

Featured: STIRRING IT UP: Athens Community Career Academy Culinary students prepare food on March 5 in the refurbished ACCA kitchen. The kitchen was revamped as part of a Clarke County School District project that finished in the fall of 2023, along with the creation of the Yellow Jacket Bistro, which opened on Jan. 19. "We will have a few events (at the bistro) this semester that are pop-up events. They may be a brunch. They may be a lunch that will be opened up to the community. You'll just book your table, you'll book your reservation and you'll come in (and) eat like any diner would," ACCA Culinary Instructor Amee Williams said. Photo by Aza Khan



were a little stressful," Holliday said. "(I'm looking forward to) being able to be creative and make our own ideas (in the future)."

ACCA culinary student Nadiyah Collins, a senior at Clarke Central High School, joined the class this year and believes that the improved kitchen and restaurant have allowed her to gain soft skills beyond preparing food.

"(It helps) not just with cooking, but also (with) communication skills

because you'll have two groups working on one thing and another group working on another, and you have to communicate throughout that," Collins said. "Communication works a lot in the kitchen and outside of the kitchen because (we get experience with) customer service, talking to whoever you're serving, talking to the other people in the kitchen, coworkers, friends, students."

There is added significance to the bistro, as it pays homage to the all-Black Burney-Harris High School that used to occupy the current ACCA building before it was integrated with Athens High School to form CCHS in 1970.

"(BHHS's) mascot was a yellow jacket. So once we began to decide that the bistro was going to be ready to open, some of the (BHHS) alumni who are still with us gave their input on it and they allowed us to use their mascot, so we

actually have the yellow jacket that was their mascot," Thomas said. "And inside the restaurant (there's a wall) dedicated to them with several pictures that were taken back in the '50s and '60s when they were in that building. That's a special part of the bistro, that history that's tied to it."

The ACCA culinary students plan to host multiple events using the bistro and updated kitchen throughout the next semester, such as community pop-ups, on or off-site catering, and staff and student lunches on Fridays.

"We will have a few events this semester that are pop up events. They may be a brunch, they may be a lunch that will be opened up to the community. You'll just book your table, you'll book your reservation, and you'll come in you'll eat like any diner would," Williams said. "We can (also) do on or off-site catering, meaning we can provide what you need for your event. And then also, one of the things we hope to do is be able to at least serve our teachers here on Friday, and then some of our students in the cafe."

As Williams looks to the future of the bistro, she hopes to instill passion in her students.

"I'm not just here to teach you how to use your stove at home. Will you learn that? Yes. Is that great? Yes. Are you learning life skills? Yes. If that's why you take my course, fantastic," Williams said. "But going a step further and in getting that empowerment, that creativity. Those are the things that I want you to leave my class with."

-- AMEE WILLIAMS,
ACCA Culinary Instructor

"I've worked in many different aspects of (the culinary) industry and you would be hard pressed in some five star restaurants, high end restaurants, to find all the equipment we have here."

COOKING UP A STORM

The Athens Community Career Academy's newly-opened Yellow Jacket Bistro and refurbished kitchen allows culinary students to take their hands-on learning to new heights.

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A ribbon cutting on Jan. 19 officially marked the opening of the Yellow Jacket Bistro, a student-operated restaurant housed at and run by the Athens Community Career Academy.

The restaurant, along with a refurbished kitchen, were part of a \$2 million renovation project funded by the Clarke County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for Education and donations from local businesses that began during summer 2023 and was finished in early fall. The new facilities serve to bring resources and opportunities to the ACCA's culinary students.

The students use the kitchen regularly in class, and operate the bistro for designated events.

"(The culinary students) are catering, they're doing live events. The instructor, Chef Amee, is giving them hands-on experience. They're making meals, serving those meals to customers. So it teaches them how a restaurant runs and how the food is safely prepared, and all the different things that go into serving customers in a restaurant," ACCA Director Reginald Thomas said.

The experience students gain in the new facilities can enable them to enter the workforce at a higher entry level, thus increasing their potential opportunities and income after graduation.

"I've worked in many different aspects of (the culinary) industry and you would be hard pressed in some five-star restaurants, high-end restaurants, to find all the equipment we have here," ACCA Culinary Instructor Amee Williams said. "That speaks volumes to how prepared our district wants our students to leave (the program)."

ACCA culinary student Lexi Holliday, a sophomore at Cedar Shoals High School, got to work in a variety of roles on the Yellow Jacket Bistro's opening night. She hopes to use the new facilities to explore different facets of the culinary industry.

"(Before opening night), we made the individual parts (of the meal) and then we pieced them together on the closer days, like we made the displays and put everything out. It was mainly fun (but) there were a couple points that

Right: STUDENT CHEFS: Athens Community Career Academy Culinary students mix and measure ingredients in the ACCA kitchen on March 5. According to ACCA Culinary Instructor Amee Williams, the kitchen and the accompanying Yellow Jacket Bistro, which opened Jan. 19, were built with the intent to better prepare ACCA culinary students for the workforce. "After" having a restaurant, I can tell you, "This is how you do it," all day long. But if you don't experience what it feels like to be in a restaurant, am I really able to teach you well?" Williams said. Photo by Aza Khan

Bottom right: PEPPERS: An Athens Community Career Academy culinary student cuts red bell peppers on March 5. The kitchen was finished in the fall of 2023, but the accompanying Yellow Jacket Bistro didn't officially open until Jan. 19, an event which ACCA culinary student and Cedar Shoals High School sophomore Lexi Holliday helped to prepare for. "We made the individual parts (of the opening night meal) and then we pieced them together on the closer days, like we made the displays (and) put everything out," Holliday said. "I'm excited to be able to work in (the bistro) and just do more than opening, even though that was a good experience." Photo by Aza Khan

