



**Jasper County officials, school administrators, and students joined Jones County Junior College administrators to announce a new partnership that will benefit every graduating high school senior in Jasper County.**

Left to right are those who were on hand for the announcement at the Bay Springs Rotary Club meeting: (Back row-left to right) Dr. Jesse Smith, President JCJC; Bennie Hales, JCJC Board of Trustees; Senator Haskins Montgomery; Supervisor Curtis Gray; Supervisor Lonnie Thigpen; Supervisor Johnny Rowell; Superintendent Warren Woodrow; Sylva Bay Senior Randy Odom; Charles Holder, CEO of Hol-mac Industries; and Joseph Fail, President & CEO of Fail Engineering and TEC-Bay Springs Telephone. (Front row-left to right) Heidelberg High School Principal Rosie Ducksworth; East Jasper Superintendent Dr. Gwendolyn Page; Heidelberg High School Senior Jalesa Bender; Stringer Attendance Center Senior MacKenzie McAlpin; Bay Springs Senior? Jelisa Payton; Heidelberg Academy Senior Amber Thatch; and Heidelberg Academy Counselor Cythia Pouncey.

**Jasper County Supervisors Make College a Reality for Jasper County Graduates**

BAY SPRINGS - Opportunity is knocking on the door of every high school senior in Jasper County right now thanks to a recent investment made by the Board of Supervisors. The board announced a new tuition guarantee program in partnership with Jones County Junior College that will allow every graduating senior in Jasper County the opportunity to attend JCJC tuition-free.

We (Jasper County supervisors) were all for this, said Jasper County District 5 supervisor, Curtis Gray. We were talking about our budget, and I said we have

to remember our youth. They will put back into the community by working. With this tuition guarantee they will have a better opportunity to get an education than I.

The announcement was made at a Bay Springs Rotary Club meeting on Monday at City Hall in Bay Springs. Dozens of guests attended the gathering, including county officials and JCJC representatives. It is an impressive statement coming from the supervisors that they recognize that college education is the best medicine for an ailing economy. They have helped to create a pathway for citizens to be successful, said Dr. Jesse Smith, JCJC President.

Smith believes county outreach is a top priority of the college. The relationships we are building with the leadership in Jasper County and our college's increased services and support, have paid off tremendously. We are in a win-win partnership with the residents and leadership of Jasper County, he added.

JCJC administrators have worked cohesively over the past year to increase the visibility of the college and its support services in Jasper County. This fall, Jasper County enrollment numbers increased 18% for freshmen and sophomores from fall 2008. Enrollment increased an impressive 58% for first time college freshmen coming from Jasper County. The Jasper County Learning Center, college recruiting efforts, and online college courses have contributed largely to that increase, according to JCJC Academic Dean Dr. Shannon Campbell.

We have a responsibility to keep people informed about what services we provide and what opportunities are available through JCJC. In addition to those of us on campus, we have a support staff at the Jasper County Learning Center devoted to that purpose, said Campbell.

The new tuition guarantee program promises additional enrollment growth from Jasper County students. Various construction projects are ongoing at the college's main campus in Ellisville that will accommodate future growth. Jones Hall, a 69,000 square foot academic facility is among the college's current construction projects.

In addition, the Jasper County Learning Center will soon be offering a liberal arts degree in a convenient format for students who have to overcome distance barriers to attend college five days a week. Enrolled students can currently utilize the learning center in Jasper County for online course work and attend a handful of classes in Bay Springs.

Jasper County leadership has put a college education within the reach of every graduating senior. That is a tremendous step toward the future success of the district. Our short-term and long-term objectives as a college focus on providing convenient and accessible solutions to our students, said Campbell.

The new tuition guarantee program begins with the class of 2010 high school graduates. Students from Bay Springs High School, Stringer Attendance Center, Heidelberg High School, Sylva Bay Academy, and Heidelberg Academy are all eligible. To be eligible, students need to submit a JCJC general admissions application and a federal financial aid (FAFSA) application by May 1, 2010. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.5 to keep the tuition scholarship, which is limited to four or five semesters depending upon the program of study. Any other scholarships received by students will be applied to the balance. The office of business affairs is managing the program.

Rick Youngblood, JCJC Vice-president of Business Affairs, is ready for the anticipated increase of students from Jasper County Schools. I'm proud of the Jasper County supervisors for stepping up to the plate as they help further the education for some who would not otherwise have gone to college. We are looking forward to inspiring greatness in them as JCJC students, Youngblood stated.

JCJC is one of the fifteen two-year colleges in Mississippi. The college offers over 100 associate degree options and has 27 career and technical programs. This fall, the college had a record enrollment 5,573 students.

Several counties passed tuition guarantee programs across the state in 2008. Jasper County is the first county to create the program in the JCJC district.

According to recently published reports and other community college websites, the following counties in Mississippi have tuition guarantee programs for high school graduates: Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Chickasaw, Pontotoc, Clay, Lowndes, Oktibbeha, Noxubee, Kemper, Lauderdale, Union County, Calhoun County, and Lafayette County.

More Mississippi counties have recently approved or are in the process of approving a tuition guarantee program for the 2010 school year for high school graduates.

Additional details on the Jasper County tuition guarantee program will be made available this fall on the college's website, [www.jcjc.edu](http://www.jcjc.edu).