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## State lawmaker seeks millions for Dixie County to complete school construction



**Virginia Sanchez of Sanchez Farms accepts the Dixie Schools Business Partner of the Year Award for 2017 from Dixie County School Superintendent Mike Thomas.**

**Story and Photos By Terry Witt, Senior Reporter**

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**OLD TOWN** -- State Rep. Charles Wesley "Chuck" Clemons Sr. (R-Jonesville, Dist. 21) said on Friday (Feb. 24) that he has introduced legislation to provide more than \$8 million to the Dixie County School District for completion of the new Dixie County Middle High School.

The walls of the \$37.7 million-school have been constructed, but additional funding is needed to complete the school. Most of the money for construction of the school is being provided by the Florida Legislature through Special Facilities Funding.

The Dixie School District will provide about \$1 million of property tax revenue for school construction.

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**Third grader Bryce Dixon uses a chair to reach the microphone as he introduces April Kight, Teacher of the Year at Anderson Elementary School. Standing behind him is School Superintendent Mike Thomas.**

Clemons said State Sen. Robert “Rob” Bradley (R-Orange Park, Dist. 5), has introduced a companion bill that proposes giving Dixie County more than \$9 million for completion of the school.



**State Rep. Chuck Clemons addresses the crowd at the 12th Annual Dixie County Education-Business Partnership Luncheon.**

Clemons said the final allocation will be worked out in negotiations. He said the builder of the high school has indicated an additional \$10 million is needed to complete the facility.

Clemons was the guest speaker at 12th Annual Dixie County Education-Business Partnership Luncheon. Herman and Virginia Sanchez of Sanchez Farmers were named as the 2017 Business Partner of the Year.

School Superintendent Michael Thomas introduced Clemons, noting the freshman legislator was raised on a chicken farm in High Springs. He is a fourth generation Floridian who is vice president of management and communications at Santa Fe College in Gainesville.

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Clemons, a former stockbroker and financial planner, said education is the key to success in life.

His father, born in 1910, left school in sixth grade to help feed his brothers and sisters, but he raised his children to believe in education.



**Members of the Dixie County High School Band perform for the luncheon. The musicians were section leaders in the band.**

“His life intention for his children was to

better themselves and have a better life than he did through education,” Clemons said.

He told the story of one of his early teachers named Doris Richardson who taught him how to read and write in 1st grade. She later earned a doctoral degree. He saw Dr. Richardson 35 years later in a Gainesville restaurant seated with three young teachers. He hugged her neck and thanked her for teaching him how to read and write. He said tears came to her eyes. He was glad the younger teachers witnessed the thank you because it showed them what can happen when they help shape a child’s life through education.

“Tell the people who helped teach you to read and write they are really changing the world,” Clemons said.

One of the bills Clemons said he has introduced in Tallahassee for his first session as a lawmaker is a modified version of the Stand Your Ground bill that allows Floridians to protect themselves and their family but doesn’t require them to prove they are innocent.

“You shouldn’t have to prove you are innocent,” Clemons said.

He said state courts should determine who is guilty and innocent.