



Eta Epsilon Chapter Newsletter

Summer 2018

Editor: Blake West

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The Legacy Museum By Anna Taylor

On June 15, 2018, a group of Jefferson State Community College staff and students went on a trip to Legacy Museum in Montgomery. This museum is all about the history of slavery up through today's mass incarceration epidemic. Reading the walls, listening to stories, and watching videos of what people had to go through for years up through today was very emotional.

During this trip we learned how people were treated and separated from families, the reason for slavery, and many more facts about slavery and lynching right here in Alabama. The Legacy Museum paints a vivid image of what African American people had to go through during those times and what they are still going through today.

One trip is not enough to learn and understand the everyday struggles of people who were in forced slavery. The Legacy Museum contains a lot of information and it is hard to learn years of information all in one trip. I am looking forward to going back to the Legacy Museum with family and friends to learn more about the history of these oppressed people. I encourage everyone to visit the Legacy Museum and learn about a tragic part of our history so we will not repeat it again, and the tragedies that are occurring today that we can help put an end to.



Front of the Legacy Museum on Coosa Street in Montgomery, Alabama



Visit <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/museum> for more information or for tickets to the museum

Jefferson State Community College

Jefferson State Community College follows equal opportunity admission policies and employment practices. College facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Meet The New Officers!

Digging Up Dirt on Austin Armstrong By Danita Miniex

Austin
Armstrong
(middle)
and his
parents at
his
high
school
graduation



Mention the term “archaeologist”, and a host of fictitious Hollywood characters come to mind. Images such as Indiana Jones with his dusty, torn, wide-brimmed hat and whip from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the daring, sleek Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*, and even the comical Alex O’Connell from *The Mummy* serve as a “go-to” reference. But, those imaginary heroes are far from reality for Austin Armstrong who plans to realistically define the role as he uncovers history. Adventure in the four corners of the world, dusty clothes, and hidden treasures may lie ahead but hopefully without the booby traps, evil villains, thieving looters, and predictable romance.

Carving through layers of time reveal clues about our Clay-Trussville native’s destiny. Born April 22, 1997 to Randy and Debbie Armstrong, Austin was the middle of their three sons. At an early age, the Armstrongs recognized that Austin had his own unique and mysterious traits. Even as a kid, our budding “**Johnny Quest**” loved riding his bike through the various parts of town. By the 5th grade, characteristics were unfolding and being voted “Most Adventurous” sparked a dream into a desire. Inspired and encouraged to continue to press towards anthropology and archaeology, with special thanks to Dr. Sarah Parcak, an archaeologist at UAB, Austin plans to

graduate from Jefferson State in 2019 with a goal of attaining a PhD in this field. Life’s lessons have taught him to stay “grounded” and respectful, to talk less and listen more, and above all, believe that your dream is attainable.

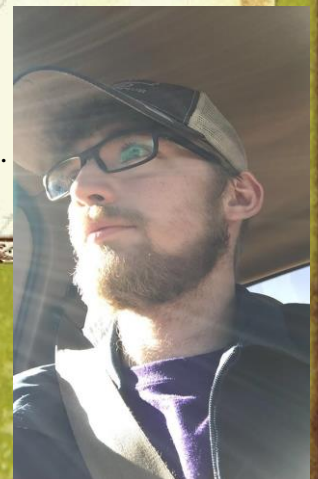
So, who knows? One day our very own Austin Armstrong may be listed on a Google page next to Howard Carter, the archaeologist that discovered King Tut’s Tomb. Or, his discoveries may be listed next to such findings as the Terracotta Army or The Dead Sea Scrolls. Undoubtedly he will someday be deep within the confines of an excavation relishing relics. Only time will reveal which great finds Austin will uncover, but for now, SKD is proud and honored to uncover Austin.

Introducing Blake West By Ben Wilson

Blake Alexander West is one of the newly-appointed officers of SKD representing the Clanton campus here at Jefferson State Community College. He is nineteen years old and a graduate of Chilton County High School, class of 2016. He is pursuing a degree in English and intends to teach English on the High School level after receiving his degree. In his spare time, Blake enjoys practicing music; he plays various musical instruments, such as the guitar, saxophone, and the piano. He also enjoys spending time working on his vehicles.

As the new Officer representing the Clanton campus, Blake will play an essential role in the publishing of the chapter newsletter. We at SKD are very excited to welcome Blake to the ranks and are looking forward to seeing how he uses his knowledge and ambitions to represent our chapter and to help further the mission of SKD.

Blake West



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An Introduction to Ben Wilson **By Blake West**

Benjamin Ross Wilson is welcomed to the group of officers representing Sigma Kappa Delta at the Jefferson State Pell City Campus. He graduated from Crossroads Christian School in 2016. Currently 20 years old, Ben is an English major and has ambitions of achieving his Masters degree and teaching at a collegiate level. In his life away from school, Ben enjoys music. His talent for singing even got him accepted into the Jefferson State Singers!

His inner English scholar shows through his enjoyment of books. He can always curl up with a good book to relax and spend his free time. He also enjoys sand volleyball, an interesting and some would say more difficult variation on the classic gym class pass-time. As this year begins for SKD, we look forward to serving with Ben and seeing what new heights he can help this new team soar to.



Ben enjoying life with his best friend

A Little Space for Our 'Seasoned' Officers

Officer Brooke Jennings at the Shelby campus and Officer Anna Taylor at the Clanton campus pose for some limelight as "old officers." Brooke and Anna will be continuing with the SKD organization this year!



Brooke Jennings – "Old" Officer from Shelby



Anna Taylor –
"Old" Officer
from Clanton

A Look Into the Life of Danita Miniex

By Zack Armstrong

Imagine yourself sitting at a prized dining room table surrounded by a large loving family with Cajun dishes hot in front of you. That is one of the many favorite childhood memories of Danita Miniex. Born in Bogalusa, Louisiana in 1972, Danita grew up in a joyful and blessed home. Her father, Clifton Williams, was an admiring pastor that also worked as a chemist, a high school teacher, and even a spokesman for the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, while her mother, Eula Williams, enjoyed teaching pre-k and caring for children. Having five siblings, three girls and two boys, Danita was cursed with the middle child syndrome and naturally learned how to compete. At most times though you could catch her and her family together visiting the elderly, singing in the church choir, or even playing around in the countryside or creek.

Over the years, Danita's parents tended to be the most influential and she learned important lessons from both. Her father taught her how to be strong and kind while her mother passed on resourcefulness and resilience. Additionally, both taught her how to have faith and that is what Danita

cherished most and values. Between her and her siblings, they were raised to live life with good intentions, hard work, and trying their best in everything they attempt. This was a positive factor in Danita's life that took her to the University of Louisiana where she earned a bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate. Since then, educating and motivating students has been an enjoyable experience for her and she was even awarded "Teacher of the Year" for her excellence and appreciation towards students.

After relocating to Alabaster, Alabama for her husband's career in 2001 along with their three kids, Danita continued to educate for years to come. Due to recent health scares and having to learn how to better manage one's health, she found a new passion in the field of Respiratory Therapy. Although she has always had a liking towards science this was something new and intriguing for Danita to get involved in. Luckily, she has the support of her mother and family to pursue her new and 2nd career which brought her to Jefferson State. Having already attended for over a year, most of Danita's credits transferred from her first degree leaving her with only a couple semesters to complete before being closer to her goal.

After studying at Jefferson State, she plans to be working at a hospital or healthcare facility within the next five years as a Respiratory Therapist when she retires from teaching. Sigma Kappa Delta is honored to have such a compassionate and driven person help build the honor society further towards success in its missions. Danita Miniex will not only connect everyone closer as a family but will also teach us many new things as we all strive for our goals in life.



Danita (Middle) and her daughters Britney and Kiera, and her son Chase



Events and Happenings

Local Survivors Tell Their Tales By Ashley Kitchens

On June 25, 2018, SKD officer Danita Miniex and sponsor Ashley Kitchens joined an American Literature class from Jeff State as students toured the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center in downtown Birmingham, Alabama. The Education Center display is titled "Darkness Into Life: Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art," and highlights the stories of residents of Alabama who were survivors, in one way or another, of the Holocaust. Each survivor story is represented by plaques detailing information of his or her ordeal paired with a piece of art paralleling his or her story and a photograph of the survivor himself or herself. All the artwork paired with the stories was done by Mitzi Levin, and all the photography was done by Becky Seitel.

Students maneuvered through the self-guided walls of stories and artwork and really got to know the many different atrocities faced

by Jewish people during the Holocaust. One story about Mr. Henry Aizenman detailed his three-year detainment at Auschwitz and the lack of food he received; upon exiting the camp, he weighed only 60-70 pounds. His information plaque states that since his liberation in 1945 he has enjoyed cooking and enjoying a delicious meal as often as possible. Aizenman states, "Every meal is a celebration of life. L'Chaim!"

Another story, told by Riva Hirsch, details her hiding place in a bunker near a convent in



Mitzi Levin's portrayal of Riva Hirsch's story

Ukraine. Nuns hid her there and would feed her when they could every two or three days; this brave woman stayed in a dark place with only a small door cracked for two years! Hirsch states, "When the door was cracked, it was my lifeline. The door separated me from the outside world. Inside that bunker, my life was lonely and frightening." There were many other stories on the walls of this incredible center from survivors living right here in Alabama.

Other amenities and showcases in the Holocaust Education Center include a research library with classroom sets of several titles of novels detailing Holocaust experiences, a regular circulating library with books and DVDs of popular Holocaust themed movies or documentaries, a hallway of painted tiles with names of children who were killed in the Holocaust, and a room of artwork from several Birmingham City Schools based off the "Violins of Hope" project. In this one room, groups from Birmingham City Schools transformed wooden pallets into artistic and symbolic pieces. Overall, this visit was truly inspirational and captivated the students and instructor alike. This museum should be on anyone's list to visit to experience the history that still lives on through people right here in the state of Alabama.

Example of the

portrayals of
"Violins of
Hope



William Gay Book Signing Event

By Ashley Kitchens

Amidst the rolling dark clouds and threat of thunderstorms, sponsors Dianna Hyde and Ashley Kitchens, along with officer Danita Miniex, attended the July 6 book signing event for William Gay's novel *The Lost Country* at the Alabama Booksmith in Homewood. An intimate crowd gathered as editors Sonny Brewer and Michael White arrived to sign the novels in memory of William Gay who died in 2012.



Book
Signing
Area at
Alabama
Booksmith

White told the quirky story about speaking to Mr. Gay right before he died about the manuscript deadline for this book. It seemed Gay had lost his manuscript and was in the process of trying to find it when he died. Interestingly enough, White spoke to relatives of Gay who found hundreds of notebooks of written chapters of *The Lost Country* that were scattered in no particular order. So, it seemed the editors had a huge job ahead of them if they were going to have to put notebooks in order and try to salvage the story. White visited Gay's home to pick up

the notebooks after Gay's death and was led to an attic area by a relative where he saw a huge bookcase full of books among thick spiderweb drapes. As White got closer, he found the actual typed manuscript for *The Lost Country* and filled in any gaps with the notebooks and produced the final version of the novel.

SKD sponsors and officer listened to the story the editor told, got their copies of the novel signed, and looked around the Alabama Booksmith store which holds signed copies of hundreds of best-selling books. They were able to also look at the picture walls of visiting authors to the Alabama Booksmith and find several big names in politics, sports, and literature that had visited the shop over the years.



Sponsor Dianna Hyde (L) and officer Danita Miniex (R) take in the ambiance in the Readers' Corner

Sponsors
Dianna
Hyde (L)
and Ashley
Kitchens
(R) take a
selfie
among the
stacks



Jefferson State Community College Hosts its 2018 New Student Orientation

By Danita Miniex

Even before entering the double glass doors of the Shelby campus HSB, guests clearly felt welcomed. The strategic planning that painstakingly went into pulling off such a feat was apparent. With music ablaze, the atmosphere was energetic. Enticing aromas of popcorn lured students to discover an array of edible goodies. The sweltering temperature was no match for the free Pepsi products offered by smiling faces. Perusing the breezeway yielded the discovery of a host of representatives from local financial institutions. Each offered services especially crafted for students. These services ranged from student loans to credit cards to fee waivers on accounts.



Officer Danita Miniex enjoying New Student orientation at the Shelby Campus



Once inside, guests were greeted with a warm smile and helpful instructions. This direction guided them past a host of extracurricular activities beckoning them to discover true college life. Honor societies, scholarship opportunities, SGA (Student Government Association), and the National Guard were a few that adorned their path.

Despite the inviting environment, the obvious glow of ambivalence from both students and parents presented a challenge. Understandably, new students felt both nervous and excited about their upcoming venture. While some parents seemed reluctant to release control, surely there was a glimmer of hope in the new freedom that would accompany their child's path to adulthood. Anxiety dissipated as this challenge was met with prepared advisors, an informative session, and guided small group tours. Kudos to Jefferson State for their devotion and crafty organization to ensure a seamless transition for their newest class!



Follow SKD on Social Media!

**Instagram: JeffStateSKD
(@jeffersonstateskd)**

**Facebook: Search “Jefferson State
SKD”**

Twitter: JeffstateSKD

**Check out our Facebook page for
reminders of upcoming events!
(Jefferson State SKD)**



Wingspan 2017

**Wingspan
Literary and
Art Magazine**
accepting works
of poetry,
fiction, non-
fiction, art and
photography
through
October 1,
2018.

Email kboyer@jeffersonstate.edu for submissions
or questions!

**Our website is also available for those
who are interested in National
Convention or want more
information about available
scholarships.
(English2.org)**

Save the Date

Pioneer Con

October 17, 2018

Part comic-con and part academic conference, Pioneer Con gives students, faculty, and members of the community a chance to release their inner geek.

*Phoebe North, author *Starglass* & *Starbreak**

*Chat with guest speakers *Student and faculty-led sessions

*Dungeons & Dragons mini-campaigns *Pizza

*Game of Thrones themed photo booth

*Trivia and prizes

FREE!

9:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Jefferson State Community College | Shelby-Hoover Campus
4600 Valleydale Road | Birmingham, AL 35242

**Do you have an item of interest
to share with your fellow
members? Do you want to be an
active member of SKD, but do
not know where to start?**

**Contact us for further
information.**

(skd@jeffstateonline.com)