

# Pickens County Courier

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## **Alliance Pickens, SDPC Join to Celebrate STEM**

**By Nichole Daughtree**

LIBERTY — Alliance Pickens and the School District of Pickens County celebrated distinguished students and teachers at a dinner banquet on Tuesday, May 22, at the new Career and Technology Center in Liberty.

At the close of “Pickens County Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): An Evening of Celebration,” the SDPC was presented with a check for more than \$10,000 to continue and advance the STEM Program.

Ray Farley, Executive Director of Alliance Pickens, collaborated with incoming superintendent, Dr. Kelly Pew, to organize the celebratory STEM event.

Tickets for the event sold for \$25 per person, and table sponsorships were available for \$500 per table. Event tickets included admission to the event and a dinner prepared by the culinary arts students from Pickens County Career and Technology Center. Proceeds from the event, which totaled more than \$10,000, were presented to the SDPC.

Those funds will be used to further the STEM program through the acquisition of more robots, electronic, mechatronic and machine tool equipment and to send students to technical learning competitions.

“We are grateful to the many businesses and industries that have provided funds for STEM initiatives in the School District of Pickens County,” superintendent Dr. Henry Hunt said. “Our schools will use the \$10,000 to purchase robots as well as electronic, mechatronic and machine tool equipment. We’ll also use the money to pay some student expenses for learning competitions next year.”

“The STEM initiative exposes young people from elementary school to high school to applied technical activities,” Farley said. “Watching the faces of elementary school children as they figure the best way to fabricate their car to make it go far, or watching the face of a high school student in solving an electric circuitry issue or program a robot to accurately shoot a ball into a basket is inspiring.”

In addition to raising funds for the STEM program, the dinner event also celebrated the achievements of SDPC students who successfully participated in the FIRST Robotics team, state champion mechatronics team, and the international champion jet-toy challenge team.

Teachers Meredith Cross (Clemson Elementary), Jerry May (Dacusville Middle) and Hank Hutto (Career and Technology Center) were named and recognized for being the School District of Pickens County's STEM Teachers of the Year for their excellence in teaching Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Also present to celebrate the achievements of these students and teachers were various members from the local business and industry community, which relies on initiatives like the STEM programs taking place in Pickens County schools to supply their future highly skilled and technically trained workforce. "Local business and industry is hiring technically talented employees at a faster rate than they are being produced," said Farley. "Thankfully, the School District of Pickens County is developing what is quickly evolving into one the state's finest STEM initiatives to prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce."

Pew shares Farley's enthusiasm and is quick to point out her desire to continue to strengthen STEM programs in all SDPC schools.

"STEM activities are an invaluable part of our educational program in the School District of Pickens County," said Pew. "Our students have many opportunities to participate in hands-on integrated learning that stresses questioning and inquiry. Those experiences prepare our students for success in the workplace and in higher education."