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blessed the wonderful meal that had been prepared by Daniel's Steakhouse. Even though the food was delicious, the time had come that all had been waiting for, the introduction of the guest speaker, Towns County Schools Superintendent, Melissa Williams.

"I am very blessed to be able to work in this great school system and live in this beautiful community with each of you," she said. "Even in South Georgia we call this area 'God's Country.' It's one of the most beautiful places I've ever had the privilege to live."

She had nothing but high praise for the Towns County Schools System, its teachers, administrators, and especially the students.

"We all have a great school system," she said. "We have some of the best students and consequently the best scores I have ever seen."

Williams excitedly shared and proudly professed that all three schools have made AYP for the last eight consecutive years.

"That's quite an accomplishment," she said. "Our graduation rate is 95.1 percent and is 21st in the state. Let's never take that for granted."

Williams told the group that her normal routine consists of beginning each day by dropping in early at the schools and checking in with the administrators, teachers, custodians, and lunchroom

workers. She also enjoys watching as the students unload from their buses each day, eager and excited about what the day may hold.

Williams offered a great deal of praise and recognition of the various programs within the school system. She also was quick to express what "an excellent job" Dr. Richard Behrens did while he was superintendent and noted that he left the system in wonderful shape.

"Our facilities are in excellent condition," she said. "They are beautiful, clean, and up-to-date electronically."

Williams announced a plan to implement a System Leadership Team which will give teachers more of a voice in system leadership in an effort to make changes in the system's instructional practices that she and the Board of Education think will have a positive impact on student achievement.

She went on to add that they hope to use the SLT to encourage existing educators to assume leadership roles.

"I am proud to be able to serve this community and to work with each of you," she said.

These were the closing words of a humble servant intent on continuing to build on a solid foundation of community-school relations.

"Please continue to encourage and support our students and our faculty and staff," she said.

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What does a retired log home builder do with his spare time? He builds log home mailboxes, of course. At least that's what Skip Peters of Young Harris does as a hobby.

Recently, he built a small replica of his log cabin as a mailbox with a three "apartment" birdhouse on the top level. It is already fully occupied with birds that recognize quality craftsmanship.

Skip's "hobby" is interesting and unique in that it serves as a therapeutic and creative outlet for this humble and very talented builder while providing a service to the folks of Towns County through his recycling efforts.

It also serves as a motivational reminder to all of us who sometimes forget that while we can't always do everything, we can always do something.

Several years ago, in a surgery that somehow went awry, Skip Peters lost the use of his left hand. While that would be a trial and a challenge for anyone, especially given the fact that he has always earned a living and supported this family using his two hands, Peters did not give up.

"He believes that God will restore his hand one day and looks forward to that day.

Until then, he has learned how to work with his good hand," says his wife of almost 40 years, Georgia Peters.

Skip Peters also decided to use recycled wood from Towns County to build his mailbox.

"I just saw a lot of scrap in dumpsters around the county and thought that would be a good way to recycle and put it to good use," he said. He drove around the county looking for building projects and explained to the owners that he would like to use their scraps and turn them into something creative.

They were happy to have him haul them away. He cuts down the scraps, turning them into the framing, log siding — each piece is cut and fashioned individually — windows, doors, and porch railings.

Working out of his makeshift workshop, he creates jigs that hold the pieces as he puts them together in order to make his mailboxes. Although it takes him longer than it would if he had two hands, eventually he completes his challenging projects.

"It may not be as perfect as it would have been if I had two hands, but it will do," Skip Peters said in a very modest demeanor.

Although a more tedious project, he loves to feed the birds and has built several birdhouses that are much simpler.

Other projects include a gate he built for his front porch and tables for the back deck, all from salvaged scraps which most likely would have wound up in the county landfills.

"I have to work with my hands," he said with a smile. "It's just how I am. I love to build, although this is on a much smaller scale than what I did most of my life."

Skip Peters lives with his wife, Georgia, both veterans, and their three Yorkshire Terriers in their log home in Young Harris. They moved here in December 2011 and "fell in love with the mountains the day that we arrived here."

Although Skip Peters did not build the house that they live in, he plans to add a small shed, a garage, clear the land, and plant fruit trees and complete other projects around the house that will keep him busy.

"We would just like for people to know that we love our new county and enjoy creating things out of something that would otherwise be thrown away," Skip Peters said.

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year's junior class. "It has been a pleasure to work with these students."

"Overall, the class sold over \$14,000 worth of merchandise, however, that certainly doesn't reflect our overall profit," she said. "We ended up netting about 35 percent-40 percent of that amount."

Morrison said that two main fundraisers were held in the fall.

"They sold candles and fruit, but they have worked very hard all year," she said.

JB JAMS Enterprises and Events of Gainesville provided the entertainment for this year's prom, including music, lighting, decorations, and refreshments; all based on the theme voted on by the junior class.

This year's theme: 'Welcome to the Jungle.'

Everyone danced, laughed, strutted their outfits, ate, socialized, and snapped pictures until the big moment finally arrived that they had all been waiting for; the crowning of the 2012 Prom Queen and King. The 2012 honors



Juniors and seniors dance the night away during the 2012 Junior/Senior Prom at North Georgia Technical College on Saturday in Blairsville. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

went to Queen Ali Bleckley and King Dakota Barrett.

The 2012 Prom Attendants were Makayla Underwood, Vanessa Eller, Courtney Marshall, and Ansley Vardeman.

"Overall, prom was a successful event," Morrison said. "The students seemed to have a good time and we

had absolutely no problems. They were all extremely well behaved. This has been an excellent group of students to work with."

Everyone in attendance walked away with a theme based T-shirt as a memento of a night they will cherish for many years to come. The T-shirts were

designed by John Landress.

The Junior Class and the Junior Class Sponsors would like to recognize the following for their support of this year's prom, Michael Lee's Chocolate Caffe, Carol's Floral Creations, Moose Creek Furniture and Home Décor, Fieldstone Cinemas, Fun World, and Café Portifino.

Band...continued from page 1A

band concert of the school year; it was also the last concert Daniel Isaacs, Towns County School's Band Director, will be conducting for the Towns County School System. Isaacs announced that he "has made the decision to take a sabbatical and return to school to further my education in music and will pursue my Master's Degree." Isaacs also announced that former TCHS Band Director, Frank McKinney, will be returning in the fall of 2012 as the school's new Band Teacher/Director.

Don Cheyne, a retired band director and resident of Blue Ridge, emceed the event.

The excitement began with the Towns County Middle School Beginning Band made up of about 20 sixth graders who wowed the group with their rendition of 'Bell Canyon March,' 'Anasazi,' and 'Midnight Mission.'

Following their performance of 'Anasazi,' Cheyne addressed the audience saying, "these young people only started an instrument about eight months ago; pretty good for students playing less than a year."

The following awards were presented to this fine group of musicians.

Rookie Award: Zachary Jensen; Participation Awards: Kyle Holloway, Tiffany Mitchell, Emerald Hunley, Evan Phillips, and Megan Wallace. Most Improved Awards:

Woodwinds: Melissa Caldwell and James Fagin; High Brass: Cason Shook; Low Brass: Sophie Parsons and

Jacob Schmitz; Percussion: Johnathan Ditmore and Hannah Martinez. Most Outstanding Musician Awards: Woodwinds: Evan Berrong and Caden Pylrik; High Brass: Alyssa Hunter and Jasmine Miranda; Low Brass: Benjamin Edwards and Miranda White; Percussion: Madison Keller and Savannah Medley.

The second group to provide an outstanding performance was the Towns County Middle School Concert Band comprised of about 15 very talented seventh grade students.

They brought the stage to life with their 'Aztec Sunrise,' 'Wingate March,' 'Jupiter,' and 'Defender of Time.'

Once again it was awards time and the following seventh grade members of the TCMS Concert Band were recognized. Participation Awards: Chad Jones and Andres Rojas; Most Improved Awards: Woodwinds: Jade Ledford and Paige Scott; High Brass: Riley Roach and Angel Thomas; Low Brass: Shawn Watson; Percussion: Brooke Crews. Most Outstanding Musician Awards: Woodwinds: Emma Watkins and Hannah Green; High Brass: Josh Goeltz; Low Brass: Tori Bradshaw and Kenzie Jenkins; Percussion: Alyssa Chastain and Tyler Sisco.

Not to be outdone, the Towns County Middle School Symphonic Band, made up of about 20 eighth graders, provided an awesome performance as they opened with 'Racing the Sun' and followed with 'Knights of Destiny.' They really shined with their closing arrangement, 'Pirates of the Caribbean.'

Mom...continued from page 1A

and other beautiful foliage on their way to the lodge event and when returning to their vehicles with their purchased treasures.

There were approximately 40 juried arts and crafts vendors displaying their handmade wares for all the lodge visitors to enjoy, and hopefully make that special selection for Mom to celebrate her special day.

One of the more delicious vending items was provided by Blairsville's Mary Fleury. Mary works out of her home and sells to local stores and gift shops. She had a huge selection of delectable treats that were attractively gift boxed or hand wrapped in a very

attractive fashion. Her wares included peanut brittle, almond butter crunch, and various assortments of fudge that would make any Mother's mouth turn upward in an appreciative smile.

Another Blairsville artist available was Angie Herndon. She had a beautiful assortment of "chocolate swirl pottery, marbled Georgia red clay pottery, and traditional glazes on white stoneware."

Mary Lengnick of Young Harris boasted a large selection of homemade jewelry. She works with beads, copper, sterling silver, various fibers, shells, but probably the most interesting piece was a neck-

lace made from 'alligator bone and tail.' Mary has been beading for about 25 years and doing what she refers to as "copper cold connections."

Jimmy Smith of Sautee had a varied assortment of birdhouses that he makes from "reclaimed wood and tin." They all had a unique design.

"I just started doing shows this year," Smith said. "This is my first time here at this one."

He had many people stopping to admire his work and talk with him about his craft, so it probably won't be his last show at Brasstown.

A very unique craft booth

was that of JoAnne Smith of Demorest with her display of hand-made scarves, dolls, hats, and purses. She operates under the name of 'Twisted Stitches.' She stated that she uses, "recycled sari silk from India, mohair from England, lace from Italy, and everything else is from Istanbul, Turkey."

There were visitors there who were local and some from Illinois, Virginia, Michigan, Vermont, Tennessee, North Carolina, and several guests from various counties throughout Georgia. Whether local or just visiting, one thing is for sure, people seemed to thoroughly enjoy the assorted supply of creative gifts available for purchase.

Young Harris College confers 146 degrees; Iskason gives address

YOUNG HARRIS—May 5th, was a big day for Marcus McGill, of Young Harris, as he walked across the stage at Young Harris College to receive his bachelor's degree in business and public policy.

McGill was one of 146 graduates participating in Young Harris College's Commencement ceremony in the YHC Recreation and Fitness Center, and one of 99 seniors earning degrees in biology, business and public policy, communication studies, English, history, music, musical theatre, outdoor leadership and theatre. 2012 marks the second year that YHC has awarded bachelor's degrees since receiving accreditation in 2008 to offer four-year programs.

Also on Saturday, the College awarded 47 associate

degrees in liberal arts, art, music, theatre, science, allied health, business and education, and many of these students will return in the fall to continue pursuing their bachelor's degrees.

Among that group of graduating sophomores was McGill's fiancée, Brittany Starrett, of Monroe, Ga. The two will be tying the knot shortly before McGill begins seminary this fall. He has another big decision ahead of him since he has been accepted to at least nine different institutions, including Asbury Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Wake Forest University School of Divinity.

McGill follows in the footsteps of generations of family members before him, in-

cluding legendary local pastor Jimmy Rogers, who has been an important religious figure in Towns County for more than six decades, having served as pastor at numerous Baptist churches in the area.

"I will be following in the path of previous generations of my family, such as my great-grandfather, Oda Rogers, my grandfather and hero, Jimmy Rogers, and my uncle, Ricky Rogers, just to name a few," McGill said. "I chose this path because I sense a call to the ministry, and I believe one needs to be equipped and educated to do that sort of work in this day and age. YHC offers so much to its students, one of which is an environment of faith, hope and love."

McGill credits several mentors with steering him in

the right direction while at YHC, including many professors who challenged him to excel academically. Outside of the classroom, McGill served as a Student Government Association senator during his freshman year and went on to become part of the SGA executive board as Sergeant at Arms. He also worked as a resident assistant on campus and completed a business and public policy internship during the summer with the Towns County Probate and Magistrate Court.

"While at seminary, I hope to be equipped and strengthened in my faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. I also look forward to any connections I will make with other future ministers," McGill added.

United States Senator Johnny Iskason, R-Ga., deliv-

ered the commencement address to the graduates, sharing with them "six secrets to success."

Young Harris College President Cathy Cox presented Iskason with an honorary doctor of public service degree. For more than four decades, he has served the citizens of the State of Georgia and the United States through roles in the Georgia Legislature, the Georgia Board of Education, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Prior to entering politics, Iskason served in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972.

President Cox also conferred an honorary doctor of humane letters degree on YHC trustee Dr. W. Harry Hill and his wife Harriet Hargrove Hill, of Powder Springs, Ga. Few

couples have had as great an impact on the physical and financial landscape of the College as Dr. and Mrs. Hill, and their longtime financial support and leadership at YHC has included playing an integral part in establishing the College's planned giving program.

The Young Harris College Medallion, the highest honor bestowed by YHC to alumni and friends who have made extraordinary contributions, was awarded to Atlanta's Pam R. Rollins, in recognition of her leadership on the College's Board of Trustees and as chair of the College's capital campaign. In March, Rollins announced a \$22 million lead gift from the O. Wayne Rollins Foundation to help YHC build a new 125,000-square-foot campus center.