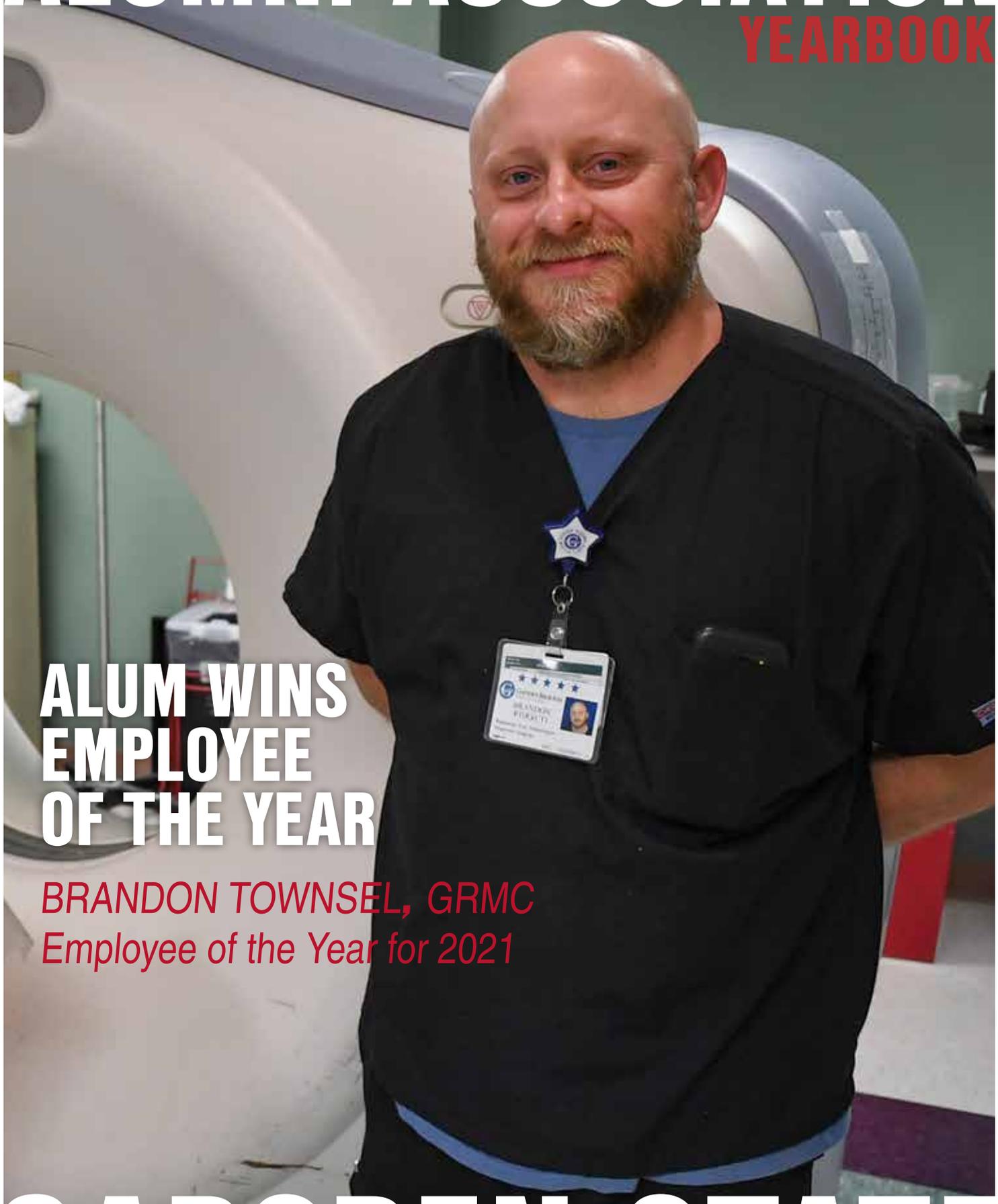


2021-2022

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION YEARBOOK



**ALUM WINS
EMPLOYEE
OF THE YEAR**

*BRANDON TOWNSEL, GRMC
Employee of the Year for 2021*

GADSDEN STATE

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the Gadsden
State Community
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scholarships!



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EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

10
BEST IN COUNTRY





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THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER



“

It is an honor to serve Gadsden State Community College and our community as chair of the Alumni Association Board of Directors.”

Over the years, our association has given away thousands in scholarships, participated in events and programs and began a brick campaign that allows alumni to honor the time they spent at GSCC as well as others that may have had a significant impact on their lives.

Celebrating the Cardinal spirit, we've recognized notable alumni, staff and faculty annually through an awards program and luncheon. We've provided outreach activities to encourage others to participate and support athletic programs, career technical competition accomplishments and more.

The association is truly the proudest ambassador of the great foundation that Gadsden State has provided and will continue to provide to hundreds of thousands of students over the years and in the years to come. It is our pride in our campus, our faculty and our future that drives us to lend our talents to build new leaders for tomorrow.

Gadsden State Community College is a game-changer for our community. Whether its reskilling or upskilling in technical degrees and certificates, strong associate foundations that transfer to additional post-secondary degree or short-term training that get people to work and on the right track as quickly as possible, there are many incredible pictures of success among our rank.

I invite you to join us in the important work we do. We'd love nothing more than to watch you fly, too.

Heather Brothers New
Alumni Association president
Gadsden State Community College graduate
Associate in Arts, 2005
Magna Cum Laude



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EXCITED ABOUT EARNING DEGREE

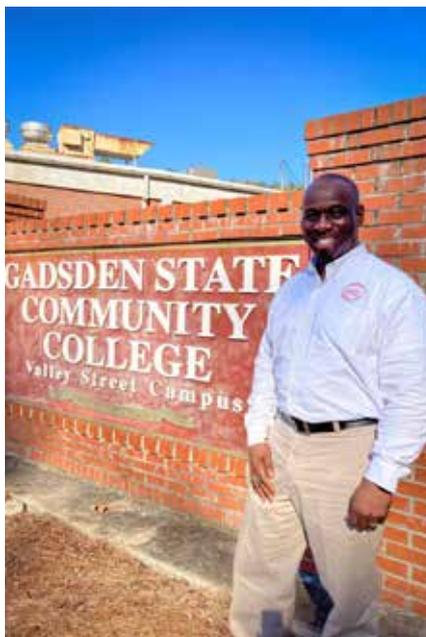


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WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Tillis goes from student to director at the Valley Street Campus

[Read more](#)



*Gadsden State Valley Street Campus Director
Ricky Tillis*

“

I'm humbled and grateful for this opportunity," he said. "I'm in a position where I can really help students, faculty and staff in bigger ways. I want to be a voice for them so that we may see improvements come to our campus."

EDUCATION INTO LEADERSHIP

Langley named director of the Ayers Campus

[Read more](#)



*Gadsden State Ayers Campus Director
Gerri Langley*

“

Furthering my education at Gadsden State made a huge difference in my life," said Langley, who was the first in her family to earn a college degree. "My instructors were supportive of me. My co-workers I had through my work-study job encouraged me every day. Gadsden State is like family to me."



ALUM WINS EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Brandon Townsel was confused when he saw his co-workers gathered in the lobby outside the Imaging Department at Gadsden Regional Medical Center.

“I just thought, ‘what in the world is going on?’” he said. “I had no idea.”

He quickly found out they were there for him. Members of the Administration Team paid a visit to the second floor to announce that Townsel was the Employee of the Year for 2021.

“I’m not here to win awards,” he said. “I’m here to take care of people. But, it’s a big honor that has made me reflect

on all of the work I’ve done for the last 20 years. People rely on me and they trust me. I’m proud of that.”

Townsel, a registered x-ray technologist, said he wouldn’t be where he is today had it not been for Gadsden State Community College.

“Enrolling at Gadsden State is one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” he said. “My instructors cared and they made sure I was prepared. They wanted us to be the best and they worked very hard to make sure that we were the best.”

Townsel graduated from Glencoe High School in 1996, the same year his daughter, Hannah, was born. He enrolled in classes at Gadsden State that fall.

“I could only take a couple of classes at a time because I had a child to support,” he said. “I worked at a furniture store and a shoe store while taking classes. It wasn’t easy.”

He said he wasn’t sure what he wanted to focus on at Gadsden State but he knew he needed to select a program that would lead to a career. His brother, Byron, was studying Radiologic Technology at Gadsden State and his mother, Brenda, had earned credentials from the College and was working as a laboratory technician.

“I didn’t know if I wanted to go into Rad Tech or Lab Tech or Nursing,” he said. “I just knew I wanted to take care of people.”

Watching Wayne, his older brother, battle kidney cancer sparked his interest in health sciences so he could take care of others.

“I wanted to be a part of a profession that would help people catch cancer sooner,” he said. “Early detection is so important.”

In 1999, Townsel applied for the Radiologic Technology Program and was accepted. He said his instructors, Gay Utz and Gina Tice, both now retired, made sure he and his classmates were prepared for the workforce.

“My instructors were the best,” he said. “They would prepare us in the lab so that we were used to positioning patients, organizing film, understanding cassettes for anatomy. They made us learn every detail of every bone. We had so much to learn. They made sure we were well-prepared to go from the lab to the clinical setting.”

In 2001, he graduated from Gadsden State and started a new job the same day as the lead technologist on second shift at GRMC. In 2006, he moved to first shift as a radiology technologist. That’s when he started working with Brenda Estes, who he considers his mentor.

“She’s the smartest technologist I know,” he said. “She taught me a lot. We relied on each other, and we worked great together.”

Three years ago, Townsel was named the lead technologist on first shift after Estes retired. In addition to his daily duties, he occasionally works with Rad Tech students from Gadsden State.

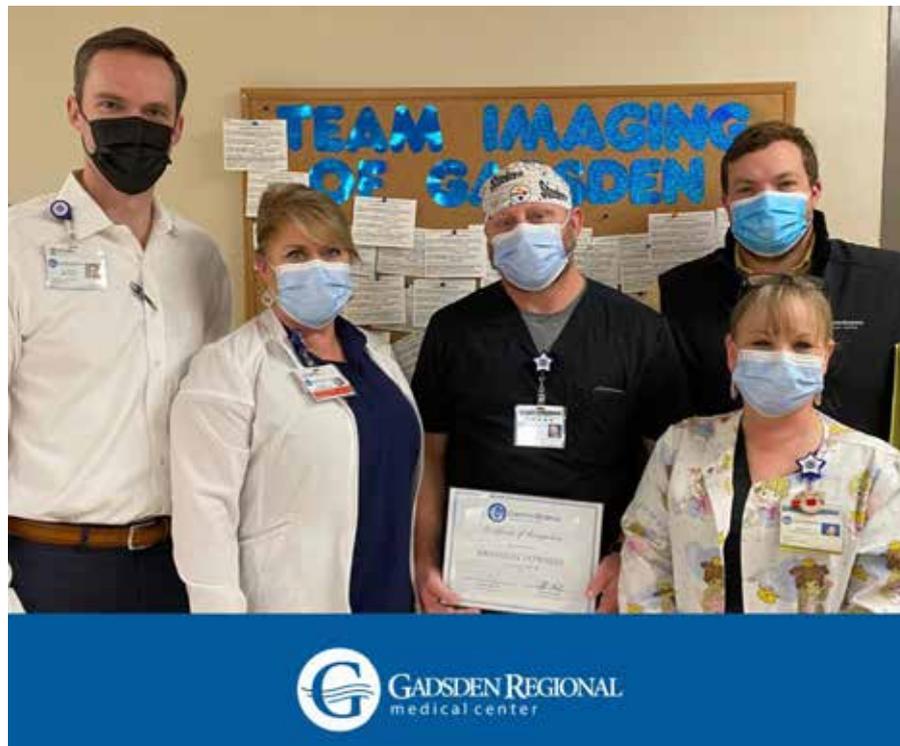
“I like working with the young technologists,” he said. “I had excellent teachers in the lab and in clinicals, so I want to pay it forward. I think it’s so important for our Rad Tech students to be well-trained and well-prepared like I was.”

It’s his hard work and dedication that caught the attention of GRMC leaders. He was named a Top 10 finalist for Employee of the Year - along with two co-workers in the Imaging Department.

“I think it’s outstanding that we had three from our department to make it to the Top 10,” he said. “It means our leaders recognize what we are doing day-in and day-out.”

Penny Carr, director of Imaging Services, said it’s the care that Townsel provides that makes him a favorite among patients.

“Brandon serves his patients with one-of-a-kind compassion and care,” she said. “Many patients choose to have their imaging at Gadsden



Regional due to the one-on-one attention that Brandon gives each of his patients. He is an asset to Gadsden Regional and the community we serve. He makes sure every patient receives the safest imaging with the highest quality all while providing genuine heartfelt compassion. I’m proud to work beside him.”

Townsel said Carr and his co-workers add to his love of working at Gadsden Regional.

“My co-workers are very talented; very smart,” he said. “They think on the fly. They work hard. They’re enjoyable to be around, and they’re good with their patients. I’ve seen them interact, and I’ve seen a lot of special moments between my co-workers and their patients.”

Townsel, who is the married father of four daughters and grandfather of two, said patient care is of utmost importance to him.

“I get to know my patients,” he said. “Some of them have been coming to me for years. A lot of them are cancer-free now and they want me to do their annual scans. It makes me feel good that they can depend on me; that they choose me to provide them with imaging services.”

“
I’m here to take care of people. But, it’s a big honor that has made me reflect on all of the work I’ve done for the last 20 years. People rely on me and they trust me. I’m proud of that.”

COUPLE STILL MARRIED MORE THAN 50 YEARS AFTER MEETING AT ALABAMA SCHOOL OF TRADES

The Cokers went to college at Alabama School of Trades and gained much more than a skill set that would create long-term careers. They found life-long partners.

“We know that the trade school brought us together,” said Deborah Coker. “It’s really funny how it all came about.”

Deborah graduated from Gadsden High School in 1970 and, a week later, she enrolled at the Alabama School of Trades, now known as Gadsden State Community College’s East Broad Campus. She was in the secretarial studies program, which required students to not only learn the necessary skills of administrative assistants but to also perform housekeeping duties.

“One day, I was sweeping the sidewalk in front of our building,” she said. “We had to dress professionally every day. We had to wear skirts or dresses, even when we were doing our housekeeping chores.”

Jimmy Coker and his best friend, J.L. Armstrong, saw her. Jimmy was instantly smitten.

“I nearly ran a stop sign looking at her legs,” he said. “I couldn’t help it. She was so beautiful.”

Still, Jimmy was too bashful to speak to her even though he saw her regularly on campus. He told one of his friends, a cosmetology student, that he really wanted to meet Deborah.

“She walked up to me and said, ‘Wait right here. I have to introduce you to someone who asks me every day what your name is,’” Deborah said. “She introduced us and made us sit together. We talked a lot. That’s where it all began.”

They told each other everything, including the fact that they both had been engaged before.

“We shared our stories and got to know each other,” she said. “I liked everything about him. He was so cute. I knew I wanted to marry him but I also knew I didn’t want the same engagement ring he used before.”

“I’m not stupid,” he said with a laugh. “I knew better than that.”

Six months after meeting, the Cokers got married on Jan. 29, 1971. They

were happy but they were strapped for cash since they were both still in college.

“We lived in a small apartment with a murphy bed and bugs,” Jimmy said. “We were poor but we were in love. We were young so we had the energy to work hard.”

After a short stint in the heating and cooling program, Jimmy was in his second year as a heavy equipment student when they got married.

“It was hard to find people skilled enough to work on heavy equipment so I knew once I graduated, it would be easy for me to find a job,” he said.

As a student, he would work on heavy equipment owned by Gadsden State Junior College, now known as the Wallace Drive Campus, and a local dealership would donate engines for them to work on.

“We really had a lot of hands-on learning opportunities,” he said.

They also spent some time pulling practical jokes on their instructor, W.C. West.



2021-2022 GRADUATION PICTURES

"We put an innertube in his locker and when he opened it, the innertube exploded," he said. "He lit a fire under us. He was so mad but we liked to have a little fun."

Meanwhile, the secretarial studies program was a little more subdued than the rambunctious heavy equipment program.

"My program was very, very hard but I never regretted enrolling," Deborah said. "A lot of my schoolmates didn't make it through the program. I was determined to succeed. I never studied so hard in my life. They really stressed perfection in the program, and the instructors expected it from the students."

It was her classmates who kept her encouraged and focused in the challenging program.

"I had a good group of friends," she said. "I really fit in with them. We helped each other a lot. I was an average student in high school but I became an A student in college. I knew I found exactly what I wanted to do for a living."

While she disliked learning shorthand, she enjoyed learning about accounting, correspondence and filing.

"I took a lot of skills with me from the Alabama School of Trades," she said. "It certainly benefitted my career."

After graduation, Jimmy worked for Thompson Caterpillar before taking a position at McCartney Construction in Gadsden, where he started as a mechanic and worked his way to shop supervisor. He retired in 2016 after 44 years of service.

Deborah's first job was as a bookkeeper in a bank in Gadsden. She eventually became responsible for all commercial loans. A few years later, she took a job as a bookkeeper and customer service representative at a gas company in Cherokee County. She

stayed there for 15 years. Through the years, Deborah worked as a payroll clerk, cost accountant, office manager and accounting supervisor. Her final position was as the office manager and paralegal at a law firm in Centre. She retired in 2014.

"I guess you could say I'm a jack of all trades," she said. "I had a lot of wonderful jobs during my career."

After being married over 50 years, the Leesburg couple still very much enjoy each other's company.

"My advice to married couples is to be flexible," Jimmy said.

And, don't argue.

"I was raised with three brothers and I was as mean as they were," Deborah said. "I was always ready to fight but I quickly learned, you can't do that to Jimmy Coker. He doesn't fight. He doesn't fuss. He doesn't argue. He just won't do it."

She said it is so important to be kind and respectful to your partner.

"Kindness and respect will lead to many years of happy marriage," she said. "Always be interested in what your spouse is talking about. Show concern when they are hurting. Try to talk through the bad times. You don't have to get your way all of the time. Compromise. And, never go to bed mad."

Jimmy said it was divine intervention when he saw her in 1970 sweeping the sidewalk.

"It's amazing how it has all worked out for us," he said. "We've lasted this long so we're doing something right."



GSCC ALUMNA RECOGNIZED AS BEST IN COUNTRY



A Gadsden State Community College alumna has quite an impressive resume with multiple accolades as one of the premiere softball coaches in the state. In fact, Taylor Burt's hard work and successful coaching has earned her a national recognition. Last summer, the National High School Coaches Association named her Softball Coach of the Year.

"It is quite an honor to be named Coach of the Year when there are so many amazing coaches in this sport," said Burt, who coaches at Hewitt-Trussville High School. "Being the winner was a really cool experience. When the school found out, they made a big deal about it. It was so nice and such a great experience."

Burt started making a name for herself at Sand Rock High School in Cherokee County, where she played volleyball, basketball and softball. She earned All-State honors in all three sports and earned a scholarship to play at Gadsden State.

"I knew I wanted to play basketball at Gadsden State," she said. "The team was very good, and I wanted to compete right away after high school. It was also a plus that it was 30 minutes from home."

From 2006 to 2009, Burt played basketball and softball at Gadsden State.

"We competed at a high level and made it to the conference tournament every year," she said.

In 2008 and 2009, she was selected to the All-Alabama Community College Conference First Team as well as the National Fast Pitch Coaches Association All-South Region First Team. She was the first player from Gadsden State to be named to the NFPCA First Team.

During the 2009 season, Burt led the Cardinals in every major offensive category, including a .449 batting average, 66 hits, 13 doubles, five homeruns, 38 runs, 37 RBIs and a 6.39 slugging percentage.

Burt's stats earned her a transfer scholarship to play softball at Auburn University at Montgomery in 2009, where she played for two seasons. Burt continued to be recognized for her outstanding athleticism when she was selected to the Southern States Athletic Conference Team in 2010, the All-Division Team in 2011 and the All-Academic Team in 2010 and 2011. She graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Pathology and Communication.

Following graduation, Burt landed her first head softball coaching job at Fort Payne High School, where she also served as a speech pathologist for students in the third through 12th grades. During her tenure as coach, the Wildcats had four consecutive 20-plus win seasons, three Dekalb County championships, three regional tournament berths and the school's first Class 6A Area 13 Championship. She was named Dekalb County Coach of the Year in both 2011 and 2012.

In 2015, she accepted a position in the special education department at North Jackson High School in Stevenson. She was also named the head softball coach and led the team to its first regional tournament appearance in a decade.

In 2017, she landed the position at Hewitt-Trussville High School, where her impressive 150-27-4 record earned her the national recognition, which included Feb. 24, 2022, being named Coach Taylor Burt Day by the Trussville City Council. She was also recognized on the state and regional level as the 2021 National Federation of State High School Associations' Alabama Coach of the Year and Southeast Regional Coach of the Year as well as the 2021 Alabama High School Athletic Association

7A Coach of the Year, an honor she



previously won in 2019 as well.

While the accolades are special, it's her team's successes that matter most. The Huskies have earned two state championships and two Class 7A Area 6 titles. During the 2022 season, the team was the

runner-up at the Alabama State Class 7A Softball Championship after a 2-0 heartbreaker against Thompson High School.

Burt said nine of her former players now play at the collegiate level.

"I've been very fortunate to coach a number of talented athletes," Burt said. "We have quite a few playing at the Power 5 level."

Throughout her career, she has looked back at her time at Gadsden State fondly. She said she remains close with a number of her former teammates.

"Some of my best friends to this day are friends I made at Gadsden State," Burt said. "The friendships created at Gadsden State are still with me. Even after transferring to AUM, we all stuck together. I have been in a lot of weddings, and I've been to a lot of baby showers."

Burt encourages students to consider community college to continue their education.

"Attending Gadsden State was some of the best times of my life," she said.

"I had an easy transition from high school to college. The class sizes aren't so big that your instructor has no idea who you are. A lot of kids really benefit from small class sizes. I also loved the hometown feel of the Gadsden State campus. The people at Gadsden State are great, too. Gadsden State is definitely one of the best decisions I've ever made."

FIRST-GEN STUDENT



Just because no one in your family tried before, doesn't mean you can't do it."

Being a first-generation student means that your parent(s) did not complete a four-year college or university degree, regardless of other family members' level of education.

At Gadsden State, the TRiO programs –Student Support Services, Upward Bound and Educational Talent-focus on developing and assisting first-generation, low-income or disabled students. Along with the TRiO programs, they find encouragement during the development of their education courses through the Advisement Resource Center.

Gadsden State recognized the National First-Generation College Celebration with Xun Chen, a 2021 graduate, who shared about her experiences as a first-generation Cardinal in the video below.

Nov. 8 was also chosen to honor the anniversary of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which led to Federal TRiO Programs that provide services for first-generation college students.

Many of the SSS first-gen students have succeeded in completing college and earning direct entry into the workforce or transferring to a four-year university.

[CLICK HERE](#) learn more about Gadsden State's TRiO programs!



FUTURE ADVANCEMENT



The Gadsden State Cardinal Foundation and Alumni Association are now under new leadership. John Roberson was named the director of Advancement and Alumni Relations in June. He is headquartered at the Joe Ford Center on the East Broad Campus.

“I am excited about being at Gadsden State and have thoroughly enjoyed the past four months in my new role,” he said. “I’ve learned a lot in a short amount of time from a lot of really great volunteers and supporters of the Cardinal Foundation and the Alumni Association.”

Roberson graduated from Southside High School in 2005 before going to Auburn University, where he earned a degree in public relations in 2010. He then moved to Atlanta to manage a grocery store and became very active in the Auburn Alumni Clubs of which he was elected president in 2014.

During his time as the Metro Atlanta president, he spearheaded a number of fundraisers and events, including the Auburn Ambush, which provides opportunities for Auburn alumni and friends to meet coaches while raising scholarship funds.

“I got really excited about fundraising and event planning while working with the Auburn Alumni Clubs,” he said.

In 2018, Roberson moved to Mobile, where he was the owner/operator of a Frios franchise. Again, he became active with the Auburn Alumni Club’s Mobile area chapter and was elected president in 2019. He also served as a volunteer with Restore Mobile, a historic preservation organization.

In 2020, Roberson returned to his alma mater to work towards a master’s degree in higher education administration and worked as an intern in the College of Education’s Development Office. He earned the master’s degree in May 2022.

“I knew I wanted to be in higher education, and I knew I wanted to be in advancement and resource development,” he said. “As a part of the Auburn Clubs, I enjoyed fundraising for scholarships. I knew I found my passion. Working in advancement at Gadsden State is a way for me to make a difference.”

Since joining the Gadsden State team, Roberson has made great strides in improving efforts to engage alumni and raise funds for the betterment of Gadsden State.

“I’m in an office of one so I have a lot of responsibility,” he said. “I am fortunate to have two great boards of directors for the Cardinal Foundation and the Alumni Association. I appreciate their willingness to be ‘working’ boards. It’s important that we all work together for both organizations to succeed.”

Since his employment, Roberson created new membership cards for Alumni Association members, which includes benefits and discounts from 23 partners in Calhoun and Etowah counties. Membership has increased in both the Alumni Association and Student Alumni Association.

“One important goal is to create opportunities within the Student Alumni Association that will

enable more student involvement and leadership opportunities,” he said.

Roberson has also revamped the Cardinal Foundation’s Cardinals Who Give Campaign; established a new scholarship form for simplicity and better understanding; and hosted a luncheon for Cardinal Foundation donors and students who received scholarships from the organization.

“We have seen changes and improvements within both organizations but we still have a long way to go,” he said. “We have great plans ahead of us.”

Some of Roberson’s goals include:

- Consistent communication for alumni members
- Consistent events and activities for alumni members
- Volunteer opportunities with alumni members at community and college events
- Make the Alumni Association and Cardinal Foundation more cohesive in all activities
- Establish more scholarships
- Establish more funds for greater overall impact at Gadsden State

Roberson can be reached at jroberson@gadsdenstate.edu or 256.549.8377.

For more information on the Alumni Association, visit gadsdenstate.edu/alumni

Information about the Cardinal Foundation is at gadsdenstate.edu/cardinalfoundation

THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER...



Lesa Young Osborne's focus is to build a better Gadsden through commercial recruitment and development so that Etowah County residents don't have to travel for enjoyable shopping and dining experiences.

"We are always working hard to bring new retailers to the city of Gadsden," she said. "More retailers mean more economic growth in our community."

Osborne is the director of the Gadsden Commercial Development Authority, a non-profit organization that acts as a liaison between the city and the development community as well as promotes the development of city-owned property. It also assists with tax rebates on commercial projects; guides developers through the permit process; maintains an extensive database of available development opportunities; provides demographic profiles to developers and assists in the development of

tax rebates on commercial projects.

Osborne is instrumental in completing a number of development projects such as Walmart and Coosa Town Center and, most recently, securing a deal with Olive Garden.

"I am most pleased with the Rivertrace development project in East Gadsden," she said. "It was exciting to be involved with a project for three years. It is amazing that it started as a golf course and now is a shopping hub for the people in Etowah County and beyond. It contributes to our area's economic growth and provides employment opportunities for our people."

In 1982, Osborne graduated from Gadsden State Community College with an associate degree in Banking and Finance. At that time, she was 18 and independent in search of a promising future that could provide her financial stability. She accepted a job at Exchange Bank in Stowers Hill before working in human

resources at Alacare and as a branch manager for Compass Bank. In 2000, she took a position at The Chamber of Gadsden and Etowah County as Operations and Business Development vice president and developed a love of marketing while recruiting businesses to locate in Gadsden and Etowah County.

"I am proud of the career that I've had," she said. "And, I give some of the credit to Gadsden State for providing an education that has led me to where I am today."

She said administrators, faculty and staff work together at the College to prepare students for direct entry into the workforce or transfer to a four-year university.

"It is a great jumping-off point to where you want to go," she said. "The instructors are there to give students a glimpse of what careers are out there."

An avid volunteer and community supporter, Osborne has taken many opportunities to help make Etowah



“
IT IS A
GREAT
JUMPING-
OFF POINT
TO WHERE
YOU WANT
TO GO”

-Lesya Young Osborne
1982 Gadsden State Graduate

County a better place.

“It really started with those early relationships I built at Gadsden State,” she said. “I have nurtured those relationships both professionally and altruistically.”

She is an active member of the Gadsden Kiwanis Club, spearheading numerous community service projects across the county. Every year, she is one of the ring leaders on the Pancake Patrol making the annual Kiwanis Club Pancake Day one of the world’s largest pancake event.

Osborne also plays an integral part in the Salvation Army’s partnership with the Kiwanis Club during the holidays.

“The Gadsden Kiwanis Club sponsors several families with purchases from the local Walmart,” she said. “The Club provides them with necessities to survive the winter holidays, and we provide a little Christmas cheer. It is such a joyful experience for all involved.”

Always seeking adventure and the beauty in nature, Osborne can be found most Saturdays hiking the Black Creek Trails at Noccalula Falls often picking up trash abandoned by disgraceful people who abuse nature’s playground. This disciplined activity has led her to become an active member with the Friends of the Falls, an organization created to promote the unique and scenic resources at Noccalula Falls, to develop partnerships for the enhancement of programs and services and to engage volunteers who serve as ambassadors of the park.

“I work with groups of people willing to assist with clean-up days,” she said. “I ensure that each project follows the city’s disposal process so that Noccalula Falls and surrounding areas stay as beautiful and as pristine as possible.”

It has been 40 years since she earned her Gadsden State degree, and she will always be grateful to

the College for cultivating a solid foundation that allows her to be successful in recruiting significant retailers and restaurants in the community.

“When I talk to young people, I encourage them to go forth and conquer,” she said. “I always tell them to consider getting their education and training at Gadsden State. The world is their oyster. They can certainly enhance their future with a credential to Gadsden State.”



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Members of the Gadsden State Alumni Association talk about what GSCC means to them.



2021 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARDS

The Gadsden State Community College Alumni Association honored three members of the faculty and staff and two community supporters with annual awards. They were presented Dec. 16 by Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of the College; Heather Brothers New, president of the alumni association; and Becky Watson formerly of Development, Alumni and Community Relations.

“It is an honor and privilege to honor five deserving individuals who support Gadsden State through their work as faculty and staff or through their commitment and service as volunteers,” New said. “We are working hard to grow our organization, and it can only be done through the hard work of our volunteers, faculty, staff and students. We appreciate the support.”

Three awards are historically presented to members of the faculty and staff – Outstanding Support Staff Award, Outstanding Technical Faculty Award and Outstanding Academic Faculty Award. Each winner received a certificate as well as an engraved brick that will be placed in the College’s courtyard located on the Wallace Drive Campus.



Tim Carter

Tim Carter, software analyst in Information Technology Services, is the winner of the **Outstanding Support Staff Award**.

“Tim has been a key player at Gadsden State and is the reason that many software systems and data elements have worked successfully for years,” said Watson during the award announcement.

Carter began his time at Gadsden State as a programmer in 1987. He has been instrumental in the development

of many systems, including a records system, and he assisted in the transition to Banner; the access point for student records and information now known as OneACCS. He has served several statewide committees due to his expertise in data management and system report writing, she said.

The winner of the Outstanding Technical Faculty Member is Tarina VanNatta, the instructor for the College’s FAME program located on Gadsden State’s Ayers Campus in Anniston.



Tarina VanNatta

Tarina VanNatta, the FAME program instructor on the Ayers Campus, was awarded the **Outstanding Technical Faculty**.

“She has grown the program and has had several successful graduates,” Watson said. “She cares about her students and does everything she can to influence them to be successful, productive members in Alabama’s workforce.”

VanNatta accepted the position as an Industrial Automation instructor in 2019 after working for several years in manufacturing as an assembly technician, engineering assistant, electronics lab assistant and maintenance technician. She is a 2011 Summa Cum Laude graduate of Gadsden State and is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society and National Technical Honors Society.

Fay Scott is an instructor of Office Administration and Health Information Systems Technology Management. She is the winner of the 2021 **Outstanding Academic Faculty Award**. Watson said the selection committee was moved by the fact that a student nominated Scott for the award.



Fay Scott

“The student said ‘Ms. Scott is an outstanding instructor,’” Watson said. “She goes above and beyond for her students and helps every step of the way. (The student said) Ms. Scott deserves the award because of her kindness and loving soul for her students and their future.”

In the nomination letter, the student said she has become a better person because Scott cheered her on and helped her get through life. She said, “I would not be the person I am today if she had not invested in me in the classroom.”

Two community supporters were honored during the awards presentation with the Distinguished Alumni of the Year Award and the Distinguished Service Award. Each received a certificate and engraved brick as well.



Kaycee Warsham

The **Distinguished Alumni of the Year Award** went to **Kaycee Warsham**, a 2020 graduate of the Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program at Gadsden State.

“Kaycee has volunteered many hours as a lab assistant for our current DMS students as well as the students working at the Etowah Pregnancy Center,” Watson said.

Warsham also serves as a clinical instructor at Gadsden Regional Medical

Center, where she is a registered obstetrics/gynecology sonographer.

“She is always willing to step up and fill a gap where needed to serve her community and Gadsden State students,” Watson said.



Mark Condra

The ***Distinguished Service Award*** was presented to **Mark Condra**, the past president of the Cardinal Foundation.

“Mark is a wonderful community volunteer and supporter,” Watson said.

Condra is an active member of Gadsden First United Methodist Church. He has served as the chairman of both the Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation and the membership committee for The Chamber of Gadsden/Etowah. He has served as a member of the District Committee for the Boy Scouts and the project coordinator for a four-church campaign to serve the community in school clean-up projects.

“Mark has done a wonderful job in leading the foundation and helping grow its assets,” Watson said. “He is a true leader in every way, and we are immensely honored and proud to recognize him in this momentous way.”



[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about the Alumni Association and how you can support student scholarships.



2021 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Gadsden State Alumni Association gives student scholarships each year. The Alumni Association awards scholarships annually to two currently-enrolled Gadsden State students. *The scholarships are applied toward tuition, fees and books.*



Stephanie Hamby

Stephanie Hamby is the daughter of Lisa & Howard Clark and Rodney Hamby.

She is majoring in general studies with a focus on business management.

She plans to graduate and pursue a career in finance management and human resources.



Torance “Torie” Morgan

Torance “Torie” Morgan is from Attalla and is the daughter of Matthew and Candice Morgan.

She enrolled in the surgical tech program and after graduation, Morgan would like to work as a surgical tech in an operating room.

GADSDEN STATE STUDENT EXCITED ABOUT EARNING DEGREE

Earning a college credential is one of the greatest milestones achieved in a person's life. A college education can result in a better quality of life thanks to greater success in today's job market and higher wages. For Cortney Joseph, her college degree from Gadsden State Community College is more than that. It is also proof that she can achieve all things with hard work, dedication and support from family and friends.

"Walking across that stage to get my diploma is my moment to show that I did this; I succeeded," she said. "My kids can now see that if they fight hard enough, if they work hard enough, they will achieve their goals."

Joseph shared her story as one of the student speakers at the December 2021 commencement ceremony held at Gadsden State Cherokee Arena in Centre. She was one of three student speakers to share their Gadsden State story during the ceremony.

Joseph, who lives in Centre, graduated from Gaylesville High School in 2010. She got married, enrolled in Georgia Highlands College and soon found out she was pregnant. After her daughter Aubree was born, she got a divorce. She said being a single mom who also juggled work and school wasn't easy.

In 2013, Joseph married her husband, Clay, and was accepted into the nursing program at Georgia Highlands College. When she became pregnant with their son, Parker, she temporarily withdrew from the nursing program just one semester shy of completing requirements to become a registered nurse.

Parker was born in June 2015 with a chromosomal defect and died three months later. This experience left

Joseph heartbroken and unwilling to resume her college education.

"I had to take some time to accept what I had just been through before I put myself out there again," she said. "I wasn't ready to go back to school."

When Joseph unexpectedly got pregnant again, she made the decision to stay home to raise her son, Cooper, now 5. She stayed home for the next three years until one day she made the decision to continue her education once again.

"I wanted to do something for myself," she said. "I wanted to do something that would be beneficial to me and my family, so I decided to apply to Gadsden State in 2019."

She initially wanted to be a part of the Registered Nursing Program at Gadsden State. When that didn't work out, she decided to take general studies courses.

"I didn't want to waste my acceptance to Gadsden State so I decided to go ahead and take courses that will one day transfer to a four-year university," she said.

Joseph enrolled in English 102, history and sociology courses for the 2019 fall semester. She applied to the nursing program for a second time and was rejected again. Far from being defeated, Joseph's advisor talked to her about applying to the Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program at Gadsden State.

"I researched sonography," she said. "I talked to my sonographer from when I was pregnant, and she told me that I would be great at it with all I've been through myself. I decided to go for it."

In August 2020, Joseph started the



highly-competitive DMS program with 19 other students. She said it would be hard for her to graduate without the support from her classmates.

"When you are placed in a class with 20 people, you all become more than friends. You become like family," she said. "People outside of our circle don't understand what we go through as DMS students. It can be chaotic. It can be challenging, but we all pitch in to be there for each other. We wouldn't be successful if we weren't looking out for one another. We aren't out for ourselves in the DMS program. We all want to cross that finish line together."

Rebecca Southern, the DMS program director, said Joseph was a model student. She was the president of the Cardinal DMS Society, was an embedded tutor and a member of Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society. She also earned the Student of Distinction Award and remained on the coveted President's List for a 4.0 GPA, a feat she accomplished throughout her time at Gadsden State.

"Cortney embodies the definition of a leader," she said. "She has a servant's

heart and goes above and beyond for her cohort all while setting an example of excellence. She excelled in the classroom and in her hands-on skills.”

Southern called Joseph a “unicorn” for achieving the rare accomplishment in earning certifications from the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonographers in all three modalities - vascular, abdomen and obstetrics/gynecology.

“Each individual credentialing exam takes months of preparation,” Southern said. “Many seasoned sonographers only hold one of these credentials. To obtain three before graduation is an extremely challenging feat; however, it exponentially increases their marketability when job searching.”

Joseph said earning the credentials is certainly something that makes her proud.

“I’m honored to be specialized and registered in all three modalities,” she said. “It was certainly an accomplishment I worked very hard for. I had to know everything about each modality, so I had to know all about the signs, symptoms, labs and pathology in vascular, abdomen and OB/GYN.”

Joseph said she studied a lot for the credentialing exams in addition to attending class, being a wife and mother and completing clinicals in Birmingham and Rome, Ga.

“I studied day-in and day-out,” she said. “I was very focused on those exams, and it was all worth it.”

Joseph said she earned her vascular certification on Oct. 19, her abdomen certification on Nov. 16 and the OB/GYN certification on Nov. 30. She is so happy that the pressure of achieving the certifications is over and that she can, once again, focus on her family and her new career.

“I think the toughest thing about all of this is the ‘mom guilt,’” she said. “I went from being there all of the time for my children to not getting home until 6 p.m., eating a quick dinner and then studying again. Not being there all of the time for my children was tough. It was the hardest thing for me as a mom and a student.”

She gives thanks to Clay for helping her achieve her goals.

“It was hard on my husband,” Joseph said. “He really stepped up and took care of everything from picking them up at the end of the school day to doing homework to cooking dinner. Plus, he worked full time. It was tough but we made it through.”

Thanks to her degree and credentials obtained at Gadsden State, Joseph landed a job as a sonographer at the Redmond Regional Medical Center in Rome, Ga.

“Graduating from Gadsden State is a testament that I am no longer a college drop-out,” she said. “I faced rejection twice and I still made it out of Gadsden State with a degree. I have achieved my dream. I did it!”

“

I wanted to do something for myself. I wanted to do something that would be beneficial to me and my family, so I decided to apply to Gadsden State in 2019.”



Cortney Joseph is pictured with her family – children, Cooper, 5, and Aubree, 10; and husband, Clay.

WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Brian Galimore was more than a student at Gadsden State Community College. He was a true Cardinal.

In 2018, Galimore enrolled as a first-generation college student and quickly became involved in numerous clubs and organizations. He is an award-winning tutor, is certified as a Skills Training Assistant and is a graduate of the Registered Nursing Program.

During his time at Gadsden State, Galimore was considered a non-traditional student, meaning he was not fresh out of high school; he worked while going to school; and he was financially responsible for himself and others. There are certainly challenges for non-traditional students but Galimore was determined to persevere. He knew what program he wanted to pursue but he had to figure out the best way to get there, even if it took him longer than expected.

"I had to find a balance between taking classes and earning an income to support myself and my mom," Galimore said. "I decided to finish a Certified Nursing Assistant certification which put me one step closer to my goal and covered the majority of my basic courses for RN program."

Even after acceptance to the program, Galimore found the time to serve in an official capacity for numerous clubs on campus, including the Rho Rho Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, which required him to maintain at least a 3.25 GPA. His involvement with PTK and Student Support Services landed him a position as part-time tutor to other first-generation students. He also worked as a tutor for the Cardinal Tutoring Center, which earned him a scholarship.

"Brian was always very dedicated to his studies and his goal of completing

the Registered Nursing Programs at Gadsden State," said Valerie Roberts, who worked with him in SSS. "I knew as soon as I met Brian that he was not going to give up."

Roberts said he willingly sacrificed his own time to help his fellow classmates while he worked to excel in his own courses.

"Most importantly, he always gave back to his community and Gadsden State by participating in various community service projects during his time as a GSCC Cardinal," she said.

Roberts witnessed him in various study groups, many of which he organized. He'd even show up on days classes were not in session to study more.

"I am not surprised at all that Brian Galimore accomplished his goals," Roberts said. "I am extremely proud of him and hope that his dedication and drive can inspire others to do the same."

As Galimore gained further confidence in balancing student, work and life as a Gadsden State Cardinal, he harnessed it to hold a presidential role for the Circle K Club. During his time as president, the club's membership grew exponentially.

From 2018 to 2019, he inspired members to join him in orchestrating and assisting with therapeutic parties for adults with disabilities.

"Brian was already representing himself as a professional caregiver with attention to details and engaging the attendees of the parties," said Brandy Hyatt, advisor for the Circle K Club.

As leader of the club, the members earned hundreds of volunteer service hours for these activities and others, but also mentored them with life-long lessons about the local communities' needs.



Brian Galimore on the day he received his acceptance letter into the Nursing program.

Galimore's dedication to the Gadsden Kiwanis Club and Circle K went beyond the campus and the community. He participated in two of the annual Circle K International conferences in both Disney World in Florida and at Huntsville's Space and Rocket Center. At each conference, the students learned the importance of global issues that they could address, and they participated with other Circle K International members in its volunteer efforts, such as The Mustard Seed of Central Florida, a furniture and clothing bank.

Locally, he organized the distribution of over 130 flags in the Clubview area of Gadsden, which is a volunteer service partnership with the Gadsden Kiwanis Club, an organization that supports the club's endeavors with a financial contribution.

Galimore's commitment to the College and the surrounding community did not go unnoticed by the Gadsden State Alumni Association. In 2020, he received the Outstanding Alumni



accomplishments and look forward to watching him grow as a successful registered nurse and a hard-working community supporter.”



Award for his participation in the growing student chapter of the Alumni Association, Phi Theta Kappa, the Student Government Association, Students Without Borders, the Math, Science and Engineering Club and the Circle K service organization.

Galimore also supported the community by helping build beds with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, taking part in Clean Home Alabama, assisting with the Etowah Water Festival, participating in a bowling fundraiser for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, raising money for the Ronald McDonald Foundation and volunteering for Comfort Care Hospice.



Galimore was honored with other awards throughout his tenure at Gadsden State. He received the Student of Distinction Award and Outstanding Achievement in American Literature. The Student of Distinction Award is bestowed on those who are nominated by the faculty and staff at Gadsden State, maintained a 3.5 minimum GPA, completed at least 54 credit hours by the end of the spring semester and demonstrated leadership at the college and service to the community. He remained on the President’s List every semester from 2018 to 2021.

Galimore received his RN pin at the 2022 Nursing Pinning Ceremony. He also received the Academic Achievement Award from the Health Science Division, which recognizes those students with above-average grades and performance.

“Brian Galimore is committed to our community and to Gadsden State,” Hyatt said. “He decided to reinvent himself and proves that you can do it at any age. We are proud of his





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The Gadsden State Alumni Association is an advocacy group comprised of alumni, students, faculty, staff and community supporters. Its purpose is to advance, support and promote the interests of the College, its students, the alumni and its members.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEMBER BENEFITS

Alumni Benefits in Etowah County 2022 – 2023

Free Gear Rental w/Purchase of Day Pass
@ Gadrock Climbing Gym

15% Off Lunch Purchase
@ Gadsden Variety Store and Café

10% Off (excludes alcohol)
Blackstone Pub and Eatery

10% Off Play
@ The Alley

10% off
@ The Coffee Bar

\$5 Off Vehicle Services
@ Ronnie Watkins Ford

Alumni Benefits in Calhoun County 2022 – 2023

\$10 Off Adjustments for Private Payers
@ Harrison Sports Chiropractic

10% Off Entire Purchase
@ Dang Girl, What's Poppin' Boutique

\$1 Off Regular Snowball
@ Pelican's Snowballs

10% Off Any Regular Priced Item
@ Kolectic Treasures

10% Off (excludes alcohol)
@ Coldwater Mountain Brew Pub

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