

BCS News & Notes

A newsletter for parents, students, staff and community

Sept. 23, 2011



Bus driver Howard Powell will drive one of the new CNG buses, which have special logos on them.

District first to buy CNG buses

Six new school buses delivered to the Birmingham City School System this week are the usual yellow color – but they are “green” as well. The buses run on compressed natural gas, the cleanest alternative fuel on the road today.

The buses will replace older diesel buses on routes around the district beginning next week. The Birmingham City School System is the first district the state to purchase CNG buses.

“We decided to buy CNG buses for several reasons, especially because they are environmentally friendly,” said Superintendent Craig Witherspoon. “Compressed natural gas also is a domestic fuel and costs about one third less than gasoline, and CNG vehicles require less maintenance.”

District officials worked closely with officials at the Alabama State Department of Education, which had to give a waiver to allow the district to buy non-diesel buses. Representatives of Energen also worked with the district, providing assistance in preparing the request for proposals the district used to select a vendor for the CNG buses.

The district paid a total of \$842,423.70 for the buses.

The issues of fueling the buses and maintaining them were worked out with the assistance of the Birmingham Jefferson Transit Authority and Lawson State Community College. Drivers of the CNG buses will fuel them at the

Hundreds attend Parker dedication

Hundreds of students, parents, staff, alumni and community members attended the dedication ceremony for the new Arthur Harold Parker High School Thursday, Sept. 22.

Radio personality and businessman Shelley Stewart was the keynote speaker. He focused on the way the faculty and staff at Parker developed relationships with him and supported him through his years at the school, when he was homeless and wore ragged clothes.

The new \$32 million school opened in August. Built for 1,200 students, it features a career-technical wing, a 750-seat auditorium, a practice gymnasium, a distance learning lab and a cafeteria that seats 367.

A competition football stadium with a nine-lane competition track, athletic field house and other athletic facilities will open in 2012.

It's flu shot season!

When fall arrives, so does flu shot season, and this year is no exception.

The Jefferson County Department of Health will hold its annual flu shot clinic for Birmingham City School System employees from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 27, and Wednesday, Sept. 28, at the Davis Center.

Employees who want a flu shot should be sure to have their insurance cards with them.

-- Submitted by Russell Veale

transit authority's CNG fueling station – which is near the district bus terminal. Lawson State, which has a grant to train mechanics on servicing CNG vehicles, trained the district's mechanics during the summer.

The purchase of the six CNG buses could be the first step in converting to alternative fuels. “We will do an assessment this year of our fuel costs and gather other pertinent information to determine our next steps in alternative fuel buses,” said Samuella Drew, the district's chief operations officer. “We also will be reviewing other forms of alternative fuel, their benefits to the environment and cost benefits to the district.”

Center to have open house

The Family Resource Center, located in rooms 212 and 214 of the Davis Center, 417 29th St. South, will have an open house from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 27.

The Family Resource Center is part of the Birmingham City Schools Family Involvement Program. It has resources to help parents and families.

For more information, call 231-7965 or 231-7978.



Sun Valley's Star Readers are, front from left, Michael Wicks, Ahmed Nassar, Shaniyah Plump, back from left, Katherine Anderson, Emma Hoppes, Erin Smith and Torri Tippett.

Sun Valley recognizes readers

Twenty-eight students at Sun Valley Elementary School read enough pages in a summer reading program to earn awards. The school held an assembly Sept. 22 to honor them.

Seven students who read 2,011 pages or more were named Star Readers. They are Michael Wicks, Ahmed Nassar, Shaniyah Plump, Katherine Anderson, Emma Hoppes, Erin Smith and Torri Tippett. The other students received bronze, silver or gold awards.

Michael Moore, deputy director of the Division of Youth Services, was a guest reader for the program.

-- Submitted by Sarah van Os

Stories needed for newsletter

If you know of something good happening in the Birmingham City Schools and you want to tell others the news, write a few paragraphs for BCS News & Notes and e-mail the information to Michaelle Chapman, director of communications, at mchapman@bhm.k12.al.us. Digital photos also are needed. Ms. Chapman is editor of "BCS News & Notes."



Carolyn McKinstry speaks to students at Wilkerson Middle School.

HistoryMakers visit schools

HistoryMakers, a Chicago-based non-profit organization sent foot soldiers of the civil rights movement to six schools in the Birmingham City Schools Sept. 23.

Carolyn Maull McKinstry spoke to a group of seventh graders at Wilkerson Middle School. She shared her story of being a eyewitness to the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. As a teenager, she participated in the marches led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., bravely facing Bull Connor's German shepherds and fire hoses.

She donated two copies of her book, "While the World Watched," to the Wilkerson media center.

The students were allowed to ask questions and truly enjoyed interacting with Mrs. McKinstry.

Other foot soldiers who visited schools were Joe Dickinson, Wenonah High School and Green Acres Middle School; Rev. Calvin Woods and Colonel Stone Johnson, Daniel Payne Middle School and Whatley K-8 School; and Gwen Appling, Sun Valley Elementary School.