

MGCCC's George Co. Center celebrates 50 years



By [Lauren Martinez at WLOX News Now](#)

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GEORGE COUNTY, Miss. (WLOX) - A celebration happened Wednesday as Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College hit a major milestone.

Faculty, alumni, and students reflected on some great achievements and rich academic history of the school.

MGCCC's George County Center was established in 1972 in Lucedale as a branch of the Perkinston campus. Now that branch is celebrating 50 years of educating students.

"It is so special because we have done so many great things at the George County Center right here in Lucedale over the many years," said Ladd Taylor, vice president of the George County Center and Perkinston campus. "We just wanted to take a moment to celebrate that and all of the great accomplishments we've achieved here at the center."

It wasn't until 2009 that the school expanded and opened an academic building comprised of a lecture hall, computer lab and multiple classrooms. Fast forward to now when the campus has enrolled more than 500 students.

"I swell with great pride when I hear that because I see us continuing to grow," Taylor said.

Before the growth, 1973 marked the first graduating class, which included only six women: Ruby Anderson, Gayle Ekhoft, Mariyln Ferguson, Betty Hobby, Marsha Mergenschroer, and Linda Murrah.

They were honored on Wednesday.

Murrah said it felt like a family reunion.

“Very happy to see my classmates again,” she said. “I wish all were here. We’ve lost some and I wish they were able to be there too. This is a special honor, and I really appreciate the college for doing this.”

Murrah said going to school back then to be a nurse helped boost her self-esteem.

”It helped me build up confidence, and I needed that at that time,” she said. “There was no males in our secretarial course, but there was in the practical nursing course. Times have changed between those two times.”

Current MGCCC freshmen Mackenzie Yawn also credits the faculty and staff at the school for helping her determine her career goals.

“My advisors really led me to a path and I’m really confident on the choice that I made,” Yawn said.

Looking to the future, the school has plans to launch a new class next month.

“April 3, as a matter of fact, we’re taking our first class of our new CDL truck driving program here at the George County Center,” said Lisa Rhodes, administrative dean of the George County Center. “That is a grant-funded program. We’ve already hired our instructors and we’re getting the yard ready.”

With the steady increase in enrollment, what sits at the core of MGCCC’s continued growth?

Lisa Rhodes, MGCCC George County Campus Administrative Dean “I’m going to give it back to the community,” Rhodes said. “So we have such a great community here in Lucedale and George County. They really support the George County Center so without our community or our community’s help we wouldn’t be able to be where we are.”

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