



**April 16, 2014**

### **Millington, Jonesboro Students Take MSCC Speech Titles**

Erin Clark of Millington, Tenn., won two first-place awards, and Eric Gladden of Jonesboro earned a first and a second at Mid-South Community College's 2014 Speech Contest held on Wednesday, April 9.

Clark prevailed in the Prepared Speaking MSCC Topic and Prepared Speaking Open Topic categories. Gladden won the Impromptu Speaking competition and placed second in Prepared Speaking Open Topic.

Raneisha Hopkins of West Memphis placed second in Impromptu Speaking, and Homer Laster of Proctor came in third in Prepared Speaking Open Topic.

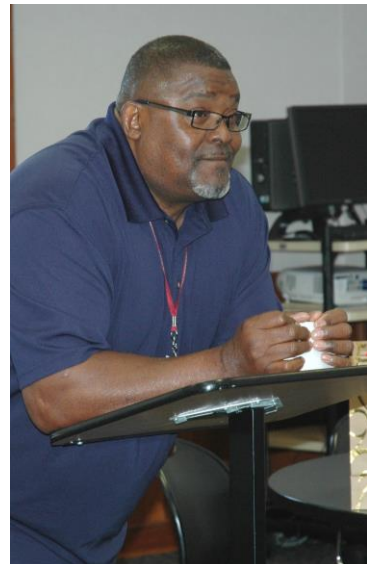
"We had seven participants in the contest this year, and I am so proud of each of them," said Mary Field, MSCC Communications instructor who coordinated the competition. "It takes courage and flexing your critical thinking muscles to be a speaker, and these students were awesome."



***Erin Clark***



***Eric Gladden***



***Homer Laster***

“In many people’s minds, public speaking is one of the most frightening experiences there is, so I commend our participants for their preparation and poise. I hope everyone congratulates them for meeting the challenge!”

Michelle McMillen, MSCC Communications instructor and Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness who served as one of the judges, said the quality of the students’ efforts impressed her.



***Raneisha Hopkins checks with event coordinator Mary Field before working on her impromptu speech.***

“The students embodied the qualities that we look for in public speaking, such as great eye contact, hand gestures, and voice projections,” she said. “I was particularly blown away by the ability of the students to come up with very organized and professional speeches for the impromptu contest where they were only given ten minutes to prepare. They were truly amazing!”

Clark won the Prepared Speaking MSCC Topic

competition with a presentation about why Mid-South is a great higher education choice for anyone.

“I graduated from Millington Central High School, and our senior year we had a big wall with stars on it. On each star, it contained our name and the school we were going to attend. Most of my classmates had Georgetown, University of Chattanooga, UT-Martin, TSU, and UTenn, but I had MSCC.

“People were asking me why. I told them MSCC outcompetes every other college I’ve seen or toured. I think MSCC is an extremely wise decision.”

Clark captured the open topic contest with a presentation on Foreign Accent Syndrome, a rare medical condition. She asked for a show of hands of audience members who had ever tried to speak with foreign accent, and several responded.

“What if you woke up, and you had that accent for real?” she asked. “FAS is one of the brain’s biggest mysteries and exemplifies the brain’s complexity as well as its magnificence.”

Gladden placed second with a presentation on the benefits of legalizing marijuana.

“I’ve extensively researched the benefits and the drawbacks of using marijuana, and I’m here to say that legalizing marijuana would be a good thing for our country. Marijuana would benefit our health, our personal lives, and our economy.”

He closed with a quote from Francis Young, who once served as a Drug Enforcement Administration administrative law judge: “Marijuana in its natural form is one of the safest, therapeutically-active substances known to man. One must reasonably conclude that there is accepted safety for use of marijuana under medical supervision.”

Laster placed third in the Prepared Speaking Open Topic division with a presentation on violence in the media.

“In today’s society, we all have young children that we want to protect from media violence. Young children and young teenagers are exposed to way too much violence. What can we do to stop violence in the media?”

In the Impromptu Speaking competition, all students received the same topic: What makes an effective public speaker?

Gladden won by demonstrating the three characteristics he outlined.

“As someone who has delivered several speeches throughout the semester, I feel like I’m kind of an expert in the subject now. The three things, to me, that make a good, effective speaker are confidence, appearance, and knowledge.

“Confidence is key. Your audience will not trust you if your head’s hanging down and you do not appear to know what you are talking about. You should also dress up a little bit to look professional and be well groomed. Knowledge is very important. You want to know your topic, and you need to know your audience.”

“Follow these three steps, and you’ll be winning your local speech contest in no time.”

Hopkins came in second with a presentation that focused on crowd awareness, engagement, and voice projection.

“I’m not saying that I am the perfect speaker, but I will let you be the judge. First I will talk about knowing your crowd. Knowing your crowd becomes a big help when it comes down to the age. You don’t want to talk about basketball or the game that just came on and you’re talking to ages between 50 and 90. That’s not going to help them at all.”

Eye contact is very important, Hopkins said. “When you don’t give people eye contact, they feel like. ‘Oh well she doesn’t want to look at me; she’s scared.’ Yes, I am shaking right now, but I’m trying to give everybody eye contact.”

MSCC employees Dr. Jeannie Oliver and Lindsey Stevens also served as contest judges.

For more information about special academic events and competitions at the college, please call (870) 733-6728 or visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis. General information about the college can be found at [www.midsouthcc.edu](http://www.midsouthcc.edu).