

Important information for students about what's happening at Thomas University

Veteran, mother, wife, employee, student

Jenkins embraces roles with success

By Joshua Barrett
Student writer

Charity Jenkins is a Thomas University student who's familiar with juggling a job, a family and school work. Jenkins originally from Macon, Georgia, will graduate Magna Cum Laude on May 11 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration-Accounting.

Jenkins began her career in the Air Force immediately after high school working in Information Management. Her job was to train enlistees on new computer software. Along the way, Jenkins used her military benefits to earn an associate degree from Georgia Military College.



Charity Jenkins

A decade after graduating with her associate degree, Jenkins decided it was time to go back for her

bachelor's degree. Now a resident of Ochlocknee as well as a wife and mother of three children, Jenkins considered several schools in the area. Praise from alumni convinced her to enroll at TU.

"The alumni told me that the advisers in the business department were some of the best advisers they have ever had," Jenkins said. "After coming here and experiencing it for myself, they truly are genuine professors, and they care more about the student than the grade."

Jenkins' first encounter on campus was with Penny Gaskins, Associate Registrar.

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TU students share experiences in Education's Berrien cohort

For several years, Thomas University's Division of Education has reached out from its location in Thomasville to offer classes at sites across Georgia current educators who want to further their career by earning a master's degree or education specialist degree. In the fall of 2017, TU began an undergraduate program in Berrien County to help career changers – especially paraprofessionals – who wanted to become teachers.

The students who began in the program already had at least an associate degree. They completed the last two years of coursework in either Middle Grades Education, Early Childhood Education or Secondary Education to earn a bachelor's degree and teacher certification. Students took classes on five Saturdays per each eight-week course. In May, students in this cohort will graduate. In August, they'll start their new careers as teachers.

Caitlyn Riggins is a Middle Grades Education major from

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In May, the first group of 10 students who've participated in Thomas University's Berrien County Education programs will graduate with their bachelor's degrees. Included in the cohort are (from left) Caitlyn Riggins, a Middle Grades Education major from Atkinson County; Consuelo Varn, an Early Childhood Education major from Berrien County; and Carrie Zeigler, an Early Childhood Education major from Berrien County.

Prior learning credit available

Not all learning takes place inside the classroom. That's why TU works with students to maximize their prior college and professional experiences for college credit toward a degree.

In addition to transfer credits from other regionally accredited institutions, TU also awards credit for military experience, law enforcement training and other prior learning experience.

Qualifying for prior learning credit

helps reduce the time and cost of completing at degree at TU. A student may receive up to 30 combined hours of credit for approved courses toward a bachelor's degree or 15 hours toward an associate degree. This can be done through:

- College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DSST/DANTES)

- Advancement Placement (AP) program
- Employer training programs
- Industry-specific certifications
- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) portfolios

For more information, contact your Success Advisor for details. Students may also complete the Prior Learning Credit Calculator (<https://tinyurl.com/y6xotgx6>) to see if they might qualify.

Next Science Cafe to discuss oil spill effects on terrapin population

The next installment of Thomas University's popular Science Café will focus on how the Deepwater Horizon oil spill impacted terrapins. The event will be held on Tuesday, March 26.

Bill Turner has been a member of Florida State University's Office of Science Teaching Activities since 2013, where he runs the Sea-to-See program and Saturday-at-the-Sea day camps. For the Science Café, he'll present "How Nerdas on Deepwater Horizon Helped Us Study the Largest Known Ornate Diamondback Terrapin Population."

Turner received his master's degree in zoology from the University of South Alabama, where he worked with the Alabama Red-bellied turtle.

Each Science Café begins with a reception with the speaker in the lobby of Smith-Bonvillian Hall at 6 p.m. followed by the presentation at 6:30 p.m. in the Flowers Foods Executive Classroom.

There is no admission charge, and the public is welcome.

For more information, contact April D. Penton at apenton@thomasu.edu.

**Contact your advisor
and register for classes
by May 3
for your chance to win!**

*'Getting Down to Business'***Forum to focus on HR and job recruiting**

Thomas University's Division of Business will hold its last speakers forum of the academic year at 5 p.m. Tuesday, April 2, in the TU Library on the Forbes Campus. "Getting Down to Business" will focus on human resources management and job recruiting.

"It isn't often that we get a chance to interact with those who screen and recruit job applicants," said Dr. Melinda Piller, Chair of the TU Division of Business. "Attending this event provides a bird's eye view into the inter-workings of top industry leaders and their recruiting strategies and employee hiring."

Speakers at the forum include Tonya Taylor, Vice President of Human Resources at Flowers Foods; Robin Wetherington, Human Resources Director at Oil-Dri; and Kim Walden, Recruitment Manager at Ag-Pro.

"Our visiting 'experts in the field' are high-profile managers in three major national companies," Piller said.

"These executives currently work for multi-million dollar and billion-dollar organizations, which means they are at the top of their field in human resource management and recruitment."

"Getting Down to Business" will introduce TU students and other attendees to what potential employers look for in a job candidate.

"The Thomas University Business Division is committed to connecting the best and brightest professionals with our students and faculty," Piller said. "Knowing how to prepare for a job interview, what the latest skills and attributes are, what graduates or soon-to-be graduates need in the workforce, they're all vitally important. We want to make sure our students are well-prepared and up on current job recruiting trends and demands."

For more information about "Getting Down to Business," contact Piller at mpiller@thomasu.edu.

Paint and Sip fundraiser to benefit ACTU

Throughout the year, Thomas University's ACTU (Arts for the Community at Thomas University) brings talented musicians, writers and artists to Thomasville for the entire community to enjoy. At 6 p.m. Friday, April 5, supporters can participate in a Paint and Sip Fundraiser with all proceeds benefitting the ACTU program. The event will be held on the Sue Rumble Terrace on TU's Forbes Campus, 1550 Millpond Road.

"... you've got the beautiful outdoor venue of the Sue Rumble Terrace along with the music of the TU Jazz Ensemble. It's really going to be a wonderful evening and a great event."

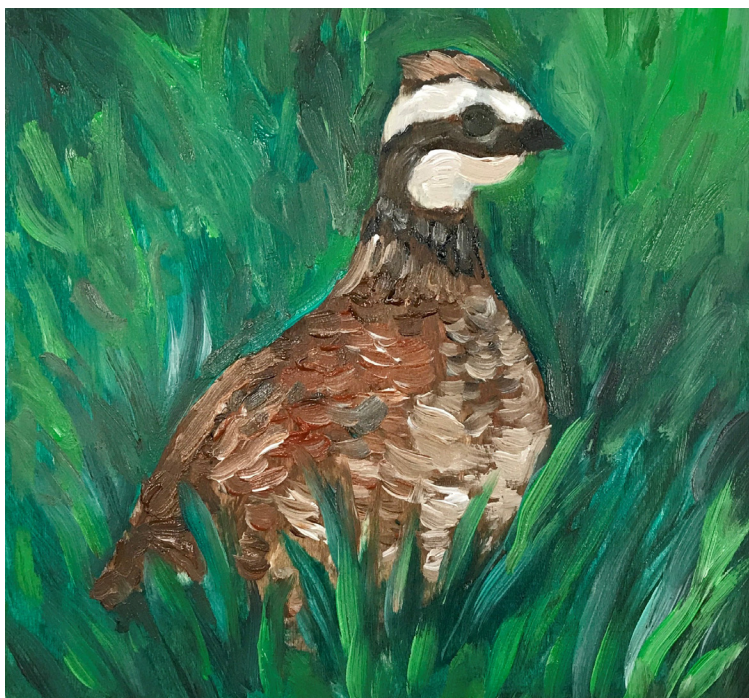
— Dr. Karl Barton
ACTU coordinator

"ACTU is a true partnership between the university and the community," said Dr. Karl Barton, ACTU coordinator. "This event represents one of the ways we are expanding that outreach, and it also provides the community to support our efforts."

For \$60 per person, guests will paint a quail on a 10-inch square wood block (pictured at right) led by Art Professor Richard Curtis in an outdoor setting while enjoying wine and listening to the TU Jazz Ensemble.

"This is an incredible opportunity to be led through a painting exercise by Professor

Curtis, who's not just a professional artist but has also taught art at the university level for many years," Barton

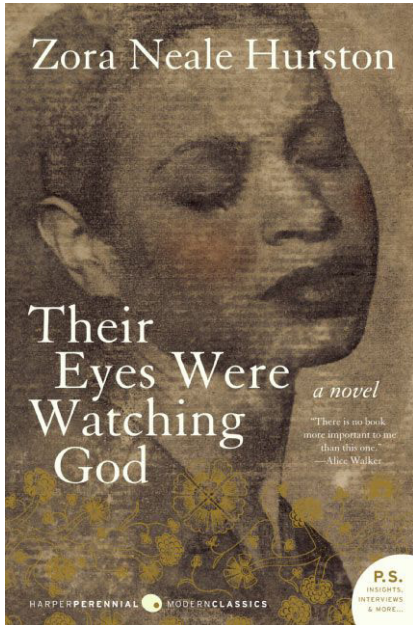


said. "Plus you've got the beautiful outdoor venue of the Sue Rumble Terrace along with the music of the TU Jazz Ensemble. It's really going to be a wonderful evening and a great event."

Spaces are limited, and registration is required. Register at tinyurl.com/actupaintandsip.

For more information, call 229-227-6964 or email actu@thomasu.edu.

Book Club to discuss 'Their Eyes Were Watching God'



Anne Larson will discuss Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" at the next TU Book Club meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, March 18, in the Campus Center Classroom on TU's Forbes Campus.

Published in 1937 this novel, set in central and southern Florida in the early 20th century, follows Janie Crawford. As she matures from a teenage girl into a woman, Janie realizes that people must learn about life for themselves, just as people can only go to God for themselves.

Hurston's novel was included in Time Magazine's 2005 list of the 100 Best English-language Novels Published Since 1923.

Originally from Augusta, Georgia, Book Club presenter Anne Larson received a bachelor's degree in English from Agnes Scott College and a master's degree in teaching from Duke University. Larson taught senior and Advanced Placement English for 50 years. Forty of those years were spent teaching at Brookwood School in Thomasville, where she created many school's ceremonies and traditions.

During her tenure at Brookwood, Larson was named STAR teacher a record 12 times.

The Book Club meeting is part of Arts for the Community at Thomas University (ACTU). For more information, call 229-227-6964 or email actu@thomasu.edu.

TU to host poet Byrne as part of Georgia Poetry Circuit

As part of the Georgia Poetry Circuit, poet Elena Karina Byrne will visit Thomas University on Wednesday, April 10. Byrne will share her poetry in a session at 12:30 p.m. in Smith-Bonvillian Hall, which is open to the public, and then work with TU students who are aspiring poets.

A visual artist, freelance editor, professor and book reviewer, Byrne served for 12 years as Regional Director of the Poetry Society of America and as Executive Director for the AVK Arts Foundation. She is the Literary Programs Director for the Ruskin Art Club and annual Poetry Consultant and Moderator for the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books.

Byrne also works on poetry programs with the Craft & Folk Art Museum and is a member of the advisory board for What Books Press. She is a contributing editor for the Los Angeles Review of Books and was one of the final judges for the Kate and Kingsley Tufts Poetry Awards.

In 2015 Byrne received the Distinguished Service Award from the Beyond Baroque's Literary Arts



Elena Karina Byrne

Center. She was part of the West Hollywood Book Fair's Planning Committee and worked with Red Car studios editing several documentary film projects including, "The Big Read," "Muse of Fire" and "Why Shakespeare?"

Since 1991 Byrne has organized or funded programs for the Museum of Contemporary Art, the University of Southern California's Doheny Memorial Library, the Getty Research Institute at the J. Paul Getty Center, UCLA's CAP/Center for the Art of Performance, Columbia University's

School of the Arts International Translation Project. She has also been part of the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles, the Craft and Folk Art Museum's Poetry and Art Collaboration Series, the Metropolitan Transit Authority's "Metro Art Live Poetry in Motion" annual readings, and the renowned Chateau Marmont "Act of the Poet" series. She was the 2005 Poetry Co-Editor for the Los Angeles Review and one of three judges for the 2006 PEN USA Literary Award in Poetry.

Byrne's book reviews and essays have appeared in "Poetry," "Slope," "Poetry International," "The Journal" and "Omniverse." Her awards include the 2009 Pushcart Prize XXXIII Best of the Small Presses and Best American Poetry 2005. Byrne's books include "The Flammable Bird," "MASQUE," "Squander" and "VOYEUR HOUR: Meditations on Poetry, Art & Desire."

Byrne's visit is part of Arts for the Community at Thomas University (ACTU). For more information, call 229-227-6964 or email actu@thomasu.edu.

Violinist Shannon Thomas at the next Fridays at Noon performance

The next Fridays at Noon performance will feature violin virtuoso Shannon Thomas at 12 p.m. March 29 in the Balfour Chapel on TU's Forbes Campus.

Thomas is an Assistant Professor of Violin at Florida State University. She has garnered reputation for exciting, thoughtful performances as a chamber musician, soloist, and in recital throughout North and South America, Europe and Asia.

Thomas earned a Doctorate of Musical Arts at the Cleveland Institute of Music, a Master of Music at Yale University and a Bachelor of Music at Vanderbilt University. She also pursued graduate work at Arizona State University, where she was the first student accepted into the Artist Diploma Program.

The Fridays at Noon series is part of ACTU (Arts for the Community at Thomas University). For additional information about this Fridays at Noon performance or other ACTU events, email actu@thomasu.edu or call 229-227-6964.



Shannon Thomas

Upcoming events

March 18 7 p.m., Book Club meeting, Campus Center Classroom

March 19 7:30 p.m., History Club meeting, Classroom 134, Student Life Center, Magnolia Campus

March 20 5:30 p.m., ENACTUS meeting, TU Library, Forbes Campus

March 20 6:30 p.m., Yoga Wednesday, TU Library, Forbes Campus

March 20 8 p.m., Survivor hosted by Goalline Ministries, location TBD

March 21 Start of March Madness Bracket Challenge for Men's & Women's NCAA Tournament, hosted by TU Student Life and CAB

March 25 4 p.m., Young Adult Book Club, TU Library, Forbes Campus

March 25 6:30 p.m., Spring Festival hosted by TU Student Life and CAB, Magnolia Campus

March 27 6:30 p.m., Yoga Wednesday, TU Library, Forbes Campus

March 28 7 p.m., Casino Night hosted by TU Student Life and CAB, TU Gymnasium

March 29 12 p.m., Fridays at Noon presents Shannon Thomas, violinist, Balfour Chapel, Forbes Campus

April 7 4 p.m., Thomasville Singers present "Devotion," Thomasville First United Methodist Church

April 10 12:30 p.m., ACTU & Georgia Poetry Circuit present Elena Karina Byrne, Flowers Foods Executive Classroom, Smith-Bonvillian Hall



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Atkinson County who participated in the Berrien cohort.

"I needed some place that actually benefitted me and my family," Riggins said.

As a non-traditional student with a husband and two small children, she first heard about the program from a friend and then talked with Dr. Susan Lynn, Chair of TU's Division of Education. After that conversation, Riggins said choosing to enroll in the program was a "no-brainer" for her.

"I just think that at Thomas University, especially with the cohort program that we have here in Berrien County, we're not just peers; we're family," Riggins said. "I've made connections with women I would not have made if it wasn't for Thomas University, and they're lifelong connections."

Riggins said she appreciates the encouragement and support she's received from TU faculty.

"I don't think I'd be where I'm at if not for Thomas University," Riggins said. "I don't think I would've gotten the same support and encouragement from any other program."

Consuelo Varn previously worked with the Georgia Migrant Education Program in Berrien County before becoming a para-professional. In addition to her job, Varn is also a wife, mother of three and a TU student.

"For me, probably the biggest challenge has been just managing time between school and work and family and all that," Varn said. "I've had support from everybody."

Her time as a TU student hasn't been easy, but her family has helped along the way.

"It's been a group effort," Varn said. "It's been a team effort from the get-go. It's been my husband, my children, my coworkers and my schoolmates. It's been one big

support system."

During their two years together as a cohort, Varn has grown close to her classmates.

"The cohort has been such a blessing," she said. "It's been almost 30 years that I've wanted to be in early childhood education, and life takes you different places...I don't think I would have finished if it had not been for TU and the opportunity I got through this cohort."

Carrie Zeigler had spent 15 years working in the legal system when she realized that it was time to change careers. For the past five years, she's worked as a paraprofessional in Berrien County. Two years ago, she began her journey to becoming a teacher.

"This is my passion," Zeigler said. "I don't feel like I work. I mean, it's work and I'm exhausted. Don't get me wrong, but it's just that I love every minute of it."

Earning her Education degree hasn't been easy.

"It's challenging," Zeigler said. "I mean, I'm not 20 anymore. I have teenagers. I have a husband. I have a mom that I also take care of in our household. We have the fur babies. We have the home. We have life. That stops a lot of people. I'm so thankful it didn't stop me with this."

For anyone who's considering earning an Education career through TU's Berrien program, these students offer some advice.

"Don't be scared to work," Zeigler said. "Be ready. Be prepared. It might be tough at first, but you'll never regret any minute of it."

Riggins said, "My biggest piece of advice is just to make sure that it's something that you really want to do because at the end of the day, you're not only choosing this career path for yourself, but you've got the lives of children and young adolescents in your hands. Just make sure that it's something that you're going to wake up for every morning and say, 'This is what I want to do.'"



Consuelo Varn, an Early Childhood Education major through Thomas University's Berrien program, shares a book with a student.

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“My first encounter was Penny Gaskins, and she told me that she was going to be my personal cheerleader,” Jenkins said. “She does not know exactly how much that meant to me.”

Dr. Pauline Ray, Associate Professor of Business, was also an encourager.

“Having Dr. Ray as my first adviser was just icing on the cake,” Jenkins said. “She was so attentive and knowledgeable about everything. I didn’t know where any of the classrooms were, and she never made me feel stupid about that. She just politely explained them all to me and even gave me pointers on where the best parking was. It was the little things and these two amazing women that gave me my initial strength to believe in myself and why I love TU.”

During her time at TU, Jenkins has been active in student organizations on campus. In the spring of 2018, Jenkins volunteered with TU’s Tax-Aide Program. Randy Minton, a TU Business instructor, coordinates the program.

“Charity Jenkins embodies the qualities I look for in an accounting student,” Minton said. “She is a capable, extremely hard-working student, has a strong sense of community as evidenced by her work with the AARP Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program this past year, and pushes herself to be successful in and out of the classroom. She is a veteran of the armed forces and has carried that sense of mission forward to her time here at TU. I fully expect her to be successful well beyond her time here at Thomas University.”

Jenkins is also a part of SALUTE, the honor society for military and veteran students, and Sigma Beta Delta, the Business honor society.

“I’m honored to be part of a distinguished group of students,” Jenkins said. “It helped me see that I’m moving in the right direction.”

Jenkins said her professors along the way have played a major role in her success.

“I have laughed, cried and joked with them,” Jenkins said. “They have let me vent, and I have let them explain. In the beginning, they had to walk me through everything, but they did it with such grace. They never made me feel like a pain, and I know I was at times.”

Mina Haretos, Instructor of Business, was one of those professors.

“Charity has always brought good energy into the classroom,” Haretos said. “She is a very conscientious student with a lot of determination and spark.”

Since August 2018, Jenkins has worked as a runner at Lanigan & Associates P.C., an accounting and consulting practice in Thomasville, while taking a full class load.



Charity Jenkins is inducted into the Thomas University Chapter of SALUTE, the national honor society for military and veteran students, in April 2018 by Dr. Debra Gresham, TU SALUTE advisor.

“They do not treat me like I am just a runner,” Jenkins said. “They treat me like I am family, and I belong. I just started working there in August, but I would say that they have also contributed to my success at TU and how to believe in myself.”

After graduation, Jenkins plans to continue working at Lanigan & Associates. She hopes to pursue her master’s degree from TU. She also plans to take the Certified Public Accountant exam.

Jenkins is thankful to her husband and three children – Taylor, Caleb and Lexi – for their support.

“I’ve had a lot of people at TU and Lanigan help support me along my journey, but the person that has stood in the shadows through all my success and adventure has been my husband, Thomas,” Jenkins said. “He gave me the encouragement, the strength and the motivation to pursue my dreams, my degree, my chapter. I did this for him, my children and myself.”