

# OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2005

6A OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS | www.oanow.com

VOL. 101 NO. 118

50 CENTS

## Transition Team helps young adults adjust to working life

WILLIAM WHITE  
STAFF WRITER

One father credits a local transition program for young adults with disabilities as being a 'godsend' for parents.

Jim Rew of Opelika said the Local Transition Partnership has been a tremendous effort by the schools in collaboration with the parents.

"I applaud the schools for going the extra mile in developing this program for the students because, I think, without this, as with so many parents, we ask, 'What are our children going to do?'"

"If they don't have any experience, it is very difficult to get them started. This is sort of a relief, sort of a godsend for parents to know that their children are getting job experience, and they are getting job coaching," Rew said.

He said Lamar Hood has done a tremendous job with his son, Daniel, getting started at Belk, a new department store in the Colonial University Village in Auburn.

"Dan was able to pick it up pretty quickly, but there were a lot of things that Lamar had to step in and say this is how you do this and this is how you do that," he said. "We sure do appreciate the efforts of the Transition Team, the job coaches, the schools and everything they have done."

He said his son has gained confidence.

"Dan gets excited about going and working, like any kid would do. Starting out as a greeter at Belk, he reacted with

every customer coming into the store. I think that was a great boost to his confidence and a great boost to his self-esteem. It made mom and dad feel pretty good too."

Lamar Hood, who is employed by Opelika High School in vocational rehabilitation and helps at the Achievement Center, said what they are doing is getting students with an occupational diploma to successfully transition from school to work. This is a transition partnership because we want partnerships between business, school, community and get the whole area involved.

"This is a partnership where we work together with employers and schools to try to get these students successfully employed like the rest of us and be productive folks," Hood said. "We are transitioning students into work, into real life, to take responsibility and accept the challenges that are out there."

Rew and Hood were among more than 60 teachers, students, business representatives and staff at the Community Transition Team annual meeting Tuesday afternoon at Niffer's Restaurant in Auburn. Two high school students and local employers were recognized during this year's meeting.

After a fashion show of what to wear and what not to wear in a business setting, Nicole Wiess of Auburn High School, Keisha Robinson of Opelika High School, Joseph Perkinson with Belk in Colonial University Village and Dena Lidestri

with Video Warehouse in Opelika were recognized for their participation in the Local Transition Partnership.

In its second year of a four-year grant, the Local Transition Partnership program was developed under a \$700,000 federal grant awarded to the Auburn City Schools by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

Information about the program on their Web pages defines the program as the Auburn City and the Opelika City school systems joining with the Auburn University Transition Leadership Institute to develop a consortium to establish a model transition partnership that will assist young citizens with disabilities as they prepare for the roles and responsibilities of young adulthood. These local partnerships act as support systems to prepare and assist high school students in finding jobs, continuing education and preparing for more independence as they exit school and embark upon maturity.

"The partnerships are what makes this work," said Brian Burrows, LTP's assistant director. "We have all kinds of people involved: students, teachers, parents, employers, agency people as well as the university."

Burrows works with coordinators Linda Felton and Kristi Ramey in Auburn City Schools.