

TALKBACK

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Bush and war

In response to "at least Bush prayed a lot" - he should have. Look at all the young Americans he sent to their death over something he was told was not there.

Tea parties

Thanks to Lori and her mom for the wonderful tea parties they give once a month for the residents of Croff House. There are good prizes and food. We also get to see each other and have a great time. Much love and appreciation.

Widen roads

Two of the busiest roads in Aiken need to be widened; Dougherty Road and the bypass need to be four lanes. They are the only cut-through roads from one side of Aiken to the other. I hope this is in the planning stage. Please, I am certainly not the first, last or only person to realize this need.

Water issues

We have state laws that require gas pumps are tested to give a gallon of gas. But what about the water meters? Have the meters in Graniteville ever done anything about this?

They say the Avondale Mills Water System is losing money but it got a huge settlement from the railroad. It needs to upgrade its own water system.

Avondale never maintained its systems.

Workmanship

Why is cost up and workmanship down?

Odell break-ins

The break-ins at the H. Odell Weeks Activities Center are because people put their purses under their seats. They shouldn't complain - they should do something about it.

Wake up!

The phrase "wake up" has lost its meaning. Everyone keeps saying it. Give it up already.

Clunkers

Clunker engines are disabled and the car is scrapped; there is no resale.

Call our TalkBack hotline at (803) 644-2384 and leave your message, or e-mail it to us at editorial@aikenstandard.com. Readers' names are not necessary and will not be published in the newspaper. Comments should be brief and to the point, and the Aiken Standard reserves the right to edit for space and content.

# Aiken Tech welcomes students of all ages and all walks of life

By ROB NOVIT  
Senior writer

Aiken Technical College held an orientation session for students and parents Friday morning, and while Grant McConaghy waited for the program to begin, several people asked him about his child's schedule for classes that began Monday.

"That's kind of fun," said McConaghy, 58, who is returning to school for the first time since 1969. He works for a nonprofit "and the economy is a huge part of it," he said. "I need to make money and want to learn new skills, perhaps in HVAC or other things like that."

ATC will enroll a record 3,150 students this semester, a 14 percent increase over 2008 and a 24 percent jump since 2007. The average age is around 25, but the student population includes significant numbers of adults in their 30s and older.

"We're pleased to be able to serve people at different points in their lives and help them reach their goals," said ATC President Dr. Susan Winsor. "The distribution of ages is not uncommon where so many people are seeking extra skills or going back to work."

The larger numbers, however, have put the technical college at near capacity, said Dr. Jim Schmidt, vice president for student services.

"A lot of two-year colleges are dealing with this," he said. "Some are just opening their doors and adding classes. We've been doing some planning, as there's only so much we can really handle. We're kind of at the max in terms of what we're



Staff photo by Rob Novit

After 26 years away from the classroom, Marsha Baughman has enrolled at Aiken Technical College to study nursing. She brought her grandson Blake to an orientation program Friday.

able to do. But our (registration) system is really clean, and students haven't had to wait too long."

With the increased enrollment, ATC is starting to outgrow its facilities at a time when budget shortfalls are impacting the college's ability to hire faculty, Winsor said. Another state budget cut is expected within the next few weeks, but ATC officials anticipated it and have contingency funds in place. Still, the college has fewer full-time instructors and support staff than it did a year ago.

"These are interesting

"Raven fell in love with the nursing floor," her mom said. "The way it's set up, it has a feel of actually being in a hospital with hands-on experience. This will be the fastest way for her to get her career started."

Marsha Baughman hasn't been in school in 26 years but got her GED five years ago. She too is headed to the nursing program and, for the orientation session, brought along Blake, her 17-month-old grandson.

"I haven't worked in five years, and it's time to go back to school," Baughman said. "I want to get a good job and give Blake things and start a college fund and let him know it's important for him to go to college."

Aiken Technical College will need its students' best efforts, Winsor told them in her welcoming remarks. The faculty and staff focus on those things the students need to be successful.

"We're proud of the staff we have here," Winsor said. "They are talented people, and, if you ask for help, they will give it to you. We're in this journey together, and I assure you we care about you deeply."

After finishing high school 20 years ago, Renee Campbell has worked as a self-employed travel agent. The last two years have been stressful in a difficult economy, and that in part has encouraged her to enroll at ATC.

"I've been thinking about being a nurse for 10 years but kept putting it off," Campbell said. "My husband gave me a push and here I am. My daughters are getting excited, and I'm excited. I'm ready to get started."

# Reverend to roam Rome for a year

By SUZANNE R. STONE  
Staff writer

The Rev. Jeffrey Kirby, parochial vicar at St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church, will soon be moving on, but he's leaving his words behind for local readers.

Kirby's two-year tenure at St. Mary ends in September, and he met with the Most Rev. Robert Guglielmo, bishop of the Diocese of Charleston, in May to discuss options for his new assignment. It was decided and announced in late May that Kirby's next placement will be to Rome for a year of studies in moral theology toward a licentiate degree.

"I discussed what would happen when my two-year assignment here was up; we talked about my education, my pastoral experience and the needs of the diocese and plans for the future," Kirby said. "It was announced in May that I'll be leaving, and that's early, but he wanted to give us time for the transition."

Kirby, 34, is originally from Columbia. At age 26, he contemplated a career in law but decided to give seminary a try instead and was ordained on July 27, 2007. He holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in

philosophy from Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, and a bachelor's degree in sacred theology from Gregorian University in Rome. He spent the first three months in the priesthood assigned to a church in Clemson and has been at St. Mary Help of Christians ever since.

"The licentiate is a licensing in a specialized field of theology. Basically it means if I teach or write, people will know I've been trained in that area," said Kirby. "Training like this, it will always be for duties in addition to parish work - in South Carolina there will always be parish work. But I think I'll probably need it for teaching duties."

Kirby has already done some writing. In addition to several articles and pamphlets, he has just released his first book, "Encountering the Lord in His Holy Court: A Walk Through St. Peter's Basilica."

Published by Signo Press, a division of Requiem Press in Bethune, the book will be available in softcover in stores in late August with a \$14.95 cover price.

Kirby was the guest of honor at a reception, book signing and presentation Tuesday evening at the Aiken Center for the Arts.



Staff photo by Suzanne Stone

The Rev. Joseph Kirby gave a presentation and signed copies of his new book Tuesday evening. Kirby will leave Aiken for Rome in September.

"It's the story of the Christian faith told through St. Peter's Basilica, using all the parts of the basilica. I thought it was important to retell the Christian story in a different way. Sometimes we need art and beauty to remind us of what we already know," he said. "It took about a year to write the manuscript and about three years to get it through the publication process. I want to write some more as my parish duties let me, but parish duties always come first."

Kirby will return to South

Carolina after his year of studies in Rome is completed in June but does not know where in the state his next assignment will be. A return to Aiken is not out of the question, however.

"Aiken is a beautiful city, a welcoming community - it's just good people," Kirby said. "It's bittersweet. I'm so happy to go to Rome for more studies, but I also will very much miss Aiken and St. Mary's."

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# Ex-attorney remembered by friends, community

By MIKE GELLATLY  
Staff writer

Described by friends and colleagues alike as a true Southern gentleman and someone always willing to help, Robert M. Bell of Aiken died Thursday.

Bell, the County attorney for a quarter of a century and public servant for more than 30 years, is a well known name in Aiken County and a man who will be missed.

"I remember him as a true statesman, a guy who cared for the County as well as being the attorney," said Ronnie Young, chairman of Aiken County Council. "Someone who had a personal affection for Aiken County."

Bell completed his undergraduate work at the University of South Carolina in 1958 then went on to USC law school and graduated in 1965.

Bell began his service to his county in 1976 as a member of the Aiken County Planning Commission and as a member of the then-titled Aiken County Crippled Children's Society.

He sat on the Highway Commission from 1982-86. His work was so appreciated that Robert M. Bell Parkway was named to honor him.

"I've known of him my entire life. ... He was absolutely one of the most honest, professional people I have ever met," said friend and Councilwoman LaWana McKenzie. "He always tried to do what was best. When he gave you an answer, he always tried to give you all sides of an argument."

McKenzie believes the people of Graniteville will miss Bell since he served their legal needs for many years.

"He was a true friend, very giving. You could see his heart," she added.

For 25 years, Bell was the county attorney (1982-2007) and served on the executive committee for the South Carolina Democratic Committee from 1980-86. He was a member of the South Carolina Board of Chiropractic Examiners from 1978-80, and a member of the Aiken County Planning Commission from 1976-80.

His work one-on-one with people changed lives. One of those lives was that of Jeffrey Sawyer, a former Aiken resident who is now attorney in Memphis, Tenn.

"The first time I met him I was a senior in high school," Sawyer said. "He presented me with an award there. From the moment I saw him, he was one of those guys you can say 'he's got it.'"

Sawyer had found a mentor, who became his teacher and then a friend. Bell inspired Sawyer to get into law, as he had "for the right reasons."

"He loved life, he loved to travel, loved to eat," Sawyer said. "First and foremost, in my mind, he is just a Southern gentleman."

The funeral service will be conducted Sunday at 3 p.m. at St. John United Methodist Church in Graniteville. The interment will follow at the Graniteville Cemetery. Friends may call at Napier Funeral Home Saturday evening from 5 to 7 p.m.