The efforts of more than 100 graduating students will be recognized at South Arkansas Community College’s Summer Commencement on Aug. 1.

State Sen. Bobby J. Pierce of District 27, made up of Calhoun and Union Counties and parts of Cleveland, Grant, Jefferson and Ouachita Counties, will be the keynote speaker. Elected in 2012, he is a member of the Senate committees on transportation, technology and legislative affairs, senate state agencies and governmental affairs, rules and resolutions and memorials. In addition he sits on the joint committees on energy, budget and budget personnel, and is a member of the Arkansas Legislative Council and Academic Facilities and Oversight Committee.

Pierce, of Sheridan, served three consecutive terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives beginning in 2006, where he was one-time speaker pro-tempore. Formerly he was a member of the Sheridan School Board for 26 years, president for 10.

He was an eight-year member of the U.S. Army National Guard and is a utility contractor and hardware-store owner. He is a member of First United Methodist Church in Sheridan; he and his wife Joan Pierce have four children and five grandchildren.

In conjunction with the South Arkansas Historical Foundation, SouthArk will host a speaking engagement by author and historian Dr. William Robison, the Origins of World War I, at 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 5 at the Library Auditorium.

The program is part of an ongoing series of history lectures co-sponsored by the SAHF and SouthArk and is free and open to the public.

The Year 2014 marks the centennial anniversary of the start of World War I. This conflict claimed the lives of more than 8.5 million soldiers and sailors. The devastating impact of this war would redraw the map.
“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language, and next year’s words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning.” (T.S. Eliot)

Summertime is an interesting time of year in the life of a college. May is usually a time to recognize our spring graduates, distinctive community members, and outstanding employees. It is the end of the financial and the academic year. It is a time that we gather data to review our outcomes and achievement of goals on a personal, course, programmatic, or divisional level. It is often a time when faculty or staff retire or relocate to other positions or places. There is closure and completion on several levels.

Summertime is also a time of renewal and revitalization. It is a time when many employees take a vacation to visit family and friends or to visit a warm or cool climate, sandy beach or majestic mountains. It is a time that is a little slower with fewer classes offered and students on campus, but it also a time when new cohorts of students begin in many of our programs. It is also a time for “cleaning house,” completing projects, planning for the upcoming year and welcoming new employees.

Summertime at SouthArk has been busy. We have awarded scholarships to new high-school graduates, selected new Ambassadors and welcomed new students into many of our health-science programs. Our Phi Beta Lambda students and automotive service students have been competing at the national level... and bringing back some awards.

We are completing two construction projects: the parking lot at Block and Summit, and Heritage Plaza. Our U.S. Department of Labor grant focused on advanced manufacturing continues to progress with curriculum revisions, equipment purchases and faculty hiring. The student services division has begun the transition process of moving from our POISE business-management system to Jenzabar. The new student portal will be unveiled in the fall. Several SouthArk employees have been elected to serve as officers at state and regional levels. Our board of trustees will retreat to make plans for the future. We are in the process of hiring new employees into several positions. And, we are testing, advising and registering students for the fall.

Our executive cabinet has experienced several changes in the past year. Dr. Jim Bullock, VP of student services, joined us last September; Dr. Belinda Aaron, VP of finance and administration, in April; and Dr. Holly Ayers, VP of learning, on July 1. We appreciate all that our previous leaders contributed to the development and growth of SouthArk, and look forward to the future with this new team of leaders in place.

The life of the college is a cycle of beginnings and endings that lead us to our ultimate goal of graduates who are educated and enriched, successful employees in the workplace, wage-earners for themselves or families and contributing citizens in their communities.

Thank you all for another successful year at SouthArk. We look forward to a new year filled with many new beginnings and opportunities for the future.

Personality seminar is set for September

The seminar Understanding Personality Styles and Their Significant Impact, with Dr. Tim Frazier of Skillpath Seminars, is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sept. 25 in Room 12 of the Center for Workforce Development.

The session is designed to teach participants how to administer personality assessments and the importance of identifying and communicating with different personality styles.

Frazier has both a doctor’s degree and master’s degree in organizational leadership and management, and a bachelor’s degree in communication.

The cost is $325 and includes a workbook. Register by contacting dean Jamie McConathy at (870) 864-7193 or jmcconathy@south-ark.edu.
Two new vice presidents on job after retirements

Two new vice presidents have joined SouthArk in recent months after the retirements of Dr. Val Cantu and Lathan Hairston. Cantu retired in June; Hairston in March. They have been succeeded by Dr. Holly Ayers, who came to SouthArk from Ozarka College in Melbourne, and Dr. Belinda Aaron, who came here from Louisiana State University-Alexandria.

Rathbun receives appointment

Bookstore manager Linda Rathbun recently was approved as the Arkansas representative to the Southwest Bookstore Association Board of Trustees, a three-year appointment that will begin in October.

Other states represented are Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The board also has positions for at-large, associate book, associate non-book and three executive board members.

Outstanding employees recognized at ceremony

The annual Employee Recognition Ceremony was held in May. Outstanding Employee Awards went to security officer Carl Blake (classified staff), adviser Dr. John Spencer (professional staff), surgical technology director Kellye Young (Health and Natural Sciences Division faculty), English professor Scott Larkin (Liberal Arts Division faculty) and Secondary Technical Center instructor Beverly Land (Business and Technical Division faculty). Land was selected as the overall faculty winner.

SPEAKER

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of Europe and destroy the ruling dynasties of Austria-Hungary, Russia, Turkey (Ottoman Empire) and Germany. The controversial peace process would lay the foundation for an even more devastating conflict: World War II.

Robison is the history department chair at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. An expert on British history, he is the co-author of “The Tudors on Film and Television” (2013). He is the editor of “Historical Dictionary of Stuart England” (1995) and “Historical Dictionary of Late Medieval England, 1272-1485” (1998).

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Union County Community Foundation.

President’s Award

Charlie Thomas reacts as he is announced as the recipient of the Spirit of South-Ark President’s Award during Spring Commencement at the El Dorado Conference Center in May. Thomas is a longtime member of the boards of both South Arkansas Community College and its educational foundation, and is a former faculty member. Surrounding him are, from left, board member David Ross and vice presidents Dr. Belinda Aaron and Dr. Jim Bullock.
Cobb commits to success

Ex-convict uses education as springboard to better life

Kendal Cobb’s is the kind of success story that is everything that higher education, and South Arkansas Community College, wants to be about.

With his warmhearted handshake and friendly smile, most people wouldn’t guess that Cobb, 30, is a former prison convict.

“After finishing high school I had the dream to become a successful person,” he said. “However, I started off on the wrong foot and did not realize that the dream would become a nightmare that would take me to places that would cause heartache and misery, and loss of valuable time.”

Cobb said that while taking this path, he fathered a daughter and realized that this “nightmare” would prevent yet another child—his own—from having a father figure.

That didn’t sit well with him.

Cobb reformed and became a counselor while still behind bars.

Following completion of his sentence he went to work at a substance-abuse rehabilitation facility, but with a wife and child, he needed the financial stability of a better-paying job.

So he enrolled in college, finding SouthArk’s welding program to be appealing because of its hands-on nature, and the job market in this field.

To say that Cobb excelled would be an understatement.

“With strong will and determination I became not just a better student, but a better person, husband and father, and a role model,” Cobb said. “I was driven to learn my craft to the best of my ability. Staying focused, I earned several welding certificates as well as my Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy certificate. My dream became a reality in two short years.”

Cobb graduated with a technical certificate in welding technology in May—even was selected as the standard-bearer for all graduates in the Business and Technical Division—and was hired as a welder by El Dorado’s Therma-Flite only a few weeks later. He said that he couldn’t be happier.

“I now have a job to help support my family and remain true to the God I love,” Cobb said. “I have the confidence of knowing I can succeed without limitations. I hope this is just the beginning, with many doors opening beyond this point.”

PBL chapter takes national awards

Several members of SouthArk’s Phi Beta Lambda chapter won awards at the PBL National Leadership Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in June.

The team of Jill Spencer and Janice Shelton placed third in community service and Jennifer Miletello was third in computer applications. Ryan Crawford was seventh in networking concepts and eighth in computer concepts. The team of Mike Roberts, Justin Hollingsworth and Logan Stratton was ninth in network design and Spencer was 10th in client services.

The chapter also received seventh place in the annual business report category.