

# Thomasville Times

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## Calling Thomasvilles Home

**Staff Writer Kevin Reid - LEXINGTON** — As president and CEO of the American Children's Home, Dr. Russ Gobble has a nice house to live in on the home's campus in southern Lexington, but instead he chooses to live in Thomasville with his wife, Beth, and their son, Vince.

"My son is a sophomore at Thomasville High School," Gobble explained. "He's 16 years old and I don't want him driving down I-85 every day, commuting to school."

Not that Gobble has anything against schools in Lexington.

"There's nothing wrong with this area," Gobble said during an interview in his office. "I serve on the advisory council at Central Davidson High School, which is a great school, but I want to separate my family life from my business life."

After a 24 year career in public education as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent, Gobble took over the reigns at American Children's Home last August.

"Coming here gave me an opportunity to get back to what I wanted to do when I got into the school business, which was work with kids," he said. "This job puts me in close proximity with the children. In my other jobs I was working for the children, but not working with them. I much prefer working with them."

Born in Thomasville, Gobble attended Kern Street Elementary School through the third grade. Then his parents moved to what was then outside of the city limits and he went through Pilot Elementary and East Davidson High schools before heading to Appalachian State University. After graduating from Appalachian in 1979 with a degree in physical education, Gobble spent a few more years in Boone as assistant director of Watauga County Parks and Recreation. In 1983, his father was injured in a workplace accident and he decided to return to Thomasville.

Back in the Chair City, Gobble ran into his friend Woody Huneycutt, who said to him, "Why don't you go see my dad? We've got some job openings."

Huneycutt's father was superintendent of Thomasville City Schools at the time, and that August, Gobble started teaching at Thomasville High School. Although he enjoyed coaching, he soon found out teaching PE wasn't for him.

"I got tired of being in the gym with all those balls bouncing and all that noise," he remembered. "I was glad to get an opportunity to go to the classroom."

Gobble taught a lot of English and a little civics, but his speciality soon was found to be working with at-risk children.

"The schools had just started in-school suspension," Gobble said of the high school students whom he would be in charge of as they worked their way back to their regular class.

Surprisingly, Gobble has good memories of working with these children.

"We got a lot of stuff done in six hours with no distractions," he said. "The kids seemed

to flourish in that kind of environment. I always found a way I could work with those children. I think they respected me because I was a coach.”

The fact that Gobble commanded respect from students with discipline problems may have led people in different areas to suggest Gobble go into administration. After earning a masters in education from UNC-Greensboro in 1990, he became assistant principal at Thomasville High the next year. After a year in that position, he returned to his alma mater and spent the next four years as assistant principal at East Davidson. During those years at East, he earned his Ed. D. in educational leadership at Nova Southeastern University. Gobble then moved on to the Randolph County Schools where he served as principal of Randleman High (1996-98), Trinity High (1998-2002) and John R. Lawrence Elementary (2002-04) schools before becoming assistant superintendent of auxiliary services in January 2004.

Since August of 2001, Gobble has also taught part-time as an adjunct professor at UNCG in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations. In other words, he teaches teachers and leaders how to teach and lead. He continues to teach at UNCG, but left Randolph County Schools to take charge of American Children’s Home last August.

“I’m learning something brand new, and everybody here has been incredibly supportive of me,” Gobble said. “It’s like I what tell my students at UNCG about leadership: Sometimes there’s a need for revolution, but most of the time evolution is better.”

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