



Adults (L to R): Jeanette King, Janice Tipper, Mattie Christian, Trudy Watson, Clara D. Coe, Rosa Hawkins, Hattie Carter, Essie Hightower, DeeDee Burnum, Eldrew Coe, Tammie Hawkins, 4-H Students: Montrez Daniels, Stephanie Bowens, Kahila Davis, Edward Guy and 4-H Assistant Carrie Hall (& Board of Education Member), Melanie Shiver, Lakeshia Hawkins, Kathy Henderson, Belinda Hayes, Bonnie Walton, and Baker County School Principal Daniel Lovering.



Above: Adults (L to R): Bonnie Walton, Principal Lovering, Suzanna MacIntosh, Janice Tipper, Jerry Henderson with WALB-TV's Jennifer Emert. Below: Adults (L to R): Bonnie Walton, Tammie Hawkins, and Carla Heard.



## Baker County Celebrates Hands On Georgia Week 2009

When Baker County Southwest Georgia Master Gardeners began planning for Hands On Georgia Week in 2007 they had a very special project in mind. Baker County third grade teachers, Mrs. Janice Tipper and Mrs. Bonnie Walton, and their students had already started working on a memorial garden to honor the memory of two young students, 9-year-old Kierra Crumbley, and 13-year-old Kursty Thomas, who were killed when a devastating tornado tore through Baker County in early 2007.

Since that year the Southwest Georgia Master Gardeners have celebrated Hands On Georgia Week annually in the garden. This event provides an opportunity for the Master Gardeners to partner with the teachers and students to work on something of lasting importance and it provides an opportunity to focus attention on the garden and involve the community. Baker County is a sparsely populated rural county in southwest Georgia and there are few retail stores in its one incorporated town and so many of the resources and service organizations taken for granted in larger areas do not exist. As a consequence, the Southwest Georgia Master Gardener project is especially meaningful and has helped bring needed materials and volunteers together to help with the garden.

On Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009, leading up to this year's formal day of celebration, Dougherty County Urban Horticulture Extension Agent, James Morgan, presented a special lesson to the third grade students on "Beneficial Insects" that was designed to help them with their work in the garden.

On Friday, October 2, 2009, Baker County School Principal, Mr. Danny Lovering, began Hands On Georgia 2009 by welcoming the crowd and he thanked everyone for their dedication, hard work, and help with this important project. Baker County Primary School students, teachers, and staff joined Master Gardeners Carla Heard, Ruth Fountain, and Suzanna MacIntosh and third grade teachers and students to help with a fall cleanup and planting afternoon in the garden. Cooperative Extension Agent, Sylvia Davis and Extension Service representatives Carrie Hall and Pat Williams and 4-H students, Stephanie Bowens, Montrez Daniels, Kahila Davis, and Edward Guy and community volunteers pitched in to help. Master Gardener Kenny Kimbrel, though unable to join in the day's activities, had spent many hours earlier working in the garden.

The garden consists of an Outdoor Classroom area which incorporates a Memory Garden. In the Memory Garden flowers surround a small pond and there are benches and a memorial plaque. The Baker County PTO donated the beautiful picket fence that surrounds the Memory Garden. The garden plans include a butterfly garden, raised flowerbeds, garden paths, and a sheltered outdoor classroom area. The garden is designed to engage young students in order to help them succeed by teaching them math, science, gardening, teamwork, and so much more through the real life applications of their lessons in the garden.

During Hands On Georgia Week citizens in all 159 Georgia counties spend hours selflessly dedicating themselves in service to their communities. Georgia's Electric Membership Corporations, The Home Depot, and Wal-Mart generously sponsored this year's event. Hands On Georgia was launched in 2004 with initial investments from Coca-Cola, Home Depot, and the Woodruff Foundation.

*By Suzanna MacIntosh*

*The Southwest Georgia (SOWEGA) Master Gardener Association is coordinated through the Dougherty County Extension Office under the leadership of Urban Horticulture CEA James Morgan. The Association includes members from Baker, Dougherty, Lee, Mitchell, Sumter, Terrell, and Tift counties.*



Teacher Melanie Shiver & Students.

Below: Master Gardener Ruth Fountain helps with gardening techniques.



Above: Master Gardener Carla Heard with Students. Left (L to R): 4-H Students Stephanie Bowens & Kahila Davis with Pat Williams (center). Below Right: Carrie Hall, 4-H Assistant & School Board Member. Far Right: Dougherty County Urban Horticulture CEA James Morgan teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students about "Beneficial Insects".