

the option of participating in programs at Lone Star College-Kingwood. They are taught about the disability services that are available and the accommodations to support them in class. With guidance, these students have the option to be successful college students.

At the age of 23, Shae graduated from Lone Star College-Kingwood on May 12 of this year with an associate's degree in education. She has big plans for her future. She does not let her diagnosis limit or define her. Shae utilizes the advocacy skills she learned to help students at Whispering Pines Elementary School, where she works as a tutor for special needs students. She intends on paying it forward by becoming a math teacher who helps special needs students like herself. When asked why she wants to be a special needs teacher, Shae replied "My experiences help me to help other children who are struggling. I can say to them, 'I know what you're going through.'"

Despite a large obstacle, Shae has embraced her uniqueness and always finds a way to accomplish her goals. She has the strength and willingness to overcome, and that is a quality that not all people possess. Congratulations, Shae, on all that you have accomplished and the best of luck with conquering the professional world.

And that's just the way it is.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BETO O'ROURKE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from the Chamber on Tuesday, June 5, 2018. Had I been present, I would have voted yea on Roll Call votes 231, 232, and 233.

CONGRATULATING ROB WIDMER

HON. RODNEY DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Rob Widmer, who will retire this month after more than twenty-two years of service to Heartland Community College in Bloomington-Normal.

Rob has been in higher education for over forty years—half of which he spent with Heartland. He joined the college in 1996, serving as the vice president of business services until 2013, when he began his role as Heartland's third president. I can attest that he has been a great advocate for community colleges and technical education.

During his time there, Heartland expanded into one of Central Illinois' primary institutions for workforce development and is now among the state's most renowned community colleges.

This week, the newly-revitalized quad at Heartland's campus will be dedicated as the Rob Widmer Quad, in recognition of Rob's service to the school.

While he plans to travel and spend time with his four sons and ten grandchildren, I know Rob will continue serving the Bloomington-Normal community with his time and talents.

Congratulations, Rob, and best wishes on this new chapter of life.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MARTHA PEEK UPON HER RETIREMENT

HON. BRADLEY BYRNE

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Martha Lyon Peek upon her retirement as the Superintendent of the Mobile County Public School System.

Martha Peek, a native of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, has worked in the Mobile County School System for over forty years. Throughout her four decades, she has served as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and deputy superintendent. Notably, she was the first female superintendent to serve in the 180-year history of the Mobile County Public School System.

Her career in education follows behind a line of her family members who have been continuously serving in the Mobile County School System since 1908. She represents the third generation in her family to work in education, and her career carried on an important family tradition.

Martha Peek was formally named Superintendent in July 2012 after serving as Deputy Superintendent since 2008. Prior to that, she was Assistant Superintendent for Academic Affairs, Executive Director of School Improvement and Accountability, and Principal at Dixon Elementary School. Her career in education started in 1972 as an elementary teacher at Alba School before she went on to work at Fonvielle Elementary School and Brookley Elementary School.

During her tenure, Martha Peek oversaw the largest school system in the State of Alabama with over 56,000 students. She successfully changed the perception of Mobile schools, improved test scores, and increased the graduation rate. She should also take great pride in the strides she made in establishing signature academies to help connect students with the skills they need to thrive in the local workforce.

Beyond her work in the school system, she is an involved community and civic member. She serves as a board member for the United Way of Southwest Alabama and Junior Achievement of Mobile and as a representative on the American Heart Association's National Superintendent Roundtable. Additionally, she is a member of the Leadership Alabama Class XXVI. In 2015, AL.com recognized her as one of the Women Who Shape the State of Alabama.

On behalf of Alabama's First Congressional District and the countless students she impacted throughout her remarkable career, I wish Martha Peek, and her husband, Tyler, all the best upon her retirement. Her legacy will live on in the Mobile County Public School System for years to come.

2018 HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan sailed westward past South America, he was struck by the serenity of the waters that lay before him. He then proclaimed this body of water Pacifico, meaning "peaceful."

This Pacific Ocean was thus a fitting backdrop for a meeting of a group of people attempting to bring peace into the lives of those affected by human trafficking.

Last month, the Human Trafficking Radar Research and Data Roundtable hosted their annual Human Trafficking Research Conference. Overlooking the Pacific Ocean from their venue in Point Loma, California, individuals committed to ending human trafficking gathered to discuss and share important research and ideas.

The featured speakers of the conference included accomplished academics and professionals, leaders in their fields to combat human trafficking. Two of the speakers, however, delivered a strong message by their mere presence together at the conference.

Ebony Jones suffered sexual abuse as a young girl. Soon after her eighteenth birthday, she found herself a victim of modern day slavery. Since escaping her trafficker, she has become a strong advocate for victims of human trafficking. Motivated by her own personal experience, Jones has worked to spread her message, people outside of low-income backgrounds are not immune to exploitation by traffickers.

Armand King once spent time behind bars for his life of crime, trafficking young women. But now, he's left his former life behind him. Armand is co-founder of Paving Great Futures, an organization that strives to drive at-risk individuals from a life of crime to opportunities of legitimate, respectable professions. King says he was lucky to be alive, and he relishes the opportunity to provide a unique and important perspective on human trafficking at the conference.

Together, near the very spot where the first Europeans landed in California several hundred years ago, Armand and Ebony urged the conference to pursue a new beginning: a world without human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, America needs more individuals like Ebony Jones and Armand King coming together to discuss ways in which we can reduce or eliminate human trafficking altogether. This scourge on humanity traumatizes the lives of thousands of people around the world, and their perspectives and support are a valuable asset as we continue the fight against this heinous crime.

Above all, Armand and Ebony strive to bring to the world what Magellan saw in those serene waters all those years ago: peace.

And that's just the way it is.