

Department of Ed funds new learning system

BY JOHN HENSON

Special to the Chronicle

Students in classrooms across South Carolina have a new resource for learning.

The Learning Blade program has been fully funded by the South Carolina Department of Education Office of Career and Technical Education.

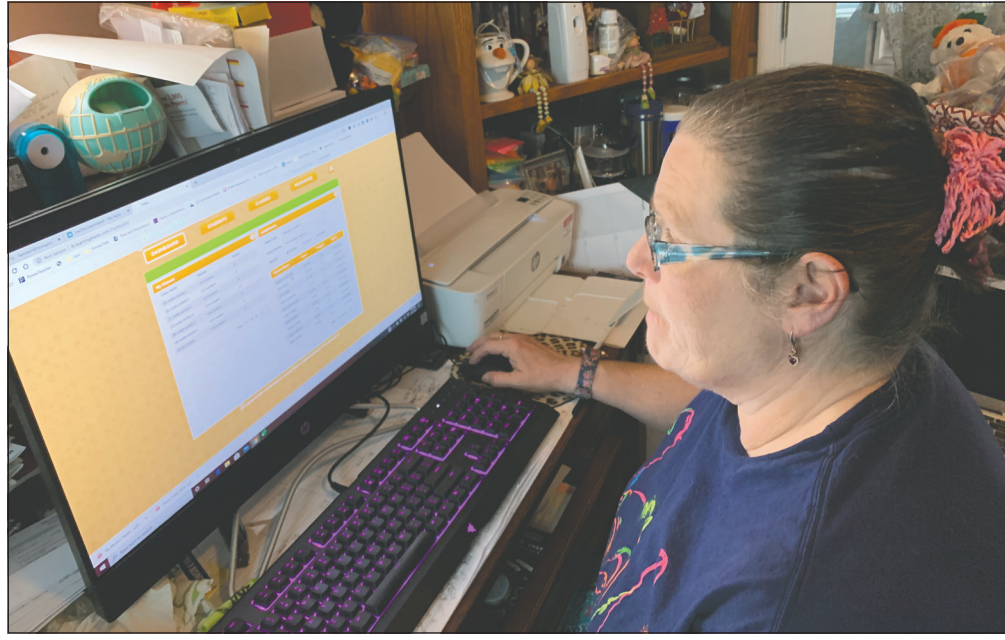
The program is designed to provide engaging resources that will expose students to STEM-related career opportunities and help them develop key skills as they move forward.

The program has become popular for several school districts around the state already.

"I love Learning Blade," said Dr. Lori Lambert, a STEM Academy IT Instructor in Lexington. "It has been amazing and very user friendly. As a teacher for 26 years, I wish we had this years ago."

Lambert said both parents and students enjoy the program.

"Several of my parents emailed me saying they enjoyed Learning Blade be-



STEM Academy instructor Lori Lambert worked with the Learning Blade program in Lexington. The program has been fully funded by the South Carolina Department of Education Office of Career and Technical Education for students in schools around the state.

cause it applies to what they do in their jobs and they could relate to it. It made helping their own kid learn much easier. They said they were actually completing the assignment with their kid," Lambert said.

Learning Blade is owned and operated by Thinking Media, which has as-

sembled a team of accomplished professionals in the STEM, education and technology space.

An interactive tool box combines:

- STEM skills
- Hands-on exercises
- Career exploration
- Academic relevance

Learning Blade aims to be

an effective resource useful to the entire teaching staff, including language arts, mathematics, social studies and science teachers.

To find out how to get Learning Blade for your educational institution in South Carolina please email info@learningblade.com.

Koon's Watch

We've got your back

There have been more than a few occasions in 2020 for which to thank you for your support of the Sheriff's Department.

But beyond your support of the men and women who make LCSD what it is, the people of Lexington County fervently support the law enforcement profession as a whole.

You rallied around officers in February when Faye Swetlik went missing and days later when her body was found. That was a tough time for law enforcement, but we knew you had our back.

The Lexington County community came together as the response against covid-19 started in March. The public health guidelines and the executive orders went over very well here because we had each other's backs.

There was essentially no pushback as we all worked together to slow the spread of the virus and protect those in our lives who need to stay well.

With the events of the last 2 weeks, first in Minnesota and now spreading across

the country, we know you have our backs again.

It's easy to see it's not like that everywhere.

The contention and chaos that's taken hold in some locations are symptoms of a troubled relationship between law enforcement and a community.

I'm proud we have those relationships here in our

county. Those relationships foster conversations and cooperation. It's an honor for us to serve and protect the people and places of this county.

The trust you place in us and the support you give

to us isn't taken for granted as we all work together to maintain Lexington County as a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Let's strive in the coming days to strengthen those relationships. And let's listen. Listen to each other and those who are sincerely interested in having a conversation about the issues brought forth in wake of current events.

The dialogue will make us better as a county and a community.



JAY KOON
Lexington County Sheriff

Lexington police chief speaks out on violence

Chief: Actions of a few reflect on all law enforcement

Lexington Police Chief Terrence Green has commented on the Minneapolis, MN, violence.

Protesters and rioters have taken to the streets after a Minneapolis police officer was videoed holding George Floyd down and suffocating him with his knee on his neck.

"The death of George Floyd earlier this week has brought the words of Martin Luther King Jr. to mind that 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'" Chief Green wrote on social media.

"I, like so many of you, have felt grief, anger and can see how the actions of a few can overshadow the work our officers do each day throughout the Town of Lexington, SC community.

"Our officers take an oath to enforce the law but to do so while never employing unnecessary force or violence.

"What we have seen in the videos involving George Floyd was not that, and I have faith that justice will be served.

"We put a tremendous focus on training and in my mind, it's the foundation of a law enforcement professional. While the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy mandate is 40 hours

of training every 3 years to maintain certification, on average our officers attend over 100 hours of training each year.

"In 2019 our officers attended over 6,500 hours of training which included annual re-certifications and advanced training in verbal de-escalation, cultural diversity, response to resistance, mental health, ethics, among others, both hands on and in the classroom.

"As an internationally accredited police department through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, we are constantly making sure that our policies and procedures are up to date and reflect

best practices within law enforcement.

"We have a number of ways to review the actions of our officers, which start with both in-car and body worn cameras but also include early warning systems to identify and correct issues seen as well as officers working in small teams within every division with multiple levels of supervision.

"We've also found that these collaborations create common ground and break down the many misconceptions about law enforcement.

"If you ever have questions or concerns, please give me a call at 803-359-6260 or email tgreen@lexsc.com."

Rabid fox confirmed in county

A fox near Columbia Avenue and Caughman Road in Lexington tested positive for rabies.

The fox submitted to the Department of Health and Environmental Control's laboratory was confirmed to have rabies May 27.

This fox is the 6th animal in Lexington County to test positive for rabies in 2020.

In 2019, 17 of the 148 confirmed rabies cases in South Carolina were in Lexington County.

Please contact DHEC if you know of any possible human or animal exposure.

Be sure to immediately wash any part of your body that may have come into contact with saliva or neural tissue with plenty of soap and water, and seek medical attention.

Exposure is defined as a bite, scratch, or contact with saliva or body fluids from an infected animal.

Keep pets up to date on rabies vaccination.

For more information on rabies, visit www.scdhec.gov/rabies or www.cdc.gov/rabies.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lexington DUI arrests down overall

The Lexington Police Department issued a report on driving under the influence and vehicle crashes in 2019.

There were 110 DUI arrests in the Town of Lexington in 2019, with an average of 9.17 per month. The number of DUI arrests in 2018 was 89. It was 192 in 2017; 124 in 2016 and 138 in 2015, the Chronicle's Terry Ward reported.

There were 1,596 traffic accidents in 2019. That's 4.37 a day. In 2018 there were 1,705 traffic accidents. There were 1,476 in 2017; 1,446 in 2016 and 1,537 in 2015.

West Columbia police seek attempted murder suspect

The West Columbia Police Department is seeking the public's help in locating Kerrie Alyssa Spires and Robert Lee Raines of Parkwood Drive in West Columbia.

Both individuals have warrants for attempted murder, armed robbery, and other felony charges. Raines also has several active warrants with the Richland County Sheriff's Office.

During the afternoon of May 28 Spires met with the victim at the Hampton Inn on Sunset Boulevard in West Columbia where she orchestrated a robbery against him with Raines, police said.

Spires allowed access into the room for Raines who

robbed the victim at gunpoint. Raines fired his handgun at the victim before fleeing the scene with the victim's money.

The West Columbia Police Department asks for those with information on the whereabouts of Kerrie Spires and Robert Raines to call the West Columbia Police Department at (803) 794-0721 or to submit a tip to CrimeStoppers of the Midlands by using the P3 Tips App or by going to CrimeSC.com and clicking "Submit a Tip".

West Cola cops arrest C-WC Chamber CEO

The West Columbia Police Department arrested Richard Dwight Skipper on Friday for 4 counts of Forgery Less than \$10,000.

An investigation determined Skipper, who is the CEO of The Greater Cayce-West Columbia Chamber of Commerce, submitted approximately \$5,150 of fraudulent invoices to the City of West Columbia for reimbursement of Hospital Tax Grant Funds.

The fraudulent invoices were submitted in 2018 and 2019 for events such as the Holiday Parade of Lights and West Columbia's Rhythm on the River Concert Series.

Skipper is currently being held at the Lexington County Detention Center, according to a news release from West Columbia.

Skipper was put on unpaid administrative leave effective immediately and the

Board of Directors and Staff will be cooperating fully with the authorities in any further investigation, the Chamber said in a statement.

Sheriff: Man robbed security guard, stole crab legs

Lexington County investigators have arrested a Columbia man accused of tying up a security guard at a food distributor and breaking into a warehouse to steal thousands of dollars' worth of seafood.

Johnathan Dewayne Dorsey, 28, is charged with armed robbery, 2nd-degree burglary and kidnapping, according to arrest warrants.

Detectives determined he and other co-defendants had a pistol as they threatened a contract security guard at the US Foods distribution center Jan. 18, said Lexington County Sheriff Jay Koon.

They tied up the guard and left him face down before stealing his cellphone and a key card, according to Koon.

"The key card got them into the warehouse where they stole 2 pallets of frozen crab legs worth about \$8,400," Koon said.

The investigation is ongoing and investigators expect to make more arrests, according to Koon.

"Deputies have also charged Dorsey with 2 counts of breach of trust from his time as a US Foods employee last year," Koon said. "They've confirmed he

stole more than a hundred cases of crab legs worth nearly \$36,000 in October."

Investigators arrested Dorsey Wednesday. He's been released after meeting the conditions of his bond.

Hospital fires employee over social media post

Lexington Medical Center announced suspending then firing an employee accused of posting a racial slur on social media.

The hospital's statement: "Lexington Medical Center has fired an employee who worked in a clerical position and made a highly offensive and inappropriate remark on social media last night.

"The employee's comments did not reflect our values and violated our organization's policies. We do not tolerate that type of behavior. The employee is no longer part of our organization."

Chapin man charged with sex crimes

Chad Michael Bose, 37, of Chapin, has been charged with sexual exploitation of a minor.

Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force investigators with the Lexington County Sheriff's Office made the arrest.

Investigators with Attorney General Alan Wilson's Office assisted with the investigation.

Investigators received a tip from the National Center for

Missing and Exploited Children that led them to Bose.

Investigators state Bose distributed child pornography.

Bose was arrested May 21 and charged with sexual exploitation of a minor, a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

The case will be prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

7 charged in armed robbery, mob assault

Lexington County deputies have arrested and charged 7 people accused of robbing and assaulting 2 men on Sunset Boulevard.

Charged with armed robbery are: Elijah Karos Clark, 19, De'Acı Marquette Corley, 18, Lane Rathburn Hein, 20, Jonathan Michael Kidd, 20, Mason Wilbur Mims, 20, Mason Caldwell Murphy, 20, and Garrett Lee Steen, 18.

Hein, Kidd, Mims and Murphy are also charged with assault and battery by mob.

Corley is also charged with 2 counts of kidnapping and possessing a weapon during a violent crime.

Detectives found Corley was armed with a pistol when he and the other 6 suspects assaulted and forcefully robbed 2 men on the side of the road in the 3100 block of Sunset Boulevard on May 12.

The suspects got away with a smartwatch and some cash, according to Koon. Investigators said some of those involved had an encounter over drugs minutes before at a Saint

Andrews Road motel.

All 7 suspects were arrested late last week without incident.

3 charged with impersonating officers

Two men and a woman are charged with impersonating law enforcement officers after Lexington County deputies said the suspects claimed to be cops and talked their way into a Pelion home last month.

Chad David Andrews, 31, Emily Kristin Moore, 24, and Kenneth Ray Wooten, 43, are also charged with 1st-degree burglary, according to arrest warrants.

The 3 suspects said they were Lexington County narcotics agents and investigating a crime when they entered a Fairview Road home at about 2:30 in the morning April 30," Lexington County Sheriff Jay Koon said.

The woman who lives at the house told detectives she thought she was doing the right thing and had to let the three people inside, according to Koon.

"She wasn't injured and we're not aware of anything being taken from the home," Koon said. "This was still a very risky situation that could've turned out much differently."

Wooten is being held in the Lexington County Detention Center. Andrews and Moore have been released after meeting conditions of their bond.