

## Education notebook

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

### College to honor high school seniors

Philander Smith College will highlight the academic excellence of more than 250 local black high school seniors at a ceremony at 3 p.m. today.

The African American High School Honors Ceremony, now in its fourth year, celebrates high school seniors with grade point averages of 3.0 or higher from the Little Rock School District, North Little Rock School District, Pulaski County Special School District, Lighthouse Academies, eStem Public Charter High School and other high schools in the Central Arkansas area.

In addition to recognizing students' academic successes, Philander Smith College will be awarding scholarships to students who qualify.

"We could not think of a better way to help observe Black History Month than by placing in the spotlight the next generation of future leaders and history-makers with an effort to encourage higher education," President Roderick L. Smothers Sr. said in announcing the event.

The ceremony will be held in the Mims Gymnasium, followed by a reception for students and their families

in the atrium of the Harry R. Kendall Building.

Philander Smith College is at 900 W. Daisy Gatson Bates Drive in Little Rock.

### 2 events to revel in charter renewal

Academics Plus Charter Schools, consisting of the Scott Charter School and Maumelle Charter Schools, is hosting two events in March to celebrate the state Board of Education's recent 10-year renewal of the school's charter and present building plans.

The Scott celebration will take place at 6 p.m. March 3 in the school's cafeteria.

The Maumelle event will be at 6 p.m. March 5 in the high school cafeteria.

The events are being hosted by the school's board of trustees according to board chairwoman Adria Conklin.

"We've grown so much over the years and are continuing to grow," Conklin said. "The board and administration want to share the vision of the school with our families and the community."

"We are excited about this vote of confidence from the state Board of Education," said Rob McGill, Academics Plus Charter Schools chief executive officer. "We will be sharing the progress and vision for the two schools including a new high school

campus in Maumelle and building plans for the Scott campus. It's important that the communities are part of this celebration as we move forward with planning for growth and expansion," McGill said.

### Gift to foundation to start campaign

The Economics Arkansas Foundation will receive a \$50,000 gift from the R.E. Lee Wilson Trust Foundation of Little Rock.

The gift serves as a matching gift to initiate a three-year, \$3 million legacy campaign to endow the foundation, the fundraising division of Economics Arkansas, a nonprofit educational organization.

"We are deeply thankful for this generous gift from our longtime friend Perry Wilson and the Wilson family," said Ray Hobbs, chairman of the Economics Arkansas Foundation board of directors. "This contribution launches a first-of-its-kind campaign in the history of our organization that will make a huge difference to Arkansas teachers and students."

The overall fundraising campaign is to raise the foundation's current endowment from \$2 million to \$5 million. The organization provides economic and personal finance education

to Arkansas teachers and students, training more than 2,800 teachers and impacting approximately 175,000 students each year. With increased contributions from the foundation, Economics Arkansas could expand its staff and resources to offer professional development training and support to more Arkansas educators.

"It is my honor and privilege to be associated with an organization as great as Economics Arkansas, and to be in a position to offer some help," Wilson said. "My father was involved with Economics Arkansas for many years before he passed away, and he instilled in me a passion for education. It's a personal and professional goal of mine to see economic education taught in all grades, starting in Pre-K and continuing through high school. With this gift, I challenge my peers to support that goal. Knowing how to thrive in our free-market economy and how to budget money could be the key to solving many of the problems folks are facing these days."

Perry Wilson is a managing member at Barber Law Firm PLLC in Little Rock and is serving the last of his three-year term as chairman of the Economics Arkansas board of directors.. His late father, Mike Wilson, served

29 years on the Economics Arkansas board. He and his family previously owned Lee Wilson & Company of Wilson in Mississippi County in northeast Arkansas.

### Breakfast ranking places state 6th

Arkansas ranks sixth among the 50 states and Washington, D.C., on an annual School Breakfast Scorecard that was recently released by the Food Research & Action Center, which is a national anti-hunger advocacy group.

A total of 159,276 students from low-income families in Arkansas participated in school breakfast on an average school day in 2018-19, according to the scorecard.

Additionally, the data shows that 66.5 low-income students in Arkansas ate school breakfast for every 100 who received free or reduced-price school lunches during the 2018-19 school year. That is a 0.8% increase over last year's numbers of breakfast eaters. It is also well above the national average of 57.5% of low-income children eating school breakfasts for every 100 who received school lunches in the 2018-19 school year.

Virtually all Arkansas schools that offer school lunches also offer school breakfasts.