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# Three Rivers Celebrates Record Enrollment

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Three Rivers Celebrates Record Enrollment

*By Annabeth Miller,  
ShowMe Times Editor*

It's a record-breaking celebration for Devin Stephenson and the Three Rivers College family.

The college president – who has had his ‘feet on the ground’ in Southeast Missouri since the summer of 2009 – has helped open new college centers in Dexter and Cape Girardeau, has seen the expansion of college programs, and watched the college enrollment continue to grow.

So Thursday was a special day for Stephenson, as Three Rivers celebrated exceeding the 4,000 student enrollment mark.

Stevenson and a crew of college officials and staff were at the Dexter center Thursday as part of a tour of the region to celebrate the milestone enrollment. And it was clear Stephenson was especially proud of the new Dexter facility. He recalled his first meeting in Dexter to discuss a college center in the community.

“I knew there was going to be magic from the beginning” of the meeting, Stephenson said. “It really just takes a vision and some people to do it. We’ve been able to do something wonderful here.”

Stephenson said the great thing about the center is the opportunities it offers to Dexter area residents.

“This is a ‘people’ business,” he said. “A lot of folks think we are in the education business. Really, this is a people business. It’s about making a difference in people’s lives, improving the quality of life for them, and giving them a chance when they didn’t have a chance or giving them hope when they don’t have hope. “

Stephenson said the statistics of the college’s progress are staggering.

- This time last year the TRC Dexter center was an empty industrial building. The facility opened in January 2011 and now has more than 250 students.
- Piedmont now has 70 students enrolled at a brand-new instructional site.
- The Kennett center has a 29 percent increase in credit hours; the Cape Girardeau center a 48 percent increase in credit hours; the Sikeston center now has more than 500 students and has run out of space.
- Total college enrollment at the end of Thursday was 4,243 students – a 12 percent record of 2010.
- Total credit hours taken this semester is 46,535 – a 16 percent increase of 2010.

“We say that this is the ‘Golden Age’ of community colleges, and it indeed is,” Stephenson said.

The college president told the group at the celebration luncheon at the Dexter center that he was recently on a family vacation and got on a hotel elevator with a group of high school students. He said the young people had t-shirts that said “Don’t tell me the sky is the limit when there are footprints on the moon.”

“Bottom line for us is that we want to push the number even higher,” Stephenson said. “That means we’re serving somebody. That means we are meeting a need. That means people are getting the kind of education they need.”

Stephenson informed the group of community leaders gathered that in the next 10 years only 80 percent of new jobs created will be to individuals who do not have four-year college degrees. He explained the majority of the jobs in the future will go to people with some post-high school education – primarily associate degrees.

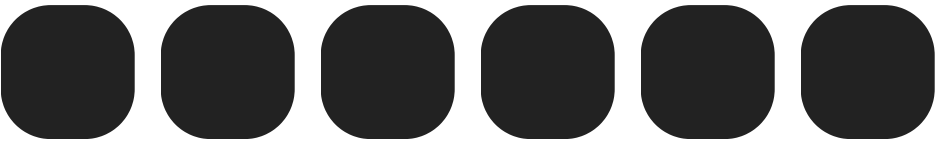
“The whole concept of taking education to where people live is what we are all about,” he said.

The noonday celebration included a number of Dexter city officials, representatives of the Dexter schools, the Chamber of Commerce, and local business and industry.

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