

Terrific Teachers

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real world into the classroom. “So we have an algebra teacher or geometry and a carpentry teacher in the same class,” said Carver Academy Principal Dr. Kenneth Butta. “The goal is to integrate the hands-on practical with keeping kids interested in things.”

Butta explained how skills learned at Carver can be used not only in the particular occupation chosen by a student, but in other disciplines as well.

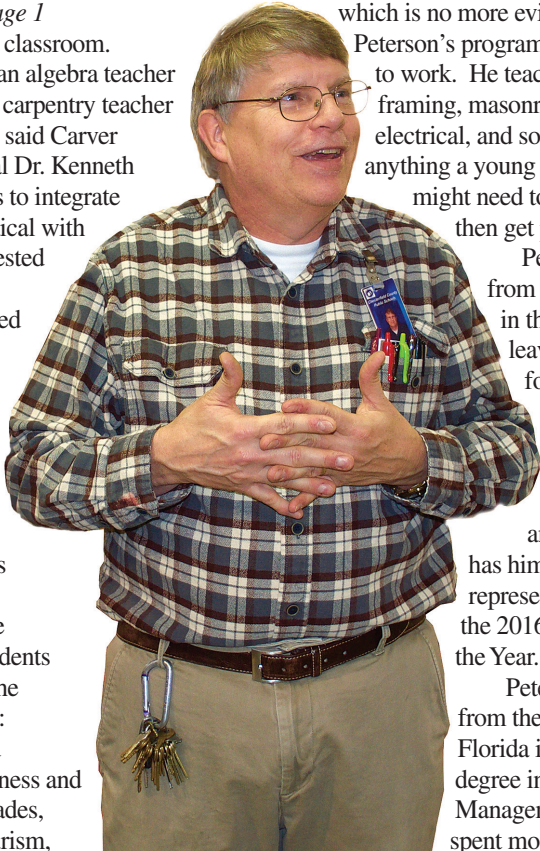
“We have five academies that students apply to from all the other high schools: culinary arts, child development, business and IT, construction trades, hospitality and tourism, and recreation and sports leadership,” said Butta.

“As an example, in our culinary students start with a food handler’s certificate then they go for serve safe manager’s certificate and then on to the culinary certificate through the American Culinary Institute.”

All of the trades, including Peterson’s class, are participating in an overarching project that is being built in the courtyard of the school. Butta said when the greenhouse is finished it will have raised planting beds.

“The construction kids build it, the culinary kids come in and harvest vegetables, they’ll have eggs to use in class to prepare things; child development students are partnering with childcare centers and elementary students. It’s a real practical way of teaching,” Butta said.

The skills taught at Carver Academy are hands-on and can be used just about as soon as a student gets out of high school,



which is no more evident than how Peterson’s program gets kids ready to work. He teaches wood framing, masonry, plumbing, electrical, and some of just about anything a young tradesman might need to get started and then get proficient with.

Peterson works from dawn to late in the evening, not leaving much time for a social life, he admits, but his work ethic and care for his students and colleagues has him currently representing Carver as the 2016-17 Teacher of the Year.

Peterson graduated from the University of Florida in 1987 with a degree in Construction Management and has spent most of his career as a contractor building

restaurants such as Applebee’s. He is a Class A contractor with many years of experience in both commercial and residential construction.

He said he has always been into carpentry, building, and cabinetry “you name it.”

“I built about 260 Applebees across the country. I had my own company for 11 years. The Applebee’s down the street I built a long, long time ago and then it wasn’t fun anymore,” Peterson said.

As the economy went south at the end of the last decade Peterson decided to move on and get into something a little less stressful. Now, he’s having a blast, he says.

“I truly believe everything happens for a reason. If you had told me I would have been teaching [at this point in my life], I would have told you you were crazy, but it is the best thing that I have ever done.”



SHARON NORQUIST CLEANING THE 1749 BELL.

The 1749 Bell

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the Liberty Bell by three years, has been restored to its original glory.

“First it was mounted on the front porch of the original courthouse, then it went on the 1917 courthouse for 100 years, and now it’s come full circle,” said Liess van der Linden-Busse, chairman of the Library and Centennial Committees for the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia.

In 2015, Buddy Cranford climbed to the cupola and took photos of the bell. It was looking its age. Eighty percent of what was supposed to be a black painted bell was covered in white paint from years of maintenance of the cupola itself.

Sharon Norquist of Norquist Conservation Studio LLC said the bell should not be used as it was in the past. It is apt to crack. When a new Chesterfield County Courthouse was built in 1917, and the bell was mounted in an open-sided cupola high above the 100-year-old courthouse. Norquist’s job was to clean it and stabilize it.

Norquist, who has a master’s in object conservation, came to Chesterfield to restore the bell, a painstaking job in which she used a scalpel, light chemicals, and special protective restorative paint.

“I travel to the object because it’s safer for the object,” Norquist said.

As she was finishing her third and final day on the job, she had yet to find the “maker’s mark” on the bell which would show where the bell was made and who made it.

The historic bell will now reside in the Chesterfield museum with other local artifacts and periodic exhibits.

Where will Norquist work next?

“I’ll be working on radios for the national air and space museum,” she said. “But being a metals specialist I get into technical objects, of course, even this bell was designed to function”

The October ceremony will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1917 courthouse.

The Historical Society as well as other departments in the county are currently working on the program.

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