

Tech center gets new director

Assistant Principal Lori Ferguson's focus to be advocacy

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COVENTRY — There is a new leader of the Regional Coventry Career and Technical Center. Former Director John Canole retired after a lengthy history with the school and the school's assistant principal, Lori Ferguson, assumed his position. According to those working with her, Ferguson is bringing with her many new and innovative ideas to the program. She said she is committed to bringing new interest to the "great programs" offered at the career center, which, she said, many students do not even realize are offered right in their own school.

Currently the Regional Coventry Career and Technical Center offers programs in cosmetology, culinary arts, electronics and computers, child development, health-care, automotive technology and carpentry.

High school students from Coventry High School and elsewhere are eligible to sign up for any one of the programs as soon as they reach tenth grade. Once enrolled into an

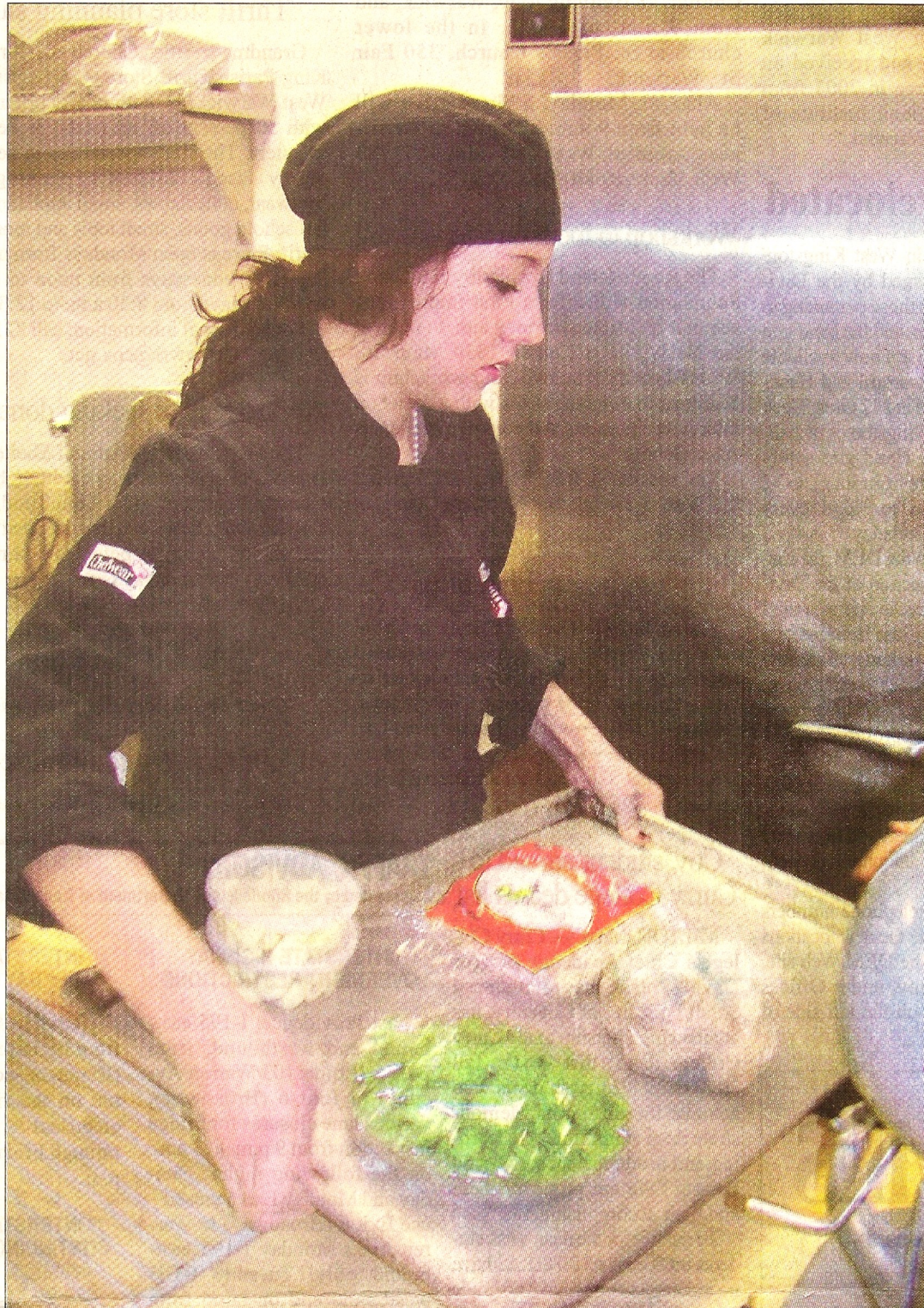
elected program, students' programs are intertwined with their traditional educational requirements. Ferguson said those students that complete their career center programs leave the school geared not only with their traditional academic knowledge, but also with college credits for the colleges that the center has articulation agreements with.

Ferguson said this program is a wonderful opportunity for students for a number of reasons. For one, she said, a student is able to evaluate a possible career path even before college without having to pay costly college tuitions. Secondly, she said, a student who completes their chosen career center program and then opts to continue on to college is able to bring articulating credits with him.

Third and most importantly, Ferguson said, even if the student opts not to pursue his career center education at a college level, he leaves the high school with career-level education in a selected field of interest. It is knowledge that, she said, students can apply even while they are still in high school.

GET A TASTE

On Thursdays the Culinary students prepare a full lunch at the school in the culinary department's dining hall known as "The Knotty Oak Room." The service is open to the public from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



Jessica Selby • Daily Times

Many students in the Coventry Career and Technical Center, such as junior Heather Bartley, relish the opportunity to try their hand at different jobs in the hopes of finding a true calling.

"We have kids in the health occupation program that are getting enough hours in that they can take their state CNA test while they are juniors," Ferguson said. "Then these kids are getting jobs in the field and earning pretty good salaries even while they are still in high school. These opportunities weren't available while we were in school.

"Even the cosmetology program — although it is the newest at the school — we are working hard so that the kids can earn the full 1,500 required hours that they need to take the state exam so that when they graduate they are ready to do that," she said. "People who enroll in cosmetology programs outside of the school are paying a lot of money to do so and these kids are ready to take the test upon graduation and getting jobs right out of high school."

Ferguson said although the programs are getting more and more interest, she is committed to make it even more accessible. She said she has been visiting all of the ninth grade advisory periods explaining to the freshman the opportunities available through the career center. She said she has also brought them down to tour all of the programs so that they can see for themselves just what is going on.

"I think it is a real shame that many of our students don't even know where the programs are in the building and this is their school and they could

benefit so greatly from these programs," she said. "I think it comes down to educating them and I am going to make sure that they get that education so they don't miss out on these wonderful opportunities."

Jim Thomson, the automotive technology instructor at the Career Center said the students who complete his program are leaving the school with "everything that they need to be a qualified entry level automotive technician."

"These kids know brakes complete from front to back, alignment including steering, suspension and tires; they have a workable knowledge for engine performance and electrical and for those that plan to get a job in the field, with the job market

the way it is — things are not the way it used to be — they need the experience now so our graduates are getting that," Thomson said. "Even for those students who do not plan to pursue this as a career path, just having the knowledge for themselves to work on their own cars or even just the troubleshooting skills they learn can come in handy in their every day lives."

Casey Cragan, a senior at the school who will be completing the culinary arts program this year, said she is very happy that she decided to enroll in the program and is impressed with the education she received.

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WHAT THEY'RE DOING

The Cosmetology program is planning a fundraiser on Feb. 6 that will benefit the Heart Association.

The Health Occupations program was very involved with H1N1

vaccinations clinics and gift baskets for the elderly in the community.

The Culinary Program participated in a program with Bristol Community College creating Ginger Bread Cookie

Kits for the children at Hasbro Children's Hospital.

The Construction students built a playhouse for a fundraiser that benefited the Tomorrow Fund.

School's tech center to host open house

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“It was a good experience and even at times a nice break from the typical classroom schooling,” Cragan said. “I know a lot of kids do not choose to do it because they think it will be too hard to do both this and school, and, granted, there are days when it is hard, but the teachers really help you with workability to get both done because the experience is so beneficial.

“I am not sure what I am going to do next year, I am thinking about going to Johnson and

Wales, but even if I don't, I definitely know how to cook better,” she said.

The Regional Coventry Career and Technical Center is hosting an open house on Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. The open house will give students, parents, and members of the community an opportunity to tour all the programs offered at the career center. Teachers and students will be on hand to speak with guests about the opportunities, internships and certifications offered in each of their programs.