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Subject: Community Education Center
Date: Thu, January 28, 2010 3:29 pm
To: "Press" <press@hsu.edu>

Henderson State University

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photo attached

Henderson unveils Community Education Center
Jan. 28, 2010

ARKADELPHIA - The Southwest Arkansas Technology Center in Arkadelphia has a new name that better identifies the facility's mission. The 10-year-old workforce training center officially became the Community Education Center during a ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 28. The center, which is now be operated by Henderson State University, seeks to expand education opportunities to the community. Dr. Lewis Shepherd Jr., vice president for external programs at Henderson, is the supervisor for all center operations.

Dr. Charles Welch, Henderson president, stressed the important role of the center. "It is seeing what we need in this state, seeing what we need in this county, what the workforce needs are of our local workforce and industry, and responding by providing educational and training opportunities."

The Community Education Center is a workforce training organization that works closely with area industries, educational institutions and training providers to insure an available trained workforce to enhance regional economic growth.

"We want to focus more on community education," Welch said. "I'm very pleased that Henderson is answering this call and becoming a more integral part of this center. I believe it's something that will serve all of us well."

Welch also pointed out the importance of working with local high schools and community colleges. "We believe strongly in collaboration to provide the opportunities," he said.

Bill Wright, a member of the center's board of directors and also a Henderson trustee, gave a brief history of the center. "We started out focusing on workforce training, but soon realized the mission should be much deeper than that," he said. Wright pointed out that there are only two such centers in Arkansas.

Brown Hardman, chairman of the center's board, spoke on behalf of state Sen. Percy Malone who was instrumental in the center's creation. "This is going to be a big deal," he said. "In the future, this is really going to help Clark County."

The Southwest Arkansas Technology Learning Center (SWATLC) was formed in 2000 to address the economic development and workforce needs of businesses and industries in Clark County and the surrounding area. The center was housed in the old Chamber of Commerce building on North 6th Street until 2003.

Funding was secured for the construction of a new facility at 640 South 6th St. In January 2003, SWATLC moved into the new building which is owned by the Clark County Conservation District. It houses the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Clark County Extension Service and the Clark County Conservation District in one half of the facility, and the Community Education Center in the other.

The Community Education Center occupies about 7,000-square-feet of the building which includes four classrooms, a computer lab, two conference/meeting rooms, and a fully-equipped maintenance shop for hands-on training to accommodate a variety of training needs. Some of the classes offered include welding, programmable logic controllers, adjustable speed drives and computer skills. The center can customize other types of training programs.

"We're already doing some really good things at this center," said Welch. "What we're doing here today is more of those good things and doing them better so that we have a broader impact."

Photo cutline: Dr. Charles Welch, Henderson president, describes the Community Education Center's goals during a ceremony on Jan. 28 at the center.

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