



Forward Thinking

Springing forward by giving back



Spring has sprung! I love everything about this season. Even pollen plays a critical role in regenerating the world. Life and newness abound as do opportunities. And, we have our share of opportunities!

I'm hearing stories of innovative practices in the virtual environment throughout our college community. Student interactions, departmental discussions and board meetings have all been adapted to accommodate a changing work environment. I believe that our current 'Click 'n Mortar' format is not a passing fad, but will continue to be a normalized reality. 'Thank you' for moving our mission forward in the midst of uncertain and challenging times.

Our values are Learn. Serve. Lead. What better way to serve and lead—in the midst of a pandemic—than opening your doors as a mass vaccination site in service to the community? And, our students will gain clinical experience as they do their part in getting shots in the arms of 500-600 citizens per day. We will do this in partnership/leadership with the Newton County Government and the Department of Public Health beginning in mid-April through July.

We have come to the end of Women's History Month. Therefore, it is fitting to acknowledge the work provided by the women of GPTC in support of our college communities in DeKalb, Newton and Rockdale counties. 'Thank You' for being absolutely amazing 365 days per year as you equip and support thousands of learners to become better versions of themselves! You transform opportunities into realities.

We see what we're looking for. Seek opportunities to move FORWARD!

- Tarez Holston, President

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **High School Equivalency Graduation / April 29**
Location: DeKalb Conference Center. More details to come.
- **Drive-thru Graduation Ceremony / May 22**
Location: DeKalb Campus
Time: 10 AM - 12 PM
Visit gptc.edu/grad for details.

1961: BACK IN THE DAY



Photo from 50th anniversary commemorative booklet

DeKalb Area Vocational School was established as a division of the total educational program of the DeKalb County School System through joint efforts of the DeKalb County Board of Education and the Vocational Division of the Georgia State Department of Education in 1961.

The school served a five-county area — DeKalb, Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale and Walton. Under the directorship of Paul Lowery, the School opened on November 20 at a temporary location, the old Scottdale Elementary School located at 3071 East Ponce de Leon Avenue, with a class of 18 Electronics Technology Program students.

GPTC honors top student and faculty member for 2021

By Jana Wiggins

An Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology program student earned GPTC's highest student distinction in a virtual announcement March 17. During the same online ceremony, an instructor who focuses her time teaching incarcerated men and women in local jails became only the second Adult Education program teacher in GPTC's history to be named its top faculty member.

GPTC narrowed the field of 18 student nominees and five finalists for the Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership (GOAL) Student of the Year to 2021 winner Garrett Johnson of Conyers. Johnson, a mental health advocate, shared about his own challenge with ADHD and emphasized his desire to engage students in conversation about overcoming those obstacles.

"Being named 'Student of the Year' gives me the opportunity to show those who struggle with mental health conditions that success in the realm of academics is possible with good support," said Johnson, who transferred to GPTC from a four-year university with a desire for more hands-on training in his field. Johnson's fellow GOAL finalists were Marketing Management student Angalique AsheWright, Clinical Laboratory Technology student Addisu Gebreyesus, Computer Networking Specialist student Lakeisha Waller and Design and Media Production student Tonisha Willis.

Electrical and Computer Engineering Program Director Obrin Griffin, who nominated Johnson for the award, said, "He is dedicated to his studies...he has excellent grades and follows it up with a pleasant attitude."

The College also named Vicki Douglas as the 2021 Rick Perkins Award winner, an honor given to GPTC's selection as its instructor of the year.



SUPERSTARS Garrett Johnson and Vicki Douglas, above, are GPTC's student and instructor of the year.

Douglas, a Covington resident, shared her 2021 top-four finalist status with Air Conditioning Technology, Building Automation and Commercial Refrigeration Program Director Robert Croom; Early Childhood Care and Education instructor Jean Jones; and Adult Education Program instructor Nicholas Michael.

"Technical college plays a role in the state's economic growth — our employers and businesses who need a trained workforce, the high school graduate looking for affordable training in a career interest, the prodigal high school dropout, the immigrant or refugee starting a new life, to the inmate in county jail wondering if there's hope for a future," said Douglas.

Nominated by GPTC Vice President of Adult Education Meghan McBride, Douglas teaches math, science, social studies and language arts to students in the Newton and Rockdale County jails.

"Vicki is an indispensable and invaluable member of the GPTC family. She is always willing to go above and beyond in service of our mission, our

students, our colleagues and our community," said McBride.

All 22 of Georgia's technical colleges statewide present these two awards annually. GPTC's winners will represent the College in its three-county service area of DeKalb, Newton and Rockdale and will receive special on-campus parking spaces for a year and \$500 scholarships from the GPTC Foundation.

"I am so excited to make these announcements today, especially after the past year — when all of our students, faculty and staff have persevered through such difficult times. You have risen to the challenge and now it is time to celebrate," said President Tarez Holston on March 17.

Johnson and Douglas will compete virtually through the Technical College System of Georgia's North Region competition April 20 and will vie for three state finalist positions from within the region for each award. Statewide winners will be selected through virtual competitions in May.

Watch the GPTC 2021 GOAL and Rick Perkins Award announcements on YouTube [here](#).

Pioneering women of GPTC

In celebration of March as Women's History Month

Contributed by Claudette Alexander-Thomason

Pioneering Women are those who have kicked down doors of discrimination, climbed through windows of opportunity and broken the glass ceilings of "but-you're-a-woman" — so that those who came behind could realize their dreams by making those cracked and broken ceilings their floors.

From the women who keep the spaces clean and sanitized to the women who sit in corner offices with titles and responsibility that impact the lives of the Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) family, we pay homage to those who came before and celebrate those who have benefited from their leadership.

There were many women who contributed to GPTC; however, there are three whose commitment to education, GPTC and to one another helped produce the greatness that collectively define the Women of GPTC.

One would become the president of the College, one the first African American Self-Study director and a campus dean, and the other was responsible for helping to build a solid foundation for the Adult Education division, as well as securing a grant to create the first Learning Support Lab. One was a model, one always knew she would be a teacher and one wanted to be a pilot.

Dr. Robin Whyte Hoffman (1946-2020) was a former model who earned degrees, taught in the health field and became the College's first and only female president.

Never one to hoard success, she helped other women realize their dreams.

One such example was Dr. Daisy Davis, who always knew she wanted to teach — being the daughter, granddaughter and niece of teachers. With Dr. Hoffman's support and encouragement, she guided the College's self-study initiative and led the Newton County Campus as a dean. Dr. Davis fondly remembers the camaraderie that created an amicable and thriving workplace.

Knowing that women must lift as they climb,

Dr. Davis mentored a young woman who always knew she wanted to fly, and she did. Her meteoric rise from the Adult Education division's curriculum developer and ESL instructor to English instructor, General Education Department chair to dean of academic initiatives, then to South DeKalb Campus dean, Dr. Cateria McLendon

would significantly impact the lives of students — especially those in Clarkston, Georgia, the most internationally-diverse community and square mile in the country.

She secured a grant to create, staff and oversee GPTC's premiere Learning Support Lab. McLendon created cohorts, reducing the remedial timeline for students to begin their majors. As a result, the retention and graduation rates for this population soared.

Raising children, managing homes and working while pursuing degrees, these three pioneering women witnessed DeKalb Technical

"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, then women together ought to be able to...get it right side up again..."

Sojourner Truth



COMING TOGETHER Women of GPTC from the DeKalb Campus, top, and Newton Campus, bottom, gathered in recognition of National Women's History Month.

Institute become a leading technical college with several thriving locations.

"Women hold up half the sky" — a proclamation made by Chinese leader Mao Zedong — speaks to how women are indispensable contributors to humanity. However, 63 percent of GPTC's workforce says:

We are pioneers who, together, continue to turn GPTC right side up. And that's Truth!

Celebrating National Criminal Justice Month



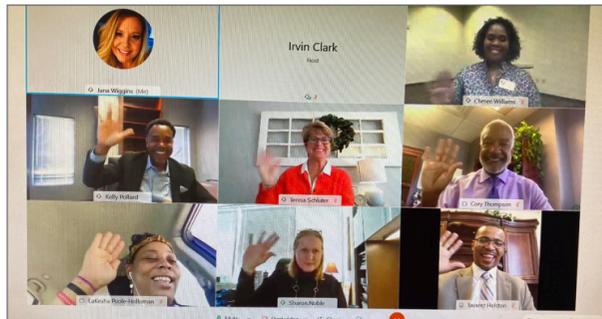
BRAND NEW GPTC Campus Police officers show off their new uniforms.

What better time to unveil the GPTC Campus Police force's new uniforms and revamped arm patches than the month of March — as we celebrate National Criminal Justice Month. According to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, the purpose of the annual recognition is to promote awareness regarding the causes and consequences of crime, as well as strategies for preventing and responding to crime.

The criminal justice system regularly touches the lives of nearly every American — the millions of individuals who have been victimized by crime; those who are incarcerated or on probation or parole; and those who are employed in the justice system.

The College appreciates our Campus Police force and their dedication to protecting and serving the GPTC family. We also honor the faculty, staff and students who dedicate themselves to the study of this job field in our Criminal Justice Technology and Legal Studies programs and in the GPTC Law Enforcement Academy.

Huber supports GPTC Industrial Maintenance



PARTNERSHIP GPTC representatives meet with the Huber Corporation team.

Women and students of color with dreams of entering the high-demand career field of advanced manufacturing now have a better chance, thanks to a generous scholarship donation from the J.M. Huber Corporation. The company established a scholarship for students in GPTC's Industrial Maintenance pre-apprenticeship program.

Student Lakesha Hollaman, pictured bottom left, was the first recipient of a \$1000 scholarship and shared her appreciation during a virtual check presentation March 4. "I am going into an industry that is new and fascinating and modernized," said Hollaman. "I am excited to be a black female ready to break through these barriers...I will make you proud."

GPTC President Tarez Holston thanked the Huber representatives present for an additional \$3000 scholarship donation for future apprentices, saying, "This is a powerful testament of partnerships."

The College has provided training for Huber through the Rockwell Automation Academy and helped Huber secure funding to support upskilling its workforce. Dr. Irvin Clark, GPTC's vice president of economic development, added, "We have a strong relationship with Huber and will be scheduling additional training for their incumbent workers..."

Hotseat with Lisa Hightower, EdD: Adult Education Program Instructor



Lisa Hightower

Going Above & Beyond

Lisa is an absolute gift to Adult Education! Prior to joining our team, Lisa served as a middle school principal, and her professional background as an educator and administrator have translated well in adult education. Lisa works hard to be of service to her students and colleagues. As a talented educator and dedicated team player, Lisa is a valuable asset to the program and the college.

- Dr. Meghan R. McBride, Vice President, Adult Education

Favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of teaching at GPTC is seeing students succeed and moving forward with their life's goals.

Favorite food?

I absolutely love seafood! Have a low country boil and I'm there!

Advice you always give?

When people are faced with difficult decisions, I always encourage them to take the "Rocking Chair Test": Pretend that you are 100 years old, sitting in your rocking chair, reflecting over your life. Will the answer to your decision matter then? If yes, move forward. If not, the decision is not that important.

Why did you choose to work in adult education?

As adults, we should be life-long learners. Teaching adults not only helps the student grow but helps me to learn a lot from them as well.

Your favorite memory? I had a 7th grade student ask me why I was quitting teaching because I was such a great teacher and that I made learning easy. I have thought back to this memory often and it inspired me to rejoin the teaching profession.



Have a question? Comment? Got a great story idea? Email us at marketingandcommunications@gptc.edu