

SHELBY COUNTY

Wednesday, April 25, 2018 | ALABAMA'S BEST COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER |

Local leaders awarded by U.S. DOE

By **BRIANA HARRIS**
Staff Writer

CALERA – Shelby County leaders, Oscar and Cindy Hawkins, leaders of Kids First Eagles 21st Century Community Learning and Resource Center, were recently honored in Washington, D.C. for the work they do to help families in the Shelby County community.

The Hawkinses received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Major Innovation Community Service Award on April 3 at the United States Department of Education's Lyndon B. Johnson Building.

The award is given by U.S. Department of Education Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the ED's White House Initiative on Educational Excellence, which recognizes African Americans in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.

The Hawkinses were among 17 recipients nationwide.

The award is given to volunteers who perform "extraordinary every-day acts of service," according to the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships website. Service includes leading



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Cindy Hawkins, right, at the awards ceremony for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Major Innovation Community Service Award on April 3 in Washington, D.C.

through outreach, mission-driven service, volunteerism and ministry focused on innovative educational experiences for students.

Kids First offers an after-school program for students as well as family education and workforce development for adults. The organization first opened in Alabaster, but relocated to Calera in December of 2017.

In addition to an after-school program where students can receive tutoring and help with homework, students also have access

to computers, college and career preparation services, health and nutrition education and service learning projects.

The facility also offers resources for parents, such as the Parent Café, which will educate parents about various resources that are available to help them.

"Since 1999, our mission has been simple," Cindy Hawkins said. "Kids First is strengthening families to make a positive difference by building hope in children and families through educa-

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tion and resources."

Cindy Hawkins said her goal is to help produce working, well-balanced members of society.

"We are very pleased to receive this award," Cindy Hawkins said. "It's acknowledgement that we are making progress. I felt truly honored and it's not because of the award itself. It's the hard work behind the award. The joy comes in knowing that others see the impact of your work."



Members of the West End community gathered to dedicate the Senior Citizen Butterfly Garden. Representatives from Kids First Awareness, the West End Neighborhood Watch and the city of Clanton were at the event, which honored Mary Sims and Oscci Allen. (Contributed)

West End dedicates butterfly garden for seniors → April 22, 2017

Kids First Awareness 21st Century Learning Center organized and dedicated a butterfly garden to the senior citizens of the West End community.

"The project is in honor of Mrs. Mary Sims and Oscci Allen for their love and leadership," Kids First director Cindy Hawkins said.

Hawkins said the goal of the project was "to have a place for seniors to gather." The garden has a walking trail and flowers, and has a fence to provide some privacy to the area on Martin Luther King Street.

The theme of the day was "pay your blessings forward." Wetumpka Community Action executive director Elaine Pace was the guest speaker.

At the ceremony, children who came with Kids First joined with children in the West End community to paint the fence of the garden.

"It was really beautiful," Hawkins said. "It was a great day of helping others ... and strengthening our community."

The ceremony included the hanging of flowers and the U.S. Flag from a tree in the garden to honor Sims and Allen.

When Hawkins asked Allen to place his flag on the flagpole, she said "his eyes were full of tears."



Bridge of Hope held a basketball fun day at the Chilton County YMCA as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday on Jan 21. (Photo by Anthony Richards)

Bridge of Hope, YMCA host MLK fun day



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Published 3:06 pm Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Bridge of Hope in Clanton honored Martin Luther King Jr. with a basketball family fun day held at the Chilton County YMCA on Jan. 21.

"It's about family and fitness," said Margaret Cindy Hawkins with Bridge of Hope. "We tried to tie the two in together."

According to Hawkins, she talked with Lori Patterson at the YMCA who was more than happy to host such a community event.

"The day is based on unconditional love and having faith," Hawkins said. "We believe that Martin Luther King Day reminds us of our past so that we can see the great things yet to come."

Clanton Mayor Billy Joe Driver, Chilton County Schools Superintendent Jason Griffin and Robert Binion of the West End community each attended the event and were given an award in recognition of the "seeds of kindness that they have planted over the years."



(<https://www.clantonadvertiser.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1-23-Fun-day-2-online.jpg>)

Clanton Mayor Billy Joe Driver, Robert Binion of the West End community and Chilton County Schools Superintendent Jason Griffin each received a "seeds of kindness" award during the event. (Photo by Anthony Richards)

"We look to strengthen our community as a family," Hawkins said. "No matter if you are black, yellow or green, we are one family, not only on Martin Luther King Day, but every day."

Bridge of Hope is an organization that focuses on adult workforce development. Its office is located behind Martin Funeral Home in the old unemployment office.

Despite only having an office in the community for one year, Bridge of Hope is striving to leave an imprint on the community with events like the basketball fun day.

"We're new to the community, but we're happy to be here and have the support," Hawkins said. "I was elated [at the turnout], because it gives hope that next year it will be even bigger and better."

The first game played was an interesting matchup of children versus adults.

Basketball, as many sports, is a team game and oftentimes sharing the ball is the key to success.

"It's all about collaboration and teamwork," Hawkins said. "It gets them to think outside the box and in a positive direction."

Other activities of the fun day included posters made by the children that wished a happy birthday to Martin Luther King Jr. along with a dance routine.



Several prominent members of the Clanton community were on hand for the opening of the BELL Resource Center, including Chilton County Superintendent Tommy Glasscock, school board president Lori Patterson, Alabama State Board of Education member Stephanie Bell and Mayor Billy Joe Driver. Photo by J.R. Tidwell / Advertiser

New adult education outreach center opens in Clanton

(<http://www.clantonadvertiser.com/author/J.R.Tidwell/>)

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Published 4:11 pm Tuesday, February 20, 2018

July 2016- Kids 1st Awareness Donated 100 Back Packs to = Clanton Housing Authority

Housing Authority donates school supplies to kids

By STEVEN CALHOUN

Staff Writer

QUICK FACTS

CLANTON - The Clanton Housing Authority partnered with Kids First of Alabaster to give school supplies to children in the Clanton Housing Authority community on Saturday, July 30.

The event started with passing out school and dental supplies to children. The school supplies were given by Kids First, a non-profit organization in Alabaster focused on preparing children for the future with education and resources. Sarrell Dental, a non-profit dental practice for Alabama's children, donated dental supplies to be handed out in goody bags.

After that, volunteers played games and danced with children in the community building provided by the CHA. This was followed by words of encouragement and a free lunch.

An estimated 100 children, youth and parents were in attendance at the free community event. The activities lasted from 10 a.m. to about 1 p.m.

"We enjoy doing stuff

► The Clanton Housing Authority partnered with Kids First of Alabaster to give school supplies to children in the Clanton Housing Authority community on Saturday, July 30.

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with the community and joining with non-profits whenever possible," said Ron Jones, Executive Director of Clanton Housing Authority. "A lot of people think all we do is provide housing."

Jones added that the housing authority has held events like this many times in the past, and he hopes to be able to continue to have events for the community.

The Clanton Housing Authority is located on 512 Ollie Ave and can be reached by phone at 755-1801.

Sarrell Dental has a location in Clanton at 1141 Jasper Dennis Road and can be reached by phone at 312-0001.



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Volunteers work to prepare a meal for the community during an event on July 30.

July 30, 2016

"December 2016"
Kids 1st Awareness 21st Century Community Center.
Introduce:

Bridge of Hope - Adult Job Skills Education Outreach

Honor from Montgomery



CONTRIBUTED

On Dec. 7, Kids First Awareness Community Center and Shelby Community Education along with some caring friends visited Montgomery for a proclamation signing for 14 years of positive community service and to introduce the new Bridge of HOPE "helping our parents through education" program. Pictured are Governor Robert Bentley, Mrs. Bell with the Department of Education, Mr. Brantly with the Department of Labor, Ms. Sosa with the Department of Public Health, Ms. Tiebt with ServeAlabama, Kay Dummier with Shelby Community Education, Kids First members Tanya Carter, Tony Harris, Jennifer and Garrett Moore, teacher Ista Elliott and Oscar and Cindy Hawkins.

We would like you to introduce our adult education program called Bridge of HOPE

Helping Our Parents through Education

To volunteer or for more information call:
205-706-9467

Because Every Life Counts!
Thank you!



We offer Job Interview Skills, Parent Workshops,
Certified Programs and more...

Our HOPE...Is that if we can prepare students their parents for the future by building a foundation life through education and resources, they will be able to pass along this same encouragement to their children, better preparing for the 21st century.

What makes us different?
We offer 21st Century "hands-on" training programs and provide transportation.

March 29, 2011 Cloudy / 51° F

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(L-R) Mark Ward with the Alabama Department of Education, Kids First Awareness Community Center Director Cindy Hawkins and Sallye Longshore with the Alabama Department of Education. Hawkins was recently appointed to the Alabama Department of Education After-School/Community Education State Advisory Panel. (Contributed/Cindy Hawkins)

Hawkins named to State Advisory Panel

Published 10:33am Tuesday, March 29, 2011

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Cindy Hawkins of Kids First Awareness 21st Century Community Learning Center in Alabaster was recently appointed to Alabama Department of Education's 21st CCLC After-School /Community Education State Advisory Panel.

The panel works to advise the 21st CCLC on programs and elements, and works to inform the public of the grant applications available for after-school and Community Education programs.

Kids First, which is off Martin Luther King Jr. Road in Alabaster, is a non-profit community center for local at-risk kids.