NEW TV SHOW HELPS STUDENTS EXPLORE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Former “Survivor” Contestant Hosts Show

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP? Students may have heard that question before and did not have a clue. But now they can get a taste of a vast number of career fields by sitting back and watching a new show produced by Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) called On The Job. The weekly television show provides students, and anyone seeking a career change, with insight into various career fields, as well as job and training opportunities. On The Job showcases the wide range of careers throughout Alabama, including unique and often overlooked careers ranging from a television sportscaster to an operating room assistant.

Currently, the show airs on Alabama Public Television Sundays at 2:30 p.m. CST and can be viewed online at www.onthejobtv.org.

“Most students when asked what they want to do when they graduate from high school will tell you they want to work in a fast food restaurant or in retail. They have no idea the opportunities and training that are waiting for them through AIDT,” said AIDT Director ED CASTILE. “On The Job showcases job opportunities in Alabama and provides students the chance to see the many career fields that are open to them. We saw this need to let the public know about what the education system can do for them and that’s how the show came about,” added Castile.

Each week producers are in the field shooting step-by-step segments of professionals performing their job with the host of the show participating in the actual skill or task.

“One day we could be in the Golden Flake plant making potato chips and the next, out in the woods in rural Autauga County with game wardens having to run into the woods to avoid being shot. It’s always an interesting day at work,” said On The Job Executive Producer CHRIS ROQUEMORE. 

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Castile said he wants to get the word out about the show to teachers in Alabama schools so students can watch the segment, learn more about the exciting opportunities available to them, and learn how they can prepare to pursue the careers they see each week on the show.

The host of the show is no stranger to being in front of the camera.

Former Survivor contestant **Bobby Jon Drinkard** began hosting the show in January. Drinkard graduated from Charles Henderson High School in 1995 and Troy University in 2003. Upon graduation from Troy, Bobby Jon moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in entertainment. In November 2003, Bobby Jon represented the state of Alabama by being named one of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*’s 50 Most Eligible Bachelors across the United States. While in Los Angeles, Bobby Jon modeled for Calvin Klein, Kenneth Cole, and Ralph Lauren. But his claim to fame is the CBS hit reality television show “Survivor.” He appeared as a contestant for season 10, “Survivor: Palau,” and was asked back for the 11th installment of the show “Survivor: Guatemala.”

“I’m thrilled to be working with AIDT and Alabama Public Television on the show,” said Drinkard. “Not only am I back working in the media, but I’m also hopefully helping other people decide about a possible career path or career change or maybe making a decision to go back to school. Anything we can do to help educate and inform people, the better off we are as a state.”

A national survey of site location consultants consistently ranks AIDT one of the top state workforce training programs in the nation. AIDT is also the first state workforce training entity in the world to earn international certification for its quality management system.

AIDT, part of Alabama’s two-year college system, provides comprehensive workforce recruiting and training to identify the best qualified workers for employers who commit to create new jobs in Alabama through startup and expansion. AIDT services result in better employees and higher profits, while improving the quality of life and providing better jobs for Alabama citizens.

From automotive to aerospace and maritime and warehousing to biomedical, AIDT researches and identifies the needs of each company served and uses that information to develop a full range of technical pre-employment selection programs uniquely customized to each company. AIDT also provides leadership development, industrial maintenance, and safety assessments.

In addition to training, AIDT is currently providing the following job preparation training:

**Alabama’s Ready to Work program** provides a career pathway for adults with limited education and employment experience at 39 locations. **Ready to Work’s workplace environment** provides trainees the entry-level skills required for employment with most businesses and industries in Alabama.

**AIDT now offers Interview T.I.P.S.** (Training to Improve Presentation Skills) to prepare job seekers to submit correct applications, demonstrate confidence, and improve communication skills with mock interviews and proper interview follow-up. **Interview T.I.P.S.** is available at no cost for job seekers ranging from high school students through adults.

**AIDT’s new Skills@Work program** is for those who need help with workplace fundamentals: application and interview skills, diversity, team skills, communication, using computers and email. **Skills@Work** is an evening program available at no cost for job seekers ranging from high school age through adult.

Complete information on all these programs can be found at [www.aidt.edu](http://www.aidt.edu).
JUDY BROWN AND MARK RAINES have a lot to be thankful for this year. In December, both won prestigious national teaching awards during the annual Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Brown, a National Board Certified teacher, was one of three educators from across the U.S. competing for the 2008 ACTE National Teacher of the Year award. Raines, a former television anchor and reporter who began teaching in the Tuscaloosa City Schools System in 2000, was one of five national teachers competing for this year’s national Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher award.

ACTE is one of the country’s largest associations dedicated to preparing students for successful careers and postsecondary learning opportunities. Founded in 1926, ACTE currently has more than 29,000 members in five national regions. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas comprise ACTE’s Region II. Membership includes teachers working in many different areas of education; counselors; administrators; superintendents; and postsecondary instructors.

Advancing to the finals of these national competitions was not an easy task. Brown, for example, started the process more than a year ago. The former Culinary Arts teacher at Madison City’s Bob Jones High School was named Alabama’s 2007 Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year. One month later, Brown was named Alabama’s Outstanding Career and Technical Teacher of the Year. In October 2007, Brown won the Region II ACTE Teacher of the Year award, the same year that Mark Raines was named the Region II ACTE Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher.

The purpose of the ACTE Teacher of the Year award is to recognize dedicated educators who are providing students with real opportunities to have successful futures. Recipients of this award must have made significant contributions toward innovative programs that promote academic achievement.

ACTE created the Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher award to encourage new teachers to stay in the education profession. Recipients of this award must have shown professional commitment in their previous careers and now must be making significant contributions to students and their scholastic success.

Under Mark Raines’ direction, the Television Production program at the Tuscaloosa Center for Technology has twice been named Alabama’s Technical Education Program of the Year. In June 2007, his students won Third Place at the 2007 National SkillsUSA Championships in Kansas City, Missouri.

This is the only time in recent history that two different teachers from the same state have been named ACTE’s national teachers during the same year.

To learn more about ACTE, CLICK HERE or HERE.

FEBRUARY IS ALABAMA CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

Since 2004, students, parents, teachers, and top business professionals statewide have come together to celebrate a new tradition – Alabama Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, February 1-29.

To celebrate CTE Month, local school systems throughout the state have planned special activities. Last year’s celebrations included career fairs, college tours, and business etiquette workshops.

Local career and technical education programs statewide have planned similar activities for this year’s celebration. To learn more about CTE Month activities in your community, contact your local Board of Education or CTE Information Specialist, ED CRENSHAW, at 334-353-5220.
Schools in Alabama must climb higher up the ever-increasing achievement ladder in 2008 to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools must meet 100 percent of the goals in order to make AYP as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Achieving anything less than 100% means the school does not meet AYP. The measures for success include graduation rates, participation rates and proficiency in reading and math.

The goals for achieving AYP have increased in the area of the percent of students who must score proficient or higher on reading and math tests. For 2008 the goals are a 90% graduation rate, a 95% participation rate and the following percentages of students who must score proficient or higher in reading and math:

- **Reading:**
  - Grade 3: 77%
  - Grade 4: 77%
  - Grade 5: 77%
  - Grade 6: 81%
  - Grade 7: 68%
  - Grade 8: 59%
  - Grade 11: 86%

- **Math:**
  - Grade 3: 68%
  - Grade 4: 72%
  - Grade 5: 65%
  - Grade 6: 56%
  - Grade 7: 49%
  - Grade 8: 55%
  - Grade 11: 77%

So what is the State Department of Education (SDE) doing to help schools prepare for student success? The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI); Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI); Preparing Alabama Students for Success (PASS); and Graduation Coaches are programs helping students succeed, but there is also another support system that has recently received national attention.

In August 2005, the SDE developed a system of support for local school systems to impact school improvement and academic success with the formation of the Accountability Roundtable (ART). The Roundtable is a think tank made up of the SDE staff members from all sections that work in partnership to provide solutions to the challenges of schools. The topics include courses of study, graduation rates, climate and culture, assessment, prevention and support, quality teaching and staff leadership.

“The Accountability Roundtable has been so effective that other states and organizations have asked for our help in developing their own Roundtable systems, and the Roundtable has been profiled in a policy brief from the Consortium for School Improvement,” said Dr. Ruth Ash, Deputy State Superintendent of Education.

The main goal of ART is to identify areas for improvement and work to improve student achievement through collaboration and ‘best practices’ that are filtered down to schools and classrooms. The Roundtable does not do the work of school and district improvement, but it does set the direction of the work and assists with implementation.

The SDE requires districts and schools that do not achieve 100% of their AYP goals to develop an improvement plan within 90 days after the release of state data. Throughout the state there are 11 regional school improvement coaches (RSICs) that work with school systems and the SDE in a collaborative effort to develop plans for improvement.

The Roundtable sends state directors to the districts to meet with superintendents and central office personnel to hear issues and concerns. They bring those issues and concerns back to the Roundtable and the State Support Team (SST) for discussion and coordination of improvement plans. Local personnel are coached and supported as they develop and implement improvement plans.

An arm of the ART is the SST that provides on-site customized support. The team is comprised of SDE section staff,
Regional Inservice Center Directors (11 across the state) and SDE regional staff (ARI, AMSTI and School Improvement). Regional staffs are assigned by Inservice Center regions statewide to provide support to the local education agencies.

The Roundtable is coordinating several projects in 2008 to continue the process of coordinating, planning and implementing professional development opportunities for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools.

“Increasing the graduation rate, school climate and culture, school improvement, and our annual summit are a few of the many collaborative efforts we are coordinating this year,” said Ash.

The directors of the Instructional Services Division have assembled a workgroup made up of members from all sections to focus on increasing the graduation rate. This workgroup has begun by organizing informational sessions for school systems and schools to become familiar with the many initiatives, programs and services offered by the SDE that focus on increasing the graduation rate. These sessions will provide information and data, as well as give participants a chance to have a face-to-face conversation with the members of the SDE who administer these programs to determine which services best fit the needs of their system.

A cross-sectional workgroup will soon be formed to work with Prevention and Support Services in creating a survey that will assist in diagnosing the climate and culture of schools that are struggling. This workgroup will study current research and work with national experts to create an instrument that will determine areas of weakness in the climate and culture of the schools. This will be done so that improvement efforts can be informed and deliberate in addressing all aspects that impact student achievement.

The SDE Summit, which will be held in April 2008, is a professional development opportunity designed for LEA personnel to work together as a team, embracing the Roundtable model of collaboration, and focusing their efforts on continuous improvement in their districts. Many of the sections within the SDE will offer collaborative sessions that will help district personnel understand how to support multiple initiatives and how they work together to strengthen student achievement.

The bar will continue to be raised for AYP until the goal hits 100 percent in 2013/2014, and the Accountability Roundtable will continue to develop plans to help schools and students reach those goals.

Random Acts of Kindness Spotlight Character Education

ONE OF ALABAMA’S MOST respected and well-known educators, Tuskegee University Founder Booker T. Washington, once said, “Character, not circumstance, is what makes a person.” This sentiment was true then and is true now. In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic – it is important that students know the importance of character education.

In a new feature in Alabama Education News, “Random Acts of Kindness,” educators are encouraged to submit brief articles about students in their school or community who go above and beyond to show examples of honesty, integrity and character. If you notice a student being a shining example of moral fiber – share the news! Already, in schools across Alabama, character education is being taught and expressed through the lives of our children. Dr. Jan Harris, superintendent of Cullman City Schools, said character education is one of her top ten priorities for the school system.

“We have a systemwide character education plan that I communicate each week through my weekly calendar to all employees,” Harris said. “I have met with local youth ministers and they also emphasize the theme of the month and word of the week at their churches. They tell me some of our ministers emphasize the themes from the pulpit!” An active plan to implement character education not only benefits students in the form of successful social development, but benefits those around them as well. Make sure you submit any stories about impressive displays of student character to aen@alsde.edu.
Opelika Teacher Uses ACCESS Program To See Husband In Iraq

AN OPELIKA TEACHER is using a new Alabama network to visit with her husband in Iraq. She saw him Wednesday, January 16th, for the first time since August 2007.

The Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students Statewide (ACCESS) program is used for distance learning in rural classrooms, but the Opelika City School System helped Amanda Smith use the ACCESS program to see her husband in Falluja, Iraq. With the press of a few buttons, she finally got to see her husband, U.S. Marine Corporal Matthew Smith, thousands of miles away.

“He looked handsome,” said Smith, a third-grade teacher at Morris Avenue Intermediate School.

The Smithers had not seen each other since August 2007. They tried to use ACCESS before Christmas, but he wasn’t able to make it. “Last time I didn’t get to do it, and it was kind of disappointing, so to get to do it this time was great,” she said.

Barbara Mitchell came up with the idea to use the distance learning technology to reconnect military families. She said she got a lot of help from FreedomCalls.org.

“This all started back when we were setting up our equipment for our ACCESS lab. We discovered we could use it to contact the bases through Freedom Calls,” said Mitchell, technology coordinator for Opelika City Schools.

Smith and his wife are still in their first year of marriage, and finally being able to see each other is a welcome comfort while he finishes his tour.

“It’s three months and counting, so I’m really looking forward to the day I actually get to hug my wife again,” he said, over the video conference.

Smith said she’s grateful Mitchell and the school system are making this possible. “It’s amazing, I feel like I have a big support system and caring people behind me. It feels really good,” she said.

Mitchell said they hope to offer the video conferencing opportunity to any student or teacher with family overseas. The Smithers will celebrate their first anniversary together when he gets home around the first of May. Courtesy ABC WTVM-9

Alabama Students Win National Achievement in Writing Award

THREE ALABAMA STUDENTS recently received certificates for Superior Writing from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The Achievement Awards in Writing are conferred by NCTE in recognition of excellence in writing by high school juniors.

Anna Lee Harris, Eufaula High School, Eufaula; Elizabeth Locker, Florence High School, Florence; and Margaret Pate, Grissom High School, Huntsville, were recognized for their writing ability in two forms: first, in a sample of their best writing in any form or genre, drafted and revised over time; and second, in an impromptu essay on a subject set by the Achievement Awards Advisory Committee and responded to by all candidates for the award. While the first sample is written under conditions chosen by candidates and their teachers, the impromptu essay is written during a supervised, 75-minute period.

A total of 595 students were selected as outstanding writers in the 2007 NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing. The recipients were chosen from 1,937 students nominated in their junior year by their teachers from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, the Virgin Islands and American schools abroad. The number of nominees from each school is based on the school’s total enrollment in grades ten through twelve: one nominee per 500 students.

The NCTE notes these students have demonstrated superior ability and also notable versatility in writing. The NCTE urges others to recognize and commend these student writers and the teachers who helped to elicit such excellence.

Eufaula High School: State Board Member: Mrs. Betty Peters Superintendent: Dr. Barry R. Sadler Principal: Mr. Steve Hawkins

Florence High School: State Board Member: Mrs. Sandra Ray Superintendent: Dr. Mary Kendy Behrends Principal: Mr. Michael W. Lewey I

Grissom High School: State Board Member: Dr. Mary Jane Caylor Superintendent: Dr. Ann Roy Moore Principal: Mr. B. Thomas Drake

State Board Member: Mrs. Betty Peters
Superintendent: Dr. Mark D. Neighbors
Principal: Mr. Nino B. Mason

Take 20
From January 22 until February, 2008, all certified education personnel in the state of Alabama are being asked to “Take 20.” Take 20 minutes out of your day to participate in the online survey – voice your opinions, and make a difference in Alabama education.

www.Take20alabama.org
Prestigious Torchbearer Award Presented to Nine Alabama Schools

NINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE received the prestigious title of Torchbearer School and each was awarded $15,000 during a recognition program January 29th in Montgomery. The Torchbearer School Program was created in 2004 to recognize high-poverty public schools in Alabama that have overcome the odds to become high-performing schools.

**Alabama Superintendent of Education Joe Morton** presented representatives from each local system with the prestigious award. “These nine schools exemplify the hard work, dedication and commitment of students, teachers, principals and staff,” said Morton. “These schools have shown they can overcome adversity and rise to the top of the achievement ladder even though the odds may not be in their favor. They are truly success stories.”

In order to receive the Torchbearer School title, along with a $15,000 monetary reward, the schools had to meet all of the following criteria as applicable:

- **Identified as Meeting the Challenge School, Advancing the Challenge School and Exceeding the Challenge School according to the state rewards plan.**
- Have at least 80% poverty rate (percent free/reduced meals).
- Have at least **80%** of students score Level III or Level IV on the reading section of Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT).
- Have at least **80%** of students score Level III or Level IV on the mathematics section of ARMT.
- Have at least **95%** of Grade 12 students pass all required subjects of Alabama High School Graduation Exam.
- High schools have a graduation rate above state average.
- Be in existence at the time of the award.

**NOTE:** Criteria in bold denotes changes in the criteria for the 2007-2008 school year.

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**2007-2008 TORCHBEARER SCHOOLS**

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* Torchbearer 2007-2008

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**AWARDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year.** SAMMY recognizes graduating seniors who are outstanding scholar athletes in U.S. high schools. Based on academics, athletic excellence, leadership and community service. [Apply for SAMMY 2008 scholarships online.](#) **DEADLINE: Mar. 17**

**Alabama Elementary (K-6) and Secondary (7-12) Economics Teachers of the Year** are teachers who have made outstanding contributions to the teaching of economics. Eligible candidates must either teach a course in economics OR integrate economics into other courses at any grade level K-12 in the public or independent schools of Alabama. [CLICK HERE](#) or call Toll Free (866) 326-0585. **DEADLINE: Mar. 14**

**Nominate a Kid Who Cares.** Kohl’s is offering youth volunteers ages 6 to 18 the opportunity to win a $5,000 college scholarship. Scholarships are awarded to youth who have excelled as community volunteers. For more information, visit your local store or [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 15**

**2008 American Stars of Teaching.** The U.S. Department of Education’s Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative is calling for nominations. Parents, students, colleagues, school administrators and others can nominate exemplary teachers who are improving student achievement, using innovative strategies in the classroom and making a difference in the lives of their students. Nominate [HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 31**

The Legacy Project’s annual [Listen to a Life Essay Contest](#) provides for meaningful conversations between youth and older adults that can result in positive experiences for both. The Legacy Project also sponsors other contests and provides resources that encourage connections across generations. [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 31**

**Students Encouraged to Take ATRIP Into the Classroom.** The Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP) is designed to inspire Alabama’s high school seniors to become teachers. ATRIP will award more than $2 million in scholarships to high school seniors based on financial need and academic success, and to professionals seeking an alternative degree in teaching. For more information and application, [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 31**

**22nd Annual Human Anatomy and Physiology Society (HAPS) Conference.** May 24-29, LSU Health Sciences Center and The Westin New Orleans at Canal Place in New Orleans. [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Apr. 30**
WINSTON COUNTY’S BAKER CHOSEN ALFA TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Two basic philosophies have guided Dana J. Baker throughout her teaching career. The first – “All students can learn … just not in the same way on the same day” – she read on a mural on her first day of student teaching. The second – “Do what you can … where you are … with what you have” – she heard in church.

No wonder Baker, who holds a master’s degree in education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a bachelor’s of science in education from the University of North Alabama, has been selected Alfa’s Teacher of the Month for February. As this month’s winner, she will receive $1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and her school, Winston County High School, will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

“My room is not the quietest or most orderly one on the hallway, but I am an advocate that learning does not have to occur in straight rows of student desks with the teacher lecturing at the front of the room,” said Baker, who teaches biology, chemistry and physics to freshmen through seniors at her former high school in Double Springs.

She admits that the No Child Left Behind Act yanked her from her “comfort zone” when she found herself facing a biology class filled with timid students with learning disabilities. “I faced a crossroad,” said Baker. “I could become bitter and resentful, taking my frustrations out on innocent people who needed my help, or I could roll up my sleeves, jump into the arena and accept a new challenge. I am so happy that I chose the latter because rather than changing my students, as I had in the past, these inclusion students changed me.”

She tells of one deaf student who was eager to do the research on genetic disorders, but was reluctant to make a presentation on the subject because she has “butterflies in her stomach.”

Once she realized that it was normal to feel that way, she made her presentation and earned the applause of her classmates.

“While she was rewarded with increased self-esteem and a good grade, I was rewarded with far more,” said Baker. “This class had revitalized my joy of teaching.”

During 2008, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation will honor one outstanding teacher from each of Alabama’s eight state school board districts, as well as two principals and two private school teachers.