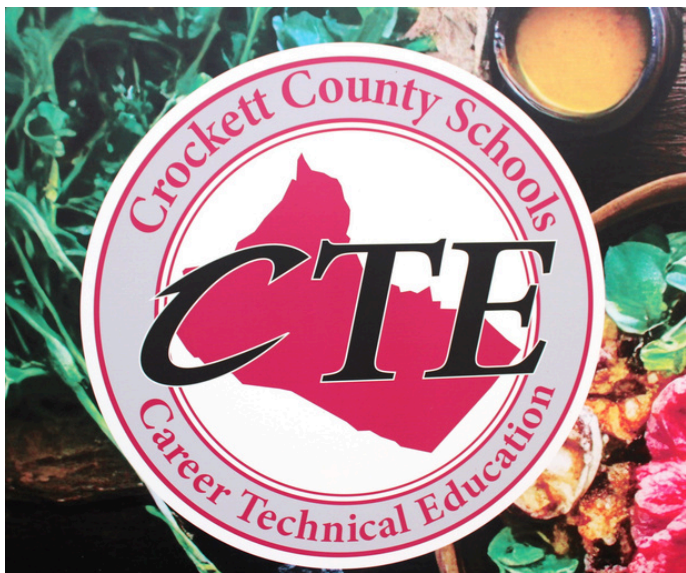


HALEY WILLIAMS HAD A DREAM - AND NOW YOU CAN SHOP IN IT



Above: All proceeds from sales at the General Store will go right back into the CTE program, fueling innovation by future students as well as current ones. (Photo by Ron Barry)

When you have a job you love, and are surrounded by people who love you, you may find yourself dreaming about ways to make everything even better.

Haley Williams has been an Agriculture teacher at Crockett County High School for 15 years, and has also served as the CTE (Career Technical Education) Director for the last seven. "Several years ago, my best friend and I were talking about what our next big project would be," Williams said. "How could we keep growing our programs? For me, the goal was clear: I wanted to grow the Ag program that truly built me – but I also wanted to innovate and elevate all of CTE at the high school."

And that's when the dream to create an on-campus store began – a place where products actually created by the Crockett students could be marketed and sold to the public, with the proceeds going back into the CTE program itself so innovation could continue.

"In 2021 I toured a similar store at an Ag Magnet School in San Antonio," Williams related. "I immediately messaged Coach Pratt (Director of Schools P. A. Pratt) and Coach Foust (Assistant Director Jared Foust) and told them that this is what I want for our school."

She acknowledged that there may have been some laughter and some raised eyebrows in the days to come, but – as Pratt stated in his recollection of events – "When Haley gets an idea in her head, I've learned not to dismiss it without giving it some decent consideration, because there's a good chance she's going to find a way to make it happen."

Soon thereafter, grant opportunities began coming from all directions.

"At meeting after meeting, I presented this idea – this vision – to anyone who would listen," Williams said. "Students of mine at the time bought into this dream without hesitation. They saw the future and believed in what this store could mean for our school. They helped plan, drew blueprints, erased them, and drew them again every time we had a new idea. They measured the plot of land behind the Blue Cross Park and marked lines so we could visualize what we would be building."

Two of those students – Bailey Ann Whitby and Kay Klonowski – helped to completely write the first Specialty Crop Block Grant that brought just over \$30,000 to the project.

"Then we got generous support from the Innovative School Model Grant and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Enhancement Grant," Williams continued. "These grants gave us the resources to turn our vision into reality, and we are incredibly grateful."

The core student group that worked tirelessly in the planning stages – besides Whitby and Klonowski – included Becca Butler, who make the store blueprints digital, and Addi Beth Work, Destiny Foster, Shelby Gantt, Brooklyn Haynes, and Lesley Morales. "There were so many more, and many students since, who have put it countless hours to help make this a success."

Next, Williams cited Wayne Carroll for his framing work at the beginning with students, and Rusty McKnight and all of his students who finished the walls, metal, trimming, ceiling, doors, cabinets, countertops, and more. "It's a powerful example of what CTE is all about," she said.

As the building began to take shape, McKnight said there were several revisions and mounting pressures to get it ready.

"There have been a lot of late hours and the pressure of meeting deadlines, and sometimes missing deadlines," he laughed. "But we wanted to make this place have a country type of atmosphere, but contemporary enough in design to be unique and attractive. I think we've accomplished that."

This past Friday – October 24, 2025 – the building was officially dedicated with a Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting and a grand opening that featured local education and community leaders, board members, business people, and most importantly, many of the students who produced it.

“It is a true celebration of what happens when vision, hard work, and community come together,” Williams said. “Many times this week, I stood quietly in the back of the store and just watched – watched students and teachers from four different classes working side by side to stock shelves, organize displays, and prepare for today (Friday). In those moments, I realized: It’s happening. It’s really happening! All the hard work, all the stress – it was worth it.

“The original idea for this project was more than just building a store – it was about creating a space that would energize and engage students in hands-on, real-world learning. We called it the GENERAL Store, a name that reflects our mission to make education more relevant, exciting, and connected to lifelong success. It’s a place where students from CTE programs can showcase their talents and see the impact of their work beyond the classroom.”

The store features a beautiful variety of displays, wood work, iron work, floral designs, and refrigerated containers to keep meat, salads, sandwiches, and other food products created in the facility’s full-sized kitchen. There is even a freeze dryer, which during the Grand Opening was making Skittles. It can be programmed by computer to provide a recipe and baking instructions before the candy is then freeze-dried.

At the Grand Opening, where Pratt delivered welcoming remarks and Williams explained how the enterprise came to be and expressed gratitude to all who helped, an enthusiastic crowd of close to 200 people gathered outside for the ribbon cutting and then made their way inside to be among the first customers of the store. Crockett students were there to serve them, including some who held placards of an enlarged QR code that automatically registered those who scanned it with their phones and put them on a mailing list.

Williams thanked the Crockett County Board of Education, the school district administrators, her fellow teachers, and her family, but saved the bulk of her praise for all of the current and past students who had a hand in bringing her dream to life.

“Students and teachers literally helped build this store from the ground up,” Williams said. “Thank you to every student who helped prepare for the Grand Opening, whether you were stocking shelves, marketing, organizing inventory, cleaning, designing displays, or just lending a helping hand. Your hard work and pride in this store have made it possible. You’ve shown what it means to take ownership of something bigger than yourself, and I couldn’t be more proud.

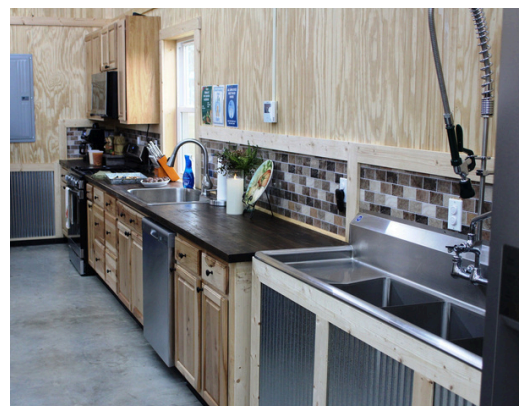
“CTE has always been strong at Crockett County High School, but we’ve lacked a public space to showcase the incredible talent of our students. My hope is that the General Store becomes a bridge – a place where all CTE programs can be promoted, celebrated, and connected to our community in meaningful ways.”

Williams also announced that recently retired CCHS secretary Sandy Woodruff – one of the school’s most popular figures during her tenure at the front desk – will be back to run the store on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



Above: Crockett CTE Director Haley Williams (center) stands proudly with four of her former students -- all now in college -- who helped her plan the original details of the store. From left: Kay Klonowski, Addi Beth Work, Williams, Bailey Ann Whitby, and Destiny Foster. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The service counter and rear interior of the beautiful new building, constructed by students and teachers. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The facility contains a full-size kitchen. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The store did a robust business on opening day. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Director of Schools P. A. Pratt delivered welcoming remarks to the crowd of close to 200 people. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: The General Store features attractive displays of the products for sale created by students. Iron work is set up backwards so the price tag is visible to shoppers. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: This machine keeps fresh flowers - with arrangements created by the Floral Design class -- refrigerated until a sale is made. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Student designs like this are scattered throughout the new facility. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: There's even a freeze dryer, which was making Skittles at the time of the Grand Opening -- all programmable by computer. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Small bags of potpourri are for sale. (Photo by Ron Barry)



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Left: ... but there are contemporary additions that give the building a very unique atmosphere. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Above: Items from the FCCLA Cafe are also available. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Want lunch? You can get that here too. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Freeze-dried candy has a display as well. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: More of the beautiful designs created by Crockett students. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The woodwork and decorations give a "country" feeling to the place ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: More of the store's decor. (Photo by Ron Barry)



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Above: Students kept busy Friday selling everything from fresh flowers to salads and meat products. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Students provided an easy way to register and get on a mailing list, all by scanning this QR code with your phone. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The official ribbon cutting to celebrate the Grand opening of the Crockett CTE General Store. (Photo by Ron Barry)