Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting
Highlights Work of the Archway Partnership’s
Education, Business and Industry Workgroup
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On January 28, 2013, over 200 residents gathered at the Grady Cultural Center to celebrate the accomplishments of the Chamber of Commerce over the past year and to recognize community members for their service. The featured program for the event provided an overview of the collaboration between the Grady County School System and local higher education institutions as part of the Archway Partnership.

David McCurry, Cairo High School Principal, moderated the program which consisted of a panel of three local college presidents. He noted that the community has been engaged in the University of Georgia’s Archway Partnership over the past year, and through the Archway process, “Education for a Quality Work Force” was identified as one of four top priorities in the community.

To address this topic, an issue work group was formed, consisting of stakeholders from educational institutions, business and industry, community members and local and state agencies. These leaders have come together to focus on such topics as the College and Career Academy, dual enrollment, work force training, academic programs, continuing education and professional development, to name a few.

Chadd Mathis, Executive Director of the Chamber, stated that “this initiative has sparked greater community collaboration throughout the educational and business sectors and the Chamber is pleased to present this collaboration as tonight’s program.”

Representatives of the higher education institutions participating on the panel included:
Dr. Richard Carvajal, President, Bainbridge College
Dr. Craig Wentworth, President, Southwest Georgia Technical College
Dr. Gary Bonvillian, President, Thomas University

Each panelist provided information on their current enrollment; the number and types of certificate, diploma and degree programs they offer; their three most popular programs; new, emerging or showcase programs; and partnership programs in Grady County such as dual enrollment, workforce training for local employers, and the future College and Career Academy.

McCurry summarized the contributions of the partnership by saying “This collaboration has provided an enhanced platform of greater opportunities for our Grady County students in terms of high quality academic programs, workforce training access and unlimited course potential. Additionally, the work group’s assistance with the applications for both College and Career Academy and the Cairo High School Charter provide even greater access for cutting edge collaborations and academic flexibility.”

Advancing Community Priorities: “Education for a Quality Workforce” was identified by the Grady County Archway Partnership Executive Committee as a priority issue for their work plan. Regular meetings between the educational institutions and local business and industry representatives have resulted in numerous examples of collaboration that benefit all the partners and provide the mechanisms for enhancing workforce development.