



## **COMMON GROUNDS**

### **RCA Marketing class opens its own coffee shop**

Conyers--- Many students may go out of their way to hit the nearest Starbucks every morning to satisfy the craving for a hot cup of coffee to get them through to lunch.

Rockdale Career Academy students, however, need only travel a hallway or two from their classroom to get their daily fix; they have a coffee shop right inside their school that is entirely run by their fellow students.

RCA's marketing student's led by instructor Sharon Shahan, opened Common Grounds Coffee House, Rockdale County's only student-run coffee shop. It's all part of a process to teach students the real-world skills needed to be successful in any business or marketing position, as well as the skills to be creative in their approach to business solutions, Shahan said.

"Our marketing class is industry-certified through the Georgia State Department of Education and the Sales and Marketing Executives," Shahan said. "As a part of that process, we had to develop a school-based enterprise."

Shahan said an example of a school-based enterprise would be your traditional school store, selling spirit wear and school supplies. But after conducting some marketing research around the school and in the local community as to what people wanted from a school-based enterprise, Shahan's students decided a traditional school store was not what they needed.

Students did surveys, brainstorming and research, and decided they would be better off with a coffee house. "Rockdale Career Academy is a unique school and we needed an innovative school store" she said.

Once her students had decided on a coffee shop, Shahan said they began doing more research to find out what the students, faculty and community of RCA thought would be the most attractive assets of a coffee shop.

With those results in mind, the students began contacting vendors to supply the coffee shop with everything it needed in order to be as professional as a Starbucks. Shahan said Common Grounds serves coffee and cappuccino from Community Coffee; sodas, juices and water from Coca-Cola; and snacks from Lance and Otis Spunkmeyer.

Nothing is over \$1.50, so everyone can afford something at Common Grounds.

Students have become professional at choosing which products they want, placing orders, sales, management, promoting and visual merchandising. This year the students are looking into creating loyalty cards and offering branded coffee mugs for sale.

The students would also like it to be known that they created the name and logo. They decided on Common Grounds because the students at RCA come from 3 different high schools in the community to a common building. The coffee house is also located in the common area of RCA. They chose the graphic of the world to build on the idea of many different people congregating in one common area.

Common Grounds Coffee House is located at the Rockdale Career Academy, 1064 Culpepper Drive, and is open to the public. Hours are 7:45am – 5:00pm Monday-Friday.