World Trade Center and got hurt when it went down. My sister and I went to visit family in New Jersey after that happened.

Two years ago my church had a Bible quiz tournament and I joined the team. We wound up in the finals and went to the National competition in Indiana and won! I have also visited the Rocky Mountains which were amazing.

My hobbies are playing baseball and football, but my favorite is cooking. I also like hanging out with my friends.

I really like the M.T.I. culinary program because I learn new things all the time. I'd like to learn everything I can about cooking and become a chef. Some day I would like to visit France to see how the culinary schools are there. My dream is to own my own restaurant and be bigger than Emeril LaGasse.



*"We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."*

*Benjamin Franklin*



# King Middle School Students Share the Fun

## Update: Soldier Snack Packs

As reported in the last edition of the Transition Times, Jim Comkowycz and class at King Middle School are still going strong with their support of our troops. Currently with an outpouring of support from schools and the community, the students have been able to send 500 Soldier Snack Packs to our soldiers serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Each Soldier Snack Pack contains 29 snacks wrapped in a cellophane bag tied with red, white, and blue ribbons. Also enclosed are several copies of the daily comics from the newspaper, letters from students and other supporters, student art work, a magazine, and a paperback book donated by Operation Paperback. Reprinted here is a letter of thanks from a grateful soldier.



*"Find a job you like and you add five days to every week."*

*H. Jackson Browne*

September 29, 2007

Dear Mr. Jim Comkowycz and King Middle School Students,

Hello. My name is Mykesha Sutton. I am 23 years old and an Enlisted Airman in the United States Air Force. I am currently serving my country in Iraq. I work in a flying special operations squadron. For the past month that I have been here I have enjoyed many of the treats that you all send in your snack packs. I pick up the mail every day for my squadron and the best pick ups are the ones when the snack packs come in. Just this week alone we received 3 boxes. I have never eaten as good of snacks as I do with your care packages. My favorite snack is the Knott's Berry Farm Raspberry Shortbread cookies. The snacks do not last very long, but do not worry, that is a good thing. Everyone here in the squadron loves the snack packs. Not only does everyone here enjoy the snacks they also enjoy reading the letters and cards you all write, many of which are hanging on our walls. It was not very long ago that I was a middle school student and I cannot recall ever doing something as honorable as you all are doing. I cannot tell you enough how much it means to us what you all are doing for us. I can only imagine the amount of time it takes to raise money, buy the snacks, and put everything together and then mail it off.

The men and women of our squadron would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for what you do for us on the home front. As a small token of our appreciation we had a flag flown in your honor on an AC-130U gunship on September 11, 2007. We had it flown on that particular day to honor all of the men and women who lost their lives on September 11, 2001 and to remember why we are out here. Thank you again for all that you do.

Sincerely,  
Mykesha Sutton

# Building Skills at Westminster

*"What we learn to do,  
we learn by doing."  
Thomas Jefferson*

## Working Toward a Goal

“Working toward a goal,” is what 10 to 15 students from Bayshore High School’s Career Experience class is all about. Mr. Cliff Essig, Bayshore’s OJT Job Coach, accompanies his students to the Westminster complexes on the Manatee River in downtown Bradenton. There the students take part in hands-on learning. Mr. Essig is part mentor, supervisor, motivator, and as Chad P. Jones, one of his student’s says, “the kind of guy you can talk and relate to, because he really cares about us to be our very best.”

Mr. Essig places his students under the supervision of area supervisors, employees of their facilities, then bounces from area to area to reward the positive and encourage improvement where needed. He says, “We set smaller goals, sometimes just daily goals to achieve a particular result, then build on that; and before they realize it, they are developing the job skills desirable for regular employment.”

Gina Young, Activities Director of Westminster Manor facility, says, “These young people are terrific when they are here. I’ve had Matt Myers help me for the last two years. He recently reminded me about the Tampa Bay Buccaneer play-off games and put up the Buc’s flag in the lobby. To do that, he had to remember where it was, anticipate that it was a good choice, and got permission before tackling the task... quite commendable.” She went on to introduce a former stu-

dent who was hired for a full time position from the class a few years ago.

Susan Davis, Director of Human Resources for Westminster Communities, Inc., which oversees the staffing needs for the six area facilities in Manatee County said she was “quite pleased to participate in the Career Experience program.” She was very keen on these students “having the chance to develop life-long job skills, which will benefit them regardless of what they do later in life.”

## Lights, Camera, Skills, & Fun More from Bayshore High

In their fourth year of supporting a Career Experience for BHS students, the Manatee Players theater offers simple tasks and an opportunity to learn while developing job skills for their future. Normally we supplement the theater’s clean-up crew by tending trash and cleaning mirrors and windows. Often we can take a necessary job that is very time consuming and break it into easier to handle tasks such as separating the hundreds of shades of lens filters and reorganizing them for reuse. Did you know the theater uses 374 different shades of blue hue before you start into the magenta spectrum? Our students do. Next chore: transitioning for the Volunteer’s Party coming soon in December. We’re invited too!



*“BJ” Benjamin McBride folds towels at the Westminster Towers Nursing Home.*



*Manatee Players Theater work crew from Bayshore High School: Netty Gutierrez, Diego Matteo, Brintrail Brinson, and Joel Parks. The crew separates lens filters in hundreds of colors that fit into spotlights to be directed on stage during performances.*

# Fun with Travel & Tourism



## Seeing the World

Waleek “Wally” Parker is a 17 year old dually enrolled high school student attending Palmetto High and Manatee Technical Institute’s Travel and Tourism Academy. This is his second year in the travel program and he plans to complete this course in May of '08. Wally has been learning how to book trips and tours as well as taking tours himself. He has visited many different locations during class such as the Tampa International Airport where he and his classmates took a tour of the security area, fire station, luggage inspection, and the ticket counter. He has been to Washington D.C., New York City, on trains and planes, and has toured Universal Studios in Orlando with his classmates. Wally wants to enter into the field of travel after graduation and someday open his own travel agency.



*MTI students take an insider tour of Tampa International Airport.*

## Southeast Volunteers Shine

### OJT Students Win Awards

Wakeland Elementary nominated two Southeast High OJT students for “Outstanding Volunteer-Youth Division” for the Manatee County School District. Students Priscella Ortiz and Kendraya Davis work at Wakeland Elementary as teacher aides. The students were nominated by teachers Cynthia Standley and Nina Karsick. Southeast High Job Coach Steve Jensen reports that both students are a great help to the teachers and are wonderful with the children. Priscella Ortiz went on to win the award of Manatee Outstanding Volunteer in the Youth Division. Congratulations Priscella!

*“Doing what you love is the cornerstone of having abundance in our life.”*

*Wayne Dyer*



*Left to right: winner Priscella Ortiz, teacher Nina Karsick, and OJT Coach Steve Jensen.*



*Left to right: teacher Cynthia Standley, student Kendraya Davis, and OJT Coach Steve Jensen.*

# 'Raising Canes' Flip for Fun



## MHS "Raising Canes" Worked Hard and Had Fun at DCDT Conference

Manatee High School's Classroom Enterprise, named the "Raising Canes," did just that in a good way at the 14th annual International Division on Career Development & Transition Conference held in October at Disney's Contemporary Resort. Tracey Swart's class showcased their skill at making decorative flip flops and won the international audience over with their skill at marketing and selling their goods. The students sold approximately 100 pairs of the flip flops and took orders for more. Other services provided by the Raising Canes include:

- Preparing the pre-game meal for the Manatee High Hurricanes during football season;
- Operating the concession stand during the basketball season;
- Helping with newspapers in education delivery;
- Making and selling task baskets and file folder games for teachers.



Left: Chris Doss making flip flops.  
Below: Bettie Stephenson buying shoes



*"If you never did you should.  
These things are fun and fun is good"*

*Dr. Seuss*



(Far left) Miss American and Jessica Hardin; (left) with Garrott Choate; and (above) "Raising Canes Crew," back row: Ms. Swart, Israel Quiming, Garrott Choate, Chris Doss, Ronald Ung; front row: Austin Smith, Jessica Hardin, Miss America 1995 Heather Whitestone-McCallum, and Freddie Gilliland



# All Play and Some Work



## Students have FUN playing the game—the Career Game

Career assessments assist job coaches and employment specialists in identifying new job sites for students. Assessments also help students in making future career decisions. Wendy Holden, VR employment specialist at Palmetto High, recently gave her students the Career Game assessment. The students were actively engaged in answering the personal questions in their color-coded booklets and were anxious to see the results. Three participants who were employed last summer as teacher’s aides through the Summer Work Experience Employment Program (SWEEP) all found that a career as a teacher’s aide was either a good, very good, or best match for them based on answers given. Another participant learned that medical/health related jobs were good matches for him and he is currently placed at a nursing home site. In addition, a participant who is working at another site assisting with laundry and building cleanliness learned that a job as a “building cleaner” was a good match for her. This tool proved helpful regarding future career pathways and the students found it to be fun and motivating.



*Wendy Holden (right) and student Berenise Gomez have fun while working on the Career Game.*



## Brittney has FUN Working at Palmetto Elementary

Brittney Swilley loves working with the children at Palmetto Elementary School. She is in the Career Experience OJT program at Palmetto High School. Brittany’s teacher, Cathy Hunter, recommended her for the OJT program. Then Mr. Clarke, Brittany’s job coach, found the perfect placement with Palmetto Elementary pre-kindergarten teacher Barbara Ryan.

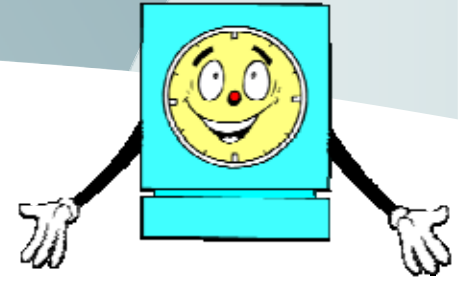
Brittney assists Mrs. Ryan by helping distribute breakfast and snacks to the children. She assists during puzzle time and circle time. She makes sure the children arrive safely on the playground, always holding two children by the hand. The children really love having Brittany in the room, and when it is time for her to leave for the day, they thank her for all she does for them.

*Brittney has fun working at Palmetto Elementary. From left: Palmetto Pre-K teacher Mrs. Ryan, student Brittany Swilley, and job coach Ryan Clark.*

***"Do what you love, love what you do."***

*Kim Simpson*

# Mixing Business With Pleasure



## LRHS—Look How We've Grown!

Our Career Experience program at Lakewood Ranch High School is so fortunate to have such wonderful business partners. We are beginning our third year with Lakewood Ranch Medical Center and Sodexo, our dedicated partners that we collaborate with on all kinds of events. Chefs from dietary have and will continue to visit our classroom to teach us secrets that make cooking a tasty snap. What goes around comes around, so we gave back this year when students from LRHS judged the annual pumpkin carving contest at the hospital. Good news travels and we ended up with more students who wanted to gain employment experience than business sites to train them. So we got busy and are very pleased to announce the placement of our students at two new sites: the YMCA at Lakewood Ranch and Morton's Gourmet Market on Main Street. It's a pleasure and privilege to provide a variety of training experiences for our students. As our partnerships expand, so does our experience of the work world. We want to share our heartfelt thanks for our business partners—new and old—who take the time to share their skills and expertise. We look forward to another fun year of learning and potentially earning!



*(Top left) Students judge the LRM C Jack-o-lanterns at the annual pumpkin carve.*



*(Top right) Justin Barrett at his YMCA job site.*



*(Bottom left) Students having lunch in LRM C cafe after their shift. L to R: Bridgid Shustack, Chef George Mose, Grecia Hernandez, Ashlea Morris, and interpreter for the deaf and hard of hearing, Joni Bos.*



*(Bottom right) Student Jeannie Shewbridge with Robbie in the bakery at Morton's Market.*

*"I think we're having fun. I think our customers really like our products. And we're always trying to do better."*

*Steve Jobs, CEO Apple Computer & Pixar Animation Studios*

# VISIONS XV

## 2008 Career Development and Special Needs Conference

Sponsored by FSNA (Florida Special Needs Association); DCDT (Division of Career Development & Transition)

# OPEN THE GATE TO OPPORTUNITY

**Radisson**

**WorldGate Resort**

**Kissimmee, Florida**

**VISIONS CONFERENCE**

**February 14 & 15, 2008**

**Transition:**

**The IDEA Way**

**Conference**

**February 13, 2008**

This hotel offers an oasis of relaxation within minutes of all the excitement of Central Florida. The Radisson is a contemporary, elegant choice with world-class comfort, sleep number beds, and refined service. It is within walking distance to scintillating shopping, nightlife, dining, and close to major local business.

Room rate: \$110 before January 20, 2008

Phone: 1-866-705-7676 or 407-396-1400

Fax: 407-396-1171

Hotel web site: [www.worldgateresort.com](http://www.worldgateresort.com)

Group Identifier: Visions Conference

(Room reservations can be made now)

### **Visions Conference registration:**

Member (FSNA or DCDT) \$125 Early Registration

Nonmember \$155 Early Registration

(Forms will be available October 2007)

**IDEA Way Conference, 2/13/08**, register at no cost at [www.thetransitioncenter.org](http://www.thetransitioncenter.org)

## **Who should attend?**

\*Anyone working with youth and adults with disabilities and special needs

\*Educators - middle school, high school, postsecondary, exceptional education, career & technical education, administrators and counselors

\*Business and partnering agencies

\*Department of Juvenile Justice

\*Community members

\*Parents, advocates and students

**Put these important dates on your calendar**

# Manatee County Transition & Interagency Committee

## Our Mission Statement

To network with the business community to improve and expand career opportunities for successful transition to gainful employment for those we serve.

## Purpose

Providing and maximizing ESE students' opportunities to participate in and benefit from job preparatory programs and on-the-job-training, thus increasing their success in the world of work.

## Transition Services

A set of coordinated activities designed to help a student move from school to post school activities including independent living, work, or continued education after finishing high school. This may include instruction, related services, community experiences, work toward post-school goals, and, if appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation, all based on the student's needs and preferences.

## Adult, Career & Technical Education

The Adult, Career & Technical Education Department (ACT) is the umbrella for all of the adult, career and technical education programs in our middle schools, high schools, and Manatee Technical Institute. We encompass Tech Prep, Career Academies, Smaller Learning Communities, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Transitions Services, and Take Stock in Children. Through our programs we prepare youth and adults for careers by providing leadership in developing an educated, prepared and competitive workforce.

## School District of Manatee County

Adult, Career & Technical Education  
215 Manatee Avenue West  
Bradenton, FL 34205  
[www.ManateeACT.com](http://www.ManateeACT.com)

Diane Roberts  
FDLRS/ESE Transition Specialist  
[robertsd@manateeschools.net](mailto:robertsd@manateeschools.net)  
(941) 708-8770 x2186  
fax (941) 708-8686



## Around the District

Watch for all of the publications keeping you informed about what's happening around the District in the Adult, Career & Technical Education Department.



*The Transition Times*

*ACT Update*

*Spotlight on Success*

*Take Stock in Children*

*Manatee Stars*

*Inquizikidz and the Job Center in the Herald*