

BRAIN

Continued from page 1A students who have chosen to come back to Marion after college.

"Ideally you would want more, but that's not such a bad number for a small town," Hardin said.

The high school tracks its students for a couple of years after they graduate. State law requires it to do that. However, beyond those first two years, there are very few records of what happens to local high school grads. The Press tried to find the names of the Top 10 students from each year since 1985. Those records apparently do not even exist.

In researching why almost one in four of the high school's smartest students come back to Crittenden County, it became apparent that the seeds of opportunity were planted early.

Several of those who came back to Marion did so because they had a vested interest in a business here or they had made a lasting relationship while working summers, part-time jobs or through cooperative education type programs.

Dr. Adria (Mott) Porter graduated from CCHS with a 4.0 grade-point average in 1997. She had worked as an office technician for Dr. Daniel Talley at the Eyecare Center during high school and while home from college in the summer.

After she graduated from optometry school, Porter and her husband Jody eventually returned to Marion.

"We wanted to come back to Crittenden County," Porter said. "We were living in Birmingham, Ala., and had experienced the big city lifestyle and both knew that we liked the small town community atmosphere much better. We preferred to come back here, but we probably would not have if we had both not been able to get a job here."

Her husband is a safety engineer at Three Rivers Rock Quarry near Burna.

Porter said it was her contact with Dr. Tally earlier in life that created an opportunity for her.

Likewise, Chris Cook a valedictorian in 1986, went off to college at Transylvania in Lexington and thought he'd never look back.

"I wanted to go into international banking," said Cook, who is also serving his first term on the Crittenden County Board of Education.

However, he worked at Farmers Bank in Marion between semesters and eventually came to understand that his first choice was not on the global scale, but in community banking.

Between 1985 and 2000, there were 33 valedictorians who graduated from CCHS. Of those, 15 percent have come back here to live or work. The figure for salutatorians is a bit higher. Thirty-two percent of them have returned.

Crittenden County School Superintendent John Belt, himself a product of the local school system, says its incumbent on the entire community to work together to create an environment that will attract a higher percentage of the county's brightest students back home.

"I feel several reasons cause young people to leave Crittenden County after they finish their education," Belt said. "Being a rural area, there are the obvious limitations imposed by not having major industries and interstate highways which challenge our graduates in relation to finding good paying jobs."

Belt said that students

TRACKING GRADUATES BY THE NUMBERS...

2005 CCHS Graduates

30% of 82 graduates went to college
 29 went to colleges in Kentucky
 2 went to colleges outside Kentucky
 27 went to vocational/technical schools
 3 went into a branch of the military
 12 went to work (30 hours plus)
 6 went to work/school combination
 3 were unsuccessful

2004 CCHS Graduates

51% of 94 graduates went to college
 46 went to colleges in Kentucky
 2 went to colleges outside Kentucky
 9 went to vocational/technical schools
 2 went into military
 3 went to work (30 hours plus)
 17 went to work/school combination
 5 were unsuccessful

Source: CCHS Guidance Office

CRITTENDEN DIPLOMAS

Number of Crittenden Countians with a high school diploma.

Year	Persons w/ Diploma	% of Population
1990	979	75.6%
2000	836	78.8%

Although the precise number of people with a high school diploma went down between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of the population with one has increased.

tend to think that greater rewards are found outside the city limits of their home town. The school system works in partnership with other groups like the Crittenden County Economic Development Corporation in hopes of creating a more attractive place for students to learn and hopefully live and work.

"As we continue to progress toward a more global economy, increased efforts through improved technology access, better technology programs in school, and continued economic development to increase jobs are ways to help retain young people in our community," Belt said.

From the 2004 and 2005 graduating classes, 79 Crittenden County students, or 45 percent, went off to college.

Cook says it's incumbent on the community to find ways to lure them back once they've earned a college degree.

"Our business and community leaders need to identify the jobs that we anticipate will need to be filled in the next two to four years," he said. "We also need to identify businesses that do not exist in Marion that would have a sufficient demand to succeed if they were available. With this information, we need to provide co-op, internship and summer employment opportunities in these fields to our top students and share the benefits of living and working in a small community with them."

A local mentoring program might even be something that would work, Cook said, pointing out that others who have returned have done so because of earlier opportunities. Cook said that type of strategy would work for all graduates whether they were 4.0 students or those who might be more inclined to seek training at a vocational or technical school.

Teachers make up the largest block of top graduates who have come home to roost. Exactly half of the 12 valedictorians and salutatorians from the study period returned to teach in the local school system.

"It is encouraging to know that almost one-quarter of our top high school graduates are returning to our community to live and work, especially to teach our current students. However, we can do even better," Cook said.

Veterans Walk will host ceremony on Nov. 11

STAFF REPORT

Blackford Veterans Memorial Trail and Walk of Honor will host a ceremony on Veterans Day beginning at 2 p.m., Saturday Nov. 11.

The event will include Rep. Mike Cherry as master of ceremonies, Judge-Executive Fred Brown, a keynote address by Sen. Dorsey Ridley and many others.

The program will feature other honored guests including members of Co. B, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor Kentucky National Guard from the Marion unit.

The event will be held at

Blackford in rural Crittenden County on the Webster County line.

In addition to honoring veterans, the event will also serve to dedicate the Memorial Paver area where names of veterans are inscribed in the walkway.

For more information, contact Brent Witherspoon, director of the Blackford Walk of Honor.

The will also be a Veterans Day event at Maplevue Cemetery in Marion at the traditional time of 11 a.m.

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(L-R) Jim McMurtrie, Director of Guest Services; Tammy Merrill and Tracie Lear, Patient Representatives; JoAnne Hargrove, Financial Counselor; Mindy Wells, Service Representative

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RE-ELECT
JIM BROWN
 FOR MARION CITY COUNCIL
 NOVEMBER 7, 2006



Paid for by candidate, Jim Brown

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Crittenden County

Left to right: Wayne Agent, Bart Frazer, Carolyn Byford, Fred Brown, Rick Riley

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Fred Brown - Judge Executive
Wayne Agent - Sheriff
Carolyn Byford - County Clerk
Bart Frazer - County Attorney
Rick Riley - County Jailer

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