The U.S. Department of Labor announced in September that the South West Arkansas Community College Consortium, made up of seven community colleges including SouthArk, has been approved for a grant of nearly $8.5 million over the next three years. SouthArk will have the lead role in administering the grant for the consortium.

SouthArk’s portion of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant is $3.9 million, and it is designed with cutting-edge fields in mind. Partnering closely with area manufacturers, grant champions discovered the kinds of workers that these industries will need moving forward. The grant is intended to help SouthArk fulfill this need.

It will fund equipment, supplies, professional training and consultation, and about 10 new positions at SouthArk alone. As the lead college, SouthArk will be responsible for establishing the overall procedures for grant implementation, defining outcomes, assuring fiscal accountability and establishing an evaluation and reporting system.

SouthArk will update and expand its welding program, further enhance its process technology program and add a mechatronics program. Mechatronics combines the technologies of electronics and mechanical engineering.

Instruction offered will range from non-credit industry-specific training to associate’s degree programs. The associate’s degree in process technology also will transfer into a bachelor’s-degree program at Southern Arkansas University.

The timing of the grant was outstanding, president Dr. Barbara Jones said, as there will be a need for about 700 new manufacturing-industry workers in the area in the coming years, according to figures provided by the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce.

“The receipt of these funds is timely with the pending expansion of El Dorado Chemical, Clean Harbors and other area industries; impending retirements; and the challenge of recruiting a skilled workforce to our rural region,” she said. “These are high-skill, high-demand and high-wage positions that are much needed by the industries.”

The intent also is to be flexible in the way that instruction is delivered, as previous methods often do not meet the needs of the current landscape. For example, a major priority is to award college credit for previous work experience, as an encouragement to current workers to complete certifications and degrees via a faster track.

College administrators are expecting about 370 new students a year in the grant-funded programs across the seven colleges in the consortium. The other colleges are Southern Arkansas University Tech, the University of Arkansas Community College-Hope, Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas, Rich Mountain Community College, College of the Ouachitas and National Park Community College.

Four recognized

Four from SouthArk were recognized at the recent Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges’ Annual Conference in Hot Springs.

Beth Sullivan (Alumna), Dr. Jennifer Parks (Faculty) and Jamie McConathy (Staff) were noted as “Outstanding” along with Academic All-Star Josephine Harris.
The fall semester is at mid term and December candidates for graduation are submitting their applications. As anticipated, we realized a 5-percent drop in enrollment from fall 2012 at 1,652. This is a reflection of the steadily-improving economy and the availability of jobs in the area.

We have developed two new programs in the past two years to attract new students. We have developed a fully-online associate of arts degree to meet the needs of the working adults and those students who have time or travel constraints. We have updated our business and computer-information programs to meet the needs of area businesses. Our student services division has developed a recruitment and retention plan that is being implemented. All divisions of the college are reflecting on innovative ways to recruit and retain students at SouthArk.

As many have heard, a team of staff at seven community colleges in southwestern Arkansas collaborated to develop a Department of Labor grant proposal to address the need for a skilled workforce in the manufacturing sector. We were thrilled to be notified by U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor’s office that we were awarded this grant totaling more than $8.4 million. SouthArk will serve as the lead institution, receiving $3.9 million to manage the grant for the consortium and to implement programs at SouthArk in mechatronics, advanced welding and process technology. We will engage area industries in developing curriculum, training, and career ladders. It will be a busy year hiring staff and implementing the grant initiatives, and will be so beneficial to developing a state-of-the-art industry training center for our students and industries.

In closing, while we have many promising activities in store at SouthArk, we were saddened to learn of the passing of two previous employees in the past month: former welding instructor Josh Benson and former Upward Bound director Debra Mock. Both educators gave of themselves to help to educate our students. We remember them for their service to SouthArk, our students and our community.

In turn, I want to thank all of you for all you do at SouthArk, day in and day out. As stated by Albert Einstein, “Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” What we do is very worthwhile and significant. Thank YOU for your service.

**Recruiting and retention are at the forefront**

The 2013 officers of SouthArk’s chapter of Phi Beta Lambda, elected recently, are President Anne Moses, Vice President Tammie Carrier, Public Relations Director Jennifer Miletello, Fundraising Director Rachel Young, Community Service Director Jennifer Medlin, Hospitality Coordinator Hazel Hardy, Secretary Ruby Billings, Treasurer Tamara Wells, Parliamentarian Beth Moses and Historian-Photographer Capri Scharbor.

**Powder power**

Students compete in a powder-puff football game during Fall Festival in October.
The Council for Resource Development, a national professional organization dedicated to fundraising at two-year colleges, has selected SHARE Foundation as its Community College Benefactor of the Year for small rural schools.

In its 20th year, the award seeks to recognize individuals, foundations or corporations whose philanthropy have benefited community colleges. SHARE, a consistent donor to South Arkansas Community College, will be recognized officially in a banquet in Washington on Nov. 9.

Representatives of SouthArk nominated SHARE earlier this year.

“Funds provided by this local non-profit foundation have allowed the college to develop services and programs that further health education, provide student scholarships and support access to education,” South-Ark’s nominating letter read.

In 2011, SHARE awarded SouthArk a $545,000 grant to fund its Health Science Professional Development Center, which provides a myriad of professional-development opportunities as well as state-of-the-art equipment. SHARE has given more than $72,000 throughout the lifetime of the Union County Single Parent Scholarship Fund. Earlier this year SHARE also gave $6,000 to establish the Cooperating Collection of the Foundation Center of New York at the college library.

The performance and media arts department will present the one-act Christmas-themed opera “Amahl and the Night Visitors” by the Italian-American composer Gian Carlo Menotti on Dec. 19-21 at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets on Dec. 19 and 21 will be $10 for general admission seating and free for students.

The Dec. 20 performance is $50 and will include an Italian dinner before and reception after the performance. The patrons also will be included in a pre-opera discussion and a post-opera party.

“Because this opera takes place at the time of the birth of Christ, it is a perfect Christmas present—a time for families to enjoy beautiful music and a beautiful story making for an enjoyable evening together,” music director Victoria Harden said. “This is my fifth opportunity to present this wonderful opera and I think it might be the best cast yet.”

The characters are Amahl, a crippled boy (Sophia Meyer); his mother, a poor widow (Liz Slater); Kaspar, Melchior and Balthasar, the Three Kings (Steve Harrell, Ricky Green and Shelton Harden); Page (Joe Smith); shepherds (Beth Moses, Anne Moses, Rick Morgan, David Joyner and Jim Roomsburg) and various villagers (the SouthArk Choral Society).

Stage direction will be by Gary Hall. His directing and lighting design students will be responsible for many aspects of the production.

**G-P donation**

Georgia-Pacific Crossett Paper recently donates $10,000 to the Foundation for use in the process technology program.

**Tetra donation**

Tetra Technologies recently donates $5,000 to the Foundation for use in the process technology program.
Classic TV legend Jerry Mathers, who played Theodore “Beaver” Cleaver on “Leave It to Beaver,” will speak at the El Dorado Conference Center at 7 p.m. on Nov. 21, part of the eighth annual South Arkansas Community College Lecture Series. The event is free and open to the public.

“The Golden Age of Television and Media Trends Today” will include behind-the-scenes stories about “Leave It to Beaver” and other projects as well as Mathers’ thoughts on current trends in TV.

Born in 1948, Mathers began his show-business career at the age of 2 in a PET Condensed Milk commercial on “The Colgate Comedy Hour.” He continued in minor roles as a child actor throughout the dawn of television and made his movie debut in 1954 in “This Is My Love.” He went on to co-star in Alfred Hitchcock’s “The Trouble With Harry” and “The Seven Little Fois” with Bob Hope, among several other film roles throughout the mid 1950s.

Mathers reached a higher level of stardom upon being cast as the Beaver in 1957. “Leave It to Beaver” is one of the most beloved TV series of all time and often is used as a perfect example of 1950s Americana. Even though its original broadcast run ended in 1963, the half-hour comedy hardly ever has been off of the small screen since; on its 50th anniversary it was noted as the longest-running scripted show in TV history.

It also crosses cultural lines well enough that it has been shown in more than 80 countries and translated into 40 languages.

Nostalgia for the era led to a revival with “The New Leave It to Beaver” in 1984, featuring Mathers and most of the original cast. The series aired until 1989. Mathers directed some episodes.

“Leave It to Beaver” charted on Time magazine’s “100 Best TV Shows of All-Time”; Mathers himself was named as one of the most well-known individuals in TV history by People magazine.

In addition to speaking dates, Mathers still does some acting, including TV, film and stage roles. In 2007 he debuted on Broadway in “Hairspray,” portraying Wilbur Turnblad.

A type-2 diabetic, Mathers often is a spokesperson for diabetes awareness, even addressing the U.S. Congress on the topic.

Mathers’ talk will be followed by a question-and-answer session and a reception.

For additional information about the Lecture Series, call (870) 864-7156.

The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program informed college officials in October that the McWilliam House on the West Campus of South Arkansas Community College has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is the country’s official list of historically-significant properties.

The home is at the corner of Summit Avenue and Wesson Street.

The announcement comes just months after the college learned that it will receive a $200,000 grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council to begin restoring the house.