



SAYING GOODBYE TO VALUED CHARGER COLLEAGUES



Tavarous Hodges, like the TV sitcom the Jeffersons, is moving on up to the Eastside! His piece of the pie is being selected as APS' High Schools Operations Manager stationed at Carver High School. Hodges' new role will add heft to his already considerable knowledge about facility operations and processes. Working for 17 years in the shipping business at UPS, Yancey Caterpillar, and Keystone is where he acquired a strong work ethic. His performance at RBMS proves dedication, diligence, and remarkably maintaining a building can move your career forward.

Hodges is a native Atlantan, graduated from Frederick Douglas High School and attended Atlanta Area Technical School. He is married with two children. Interior design and home renovation are his leisure pursuits. His infectious smile and professionalism will be missed. Hodges moves to his new role at the end of the school year.



Kathy Ojore is one of RBMS's longest serving educators. For more than two decades, she has performed as a 7th grade Language and Literature (ELA) teacher. She will officially transition into retirement on May 27th. Ojore said, "Bunche has always had a fantastic group of educators. I have also had the privilege of teaching some awesome students." Her RBMS colleagues consider her fantastic as well! Born in Flint, Michigan, but raised in Atlanta, Ojore is a product of APS, attended Morris Brown College and Georgia State University.

She is married to Dr. Abayomi Ojore who is also an educator. "We have a blended family of 5 adults who are out on their own. Their professions range from professional musician to dentist." Ojore said she is looking forward to traveling and spending time with her grands. Yard work and gardening are her free time hobbies.



If **Dr. Michael L. Taylor** had a custom bumper sticker, it would probably say, *No Time To Sit Around Doing Nothing*. This renaissance man has achieved a lot during his life. He served in the Air Force, National Guard, earned (5) degrees and completed Turnaround School Principal Training at Harvard University. Unfortunately, Bunche will lose this accomplished 6th Grade administrator when he retires from APS on June 30th. He has served at RBMS for seven years.

Dr. Taylor and wife Jestine recently purchased a new residence in Florida. In addition to enjoying Florida's surf and sand, he plans to work on his tentatively titled book, *Raising Emily's Boys*, which will focus on, "a collective effort to keep black men on the payroll, educated, or owning a business, and out of prison." The book title is in homage to his mother whose name is Emily. Taylor and Jestine are avid travelers. He also enjoys watching sports, movies, and reading.



Welcome
Amber Britman
Computer Technology
Specialist

THE VALUE OF GRANDMOTHERS

What children need most are the essentials Grandmothers provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, kindness, patience, humor, comfort and life lessons. Grandmothers are also a valuable resource at every school. They serve as a secondary contact for student records, which aids attendance and combats truancy. They, more often than not, can also be depended upon to volunteer at school when asked.



8th Grader Joe Boyd and his grandmother Barbara Boyd

CHARGERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

DIANA HARRIS Always knew teaching would be her calling. “As a child, I had a reading comprehension problem, so school was difficult. I had a teacher who taught me with love and kindness. Once that seed was planted, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I yearned to help other students. When I decided to get my Middle Grades teaching degree, I chose Science and Language Arts as my two main areas.” Why science? “Because Science is fun, it’s constantly changing with new discoveries. With Language Arts, I knew I could reach many students who have the same comprehension issues I had,” Harris said. She has taught at RBMS for 3 years.

She moved around a lot due to school, the military and life in general. Harris worked as a Communication Officer in the U.S. Navy for 10 years and was a Software Engineer for 5 years. She earned a Humanities Degree at Oregon Institute of Technology, a Software Engineer certificate at Oregon Institute of Technology, a Middle Grades Teaching Degree at Clayton State University and a Masters in Teaching/Learning, Curriculum Design Degree at Keiser University in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Harris is originally from Pine Native American Reservation in North Dakota and is a member of the Porcupine Tribe, Oglala Lakota. According to her, “I have three wonderfully odd, weird, and eccentric grown children.” Gardening, reading, motorcycle adventures, cooking/baking and hiking are her leisure pursuits.



COREY DONERLSON, SR. Prior to becoming a Health & Physical Education teacher at RBMS 4 years ago, Donerlson worked as a sports radio host for an ESPN affiliate in Maryland, toiled as a sports editor for Atlanta Voice Newspaper and became a sports columnist for another newspaper company in New Jersey. Before working in journalism, he played minor league baseball and arena football. Donerlson is also a poet and DJ. Additionally, he has 25 years of teaching experience. “I chose to become a teacher as a way to instill truth and life lessons to youth that will make them better people and become leaders in society. Every day I have an opportunity to have a positive effect on my students,” said Donerlson.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Donerlson attended Frederick Douglas High School and Clark Atlanta University. He and his wife have two children. His leisure activities include eating healthy, exercising, spending time with family, doing sports research, playing sports and learning to fulfill his purpose in life. When asked what gets him up raring to go each day, Donerlson responded, “My love of my family and knowing that each day is a day to give the best that you have.”



LATOYA RHEASYLVIA BENJAMIN-THOMPSON During the beginning of the pandemic, Ms. Benjamin became Mrs. Benjamin-Thomas. “I’m actually going home to St. Croix for a bigger wedding this June and I am planning on having children very soon.” The newlyweds met while attending college in her husband Sydney’s lovely hometown, St. Thomas, VI. She is from St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands and has been in Atlanta for 2 years. “I grew up with a love of math while my classmates struggled. I would always offer help and they would come to understand. This is when I knew teaching was my calling. I wanted to help struggling students have an understanding of math,” she said.

Her higher education pursuits began with obtaining a Bachelor Degree in Elementary Education at the University of the Virgin Islands with a concentration in Math, English and Science. Similarly, she earned a Master’s Degree from Walden University in Middle School Mathematics, with a concentration in curriculum development. Benjamin-Thompson is considering applying to earn a doctorate. She admits that while she is an island girl who can’t swim, she does enjoy gazing at the beach waves. Watching movies and going on hikes is how Mrs. Benjamin-Thompson relaxes her mind.



KENNETTE BLACKMAN “The opportunity to work with a dynamic team of leaders and teachers, and provide opportunities for students that they would otherwise not have access to due to circumstances outside of their control,” is what she likes most about being the International Baccalaureate Coordinator (IB) at RBMS. An IB coordinator is responsible for implementing the objectives of the program, management of staff, professional development, and teaching practices. Blackman believes education is the great equalizer and said, “I want to do my part to ensure all students receive a quality education, as well as academic opportunities to achieve their career goals.” She earned a Master’s Degree in Public Administration as well as a Bachelor Degree in History. Blackman has served at RBMS since 2015. She relaxes by taking walks in the great outdoors and spending time with her husband and two sons.



CHARGERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

NICOLE GRAY Revealed she chose to become a teacher because, "I grew up with very supportive and loving teachers throughout my K-12 grade education. Specifically, my music teachers always knew how to push me to become a stronger person and musician even when I succeeded, or felt like I had failed. I want to provide the same support I received as a student to our students at Bunche. In the Fall of 2019, she nominated 6 of her top band students to participate in APS-wide Honor Band and 2 of her top orchestra students to participate in APS-wide Honor Orchestra. Unfortunately, two other performance events for her students to participate in were canceled due to Covid-19.

She is originally from a farming town in Stoughton, Wisconsin. Gray migrated south to Atlanta a few months after she earned a Bachelor Degree in Music Education (Instrumental and General Certifications), as well as a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish Language at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Gray will receive a Masters of Music Education Degree upon graduation from the University of Georgia in July 2021! A gym workout one day, going on a long walk in Piedmont Park the next, or a hike somewhere in Georgia are the strategies she employs to relieve stress. To her, "Getting moving is key." Solving jig-saw puzzles, binge-watching TV shows, and practicing her instruments are her free-time actions.



ATLANTA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS RECOGNIZES CHARGER EXCELLENCE

SHAKINA JONES
2019-2020
TEACHER OF THE YEAR



If Ms. Jones had followed her initial decision to become a lawyer, being selected by her peers as Teacher of the Year and honored by the District for that worthy designation, RBMS would have missed out in having her mathematical acumen as the school's Gifted Math Teacher/Master Teacher Leader. "My first career choice was to become a lawyer. I changed my mind after watching TV shows where lawyers were killed for putting criminals away." That shrewd insight supported Jones' choosing to use her natural gifts to, "Equip minority students with the math skills needed to become more marketable in their future careers." For the past 15 years, she has used her mathematics expertise to prepare RBMS 6th-8th grade students for career opportunities.

Jones is originally from Dublin, GA and moved to Atlanta in 2006. She earned a Bachelor Degree in Education with a Concentration in Math/Science at Albany State University and an Instructional Tech & Education Master's Degree at American Intercontinental University. Traveling, binge watching her favorite TV shows, playing brain stimulating games and sharpening her skills in the kitchen are her leisure interests. The brain stimulating games likely helped her and other family member's appearance on the *Family Feud with Steve Harvey!* Her family answered the questions earnest enough to advance to the fast money round. The opposing family knocked them out of the final round by "hitting the button first." Still, being selected to appear on the show and making it to the final competition round will remain a cherished experience of a lifetime.

MAURICE HART
2019-2020
SUPPORT STAFF
OF THE YEAR



Sixth Grade Paraprofessional, Maurice "Coach" Hart, was selected by his peers as Support Staff of the Year because of the many hats he wears at RBMS. He can be depended upon to rush to answer the call for support anywhere in the building, regardless of the grade level requesting assistance. He is well-known as the Enforcer because students know he will ensure school rules are followed. He often takes the time to patiently explain to parents why the parent was called and asked to come to school to pick up their student for early dismissal. When he notices a student has been absent for several days, he calls their home to find out why the student hasn't been to school.

Hart does all of those things and much more, not because he knows his imposing 6'4" stature can be intimidating but, because he views his role not only as a discipline adjudicator, but also as a "father figure." He shared, "I want to help the students become better people who respect their mother, women and all people." In that regard, he leads by example by being judiciously respectful to all staff at RBMS. Hart is a lifelong Atlanta resident. He attended Pitts Elementary School, Archer High School and HBCU Lane College. Hart played football as an offensive and defensive lineman in both high school and college. He coached football at Maynard Jackson High for 18 years prior to joining RBMS in 2015. During his free-time, he enjoys Bowling, playing Ping Pong, Bacci, exercising and bass fishing.