

## History of **COPE** Area Career Center

In 1962, Superintendent W. H. Hoole of Edisto District Schools encouraged the school's trustees to reserve Cope High School as a vocational-trade school. At the approval of the school board, **Bi-County Technical School** opened its doors in 1963, offering two courses, Auto Mechanics, and Electricity. Edisto, Denmark, and Norway-Springfield High Schools were served by the school.

By 1965 Cosmetology was added along with Building Construction. Students from Blackville High School in Barnwell County and Orangeburg District 5 Schools began attending. In 1966, six high schools from five districts were being served by Bi-County Technical School.

In 1967, two additional schools were added: G.W. Carver High School and Wilkinson High School. All superintendents from participating districts served on the joint board for the school. W.H Hoole served as sponsor of the newly named **Tri-County Technical School**. Myron Dunn became the acting principal for the first three years, followed by Harry E. Sanders for two years. J.M. Bratton was named the Director of the school, followed by E.A. Neumeister who served as Director until July of 1998. In 1970, the name Tri-county Technical School was changed to **Cope Area Vocational Center**.

In 1977, the present facility opened its doors to students from Orangeburg Districts 1, 4, and 8, and Bamberg 1.

In 1998, under the newly named Director, Sinclair R. Abraham, Sr., the center was renamed **Cope Area Career Center**, serving students from Orangeburg 4, Bamberg 1 and 2 school districts, comprising of Bamberg-Ehrhardt, Branchville, Denmark-Olar, Edisto and Hunter-Kinard-Tyler High Schools. Courses offered were Automotive Technology, Building Construction, Cosmetology, Computer-aided Drafting, Health Occupations, Industrial Electricity, Masonry Construction, and Welding & Metal Fabrication Technology.

In 2003 Mike Corey took over as the Director, and in 2006 Sandra K. Jameson became the Director. During this time many courses were changed to reflect the needs of the community. Law Enforcement and Early Childhood Education were added, while Building Construction was dropped along with Metal Fabrication. Computer-aided Drafting morphed into Project Lead The Way – Engineering. Between 2012 and 2016 Hospitality and Tourism was offered.

In 2017, COL Richard D. Leonard (USA-Ret) became the Principal/Director of **COPE** whereby a new branding campaign has begun. Likewise, Automotive Technology has shifted its focus from brakes and electrical to machines and light repair, to include small engines. First of its kind in the state of South Carolina, a Commercial Truck Driving Class-A (Permit) course is now available in conjunction with O-C Tech. Soft skills are being taught as a critical part of every course's curriculum in preparing students for the workforce in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.