

Towns County Seniors take pledge as future educators

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Nine Towns County High School graduating seniors committed to teaching future generations of students during TCHS' first Future Georgia Educator Signing Day on Tuesday, May 16.

Similar to an athletic signing event, but instead of pledging to play sports, these students are pledging to devote their collegiate studies to pursuing a career in education.

The TCHS seniors that signed to be future Georgia educators include Madison Landress, Tori Bradshaw, Courtney Giles, Kaylea Parker, Cadence Nichols, Kristen Henson, Jackson Taylor, Alyssa Chastain and Chloe Spears.

"This is the first time that Towns County has hosted a Future Georgia Educator Signing Day," said Dr. Darren Berrong, Towns County Schools Superintendent. "This was started by our state superintendent in an attempt to get more students into the education field."

"One of the statistics

that was sent out to us was that 60 percent of educators work within 20 miles of the high school that they graduated from.

"The weird thing is, very few people are actually going into the education field although it is one of the places that you can actually work close to home, where you grew up."

Dr. Berrong congratulated each of the students for making such an honorable commitment and invited each of them back to Towns County to teach, no matter how far from home their collegiate careers may take them.

"I think this is a good thing," said Dr. Berrong. "We always honor athletes who are going to college for baseball scholarships and similar things. We feel like going into the teaching profession is just as important as any of those types of activities."

"This is your career and we hope to one day see you guys back teaching in Towns County. There's a lot of opportunities in the education profession for you."

Only four of the nine

students pursuing a post-secondary education in teaching were able to attend the signing event but, nevertheless, those four were ready, pens in hand, prepared and eager to sign their letters of intent.

"As far as education goes, we're very thankful that you're going into education," said Dr. Berrong. "It's a great feeling to be able to give back after all that your teachers have done. That's a feeling that I hope all you will be able to get as you go through your careers."

Each student signed the commitment certificate as their family, friends and teachers looked on with pride as these graduating seniors made a step toward the rest of their lives.

The commitment certificate read, "You are committing to improve the quality of education for students in the state of Georgia. The State School Superintendent Richard Woods, your local administrators, community members and teachers commend you on making an honorable decision to improve the quality of life for Georgia citizens through the educational process."



L-R at table: seniors Kaylea Parker, Courtney Giles, Tori Bradshaw and Chloe Spears. These young women took part in the Future Georgia Educator Signing Day on Tuesday, May 16. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

While each student's enthusiasm and admiration for the field of education varies from person to person, they all stem from one thing – love. For TCHS senior Chloe Spears, her love of the faculty and staff of TCHS is what made her decide to pursue such a career, in the hopes of one day reciprocating

the affection she has always received from her teachers.

"I want to be an educator because the education team at Towns County High School has helped me so much personally and educationally," said Spears. "They've really helped me want to make more of myself and I want to be able to give

the same opportunities that I've been given to other children.

"I absolutely love people. That's what I want to do, love people and teach them."

Spears will be attending Young Harris College and hopes to one day return to the Towns County School System to teach.

TCHS Honors...from Page 1A

your rewards. I look forward to seeing you build upon your success in the future.

"If for some reason you did not quite achieve all that you wanted to this year, work harder, stay focused and remember that there is nothing that you cannot do if you set your mind to it."

Ninth-grade through 11th-grade students were awarded certificates for having achieved the A-B Honor Roll, as well as the All A Honor Roll, an award that requires continuous hard work and dedication.

Students were also honored with the University of Georgia Certificates of Merit, Woodmen Life History Award and new National Beta Club students were inducted.

Towns County teachers presented the awards to their students, and were clearly very proud of their accomplishments.

Also honored at the event were the individuals from each grade level with the Top 3 weighted grade point averages.

Those GPAs for the freshman class, which will be sophomores next school year, were: highest, Chase Reece; second highest, Mackenzie Wallace; and third highest, Journey Hunter.

Representing the highest level of academics for 2016-2017 sophomores were: highest, Kendall Floyd; second highest, Chase Rogers; and third highest, Emily Williams.

And those recognized for highest GPAs as juniors, who will be seniors for next year's Class of 2018, were: highest, Sara Beth Hobbs; second highest, Zachary Davenport; and third highest, Sarah Bastian.

While the ceremony was an academic celebration, one very special student at TCHS received recognition



Freshman Julia Chinkham received the Life Saving Award for using CPR to resuscitate a little boy who had stopped breathing. Pictured here with Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, left, and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

for her heroic deed outside the classroom – Julia Chinkham.

Two months ago, Chinkham saved the life of a young boy by performing CPR techniques that she had learned at school, from Coach Jeannie Ledford and Sarah Vardo.

Presenting the award to Chinkham on behalf of the county was Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Towns County Sheriff's Office Col. Terry Conner.

"I want to thank the school system and administration for all that they do," said Commissioner Bradshaw. "I also want to thank the two teachers who teach CPR, Sarah and Jeannie. And to Julia, what courage it took to do that."

"There are certain things that people do that are so special

and saving that little boy's life is one of them. Thank you."

Dr. Hobbs also awarded Chinkham with a plaque from the school to recognize her outstanding courage and bravery.

Before the ceremony came to a close, Dr. Hobbs took the time to thank the parents and teachers who support the students both inside and outside the classroom. Dr. Hobbs added that, without that continuous encouragement, these students would not be where they are today.

"High school teachers, you work in what I consider to be the hardest but most important and most rewarding profession that there is," said Dr. Hobbs. "You all do an awesome job day after day after day. I can't thank you enough."

Eggfest...from Page 1A



A couple thousand people showed up to get their mouths on some delicious Green Egg fixings on Saturday, May 20, at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

We had over 300 people come out last night for the meet and greet party. We had over 1,000 tasters registered in advance, not to mention those who didn't register early and bought a ticket at the gate today.

"We have 127 cooks here today and more than 30 cooks on the waiting list."

Cooks from Hiawassee to all across the Southeast to as far away as Canada came out to crank up their Big Green Egg grills and wow festivalgoers with their best-cooked treats.

Grilled piña colada muffins, Vidalia onion casserole, shrimp 'n grits, bacon-filled pancakes, brisket, stuffed mushrooms – the list went on and on with one delicious treat after another for tasters and guests to try.

According to Thomason, close to 3,000 people came out for the Eggfest, making it one of the biggest years to date. Annual "eggheads" and newcomers alike filled the Fairgrounds, all piling into the booths with empty stomachs, ready to eat.

For many foodies across the Southeast, the Eggfest is a must every year but for Mike and Wanda Thompson, this year's festival was their first and needless to say, it will certainly not be their last.

The couple traveled from Atlanta with friends Eve and Charles Garrett to camp at the Fairgrounds but, more specifically, to see what the Eggfest is all about.

"We stay at the Fairgrounds pretty regularly,"

said Wanda. "Well, Mike was looking online and saw the Eggfest and said that we had to go this weekend."

"So far, my favorite has been the cranberry breakfast bake. It was really good. So good, that we'll definitely come back next year. This has been a lot of fun."

Festivalgoers were not the only ones having a good time – the cooks were as well. Kurt Halls, a three-year veteran egg chef and owner of Caribeque Seasoning and Rub Company, said that he travels all the way from Tampa, Florida each year just to cook and spend time with his friends at the Eggfest.

"This is my third time here," said Halls. "I love it so much. I drive eight hours every year to come here and cook with my friends. There's a big crew of us and we all hang out and cook and laugh and just have a good time."

Although Halls could easily cook on any type of grill to serve up his deliciously seasoned honey heat chicken wings, he said that nothing could ever beat the quality and versatility of cooking on a Big Green Egg.

"These Green Eggs are so versatile," said Halls. "You can bake bread. You can cook pizzas. You can cook chicken wings. You can fry on them, if you're safe. You can use an iron skillet. You can cook briskets. You can cook just about anything."

"I own two large Eggs and two small ones. I love them

and couldn't imagine cooking on anything else."

While for some cooks, the festival was about kicking back and sharing good food, others focused more on the art of cooking and presenting the food to tasters more than anything else.

"This our fifth time at the Eggfest," said Tim Barnes. "We love Hiawassee. We're making a little bit of everything today. We have bratwurst and sauerkraut. We also have apple dumplings. We have macaroni and cheese."

"We make smoked bologna, or poor man's steak. Then we make something called the triple threat and it has chocolate, peanut butter and chocolate chip cookies in it. We make a little bit of everything."

"You can cook anything on these grills. When you buy an Egg, you're buying a grill for life."

After six hours of tasting and socializing, the festival came to a close. While this year's event may be over, next year's is already in the works. Thomason encourages everyone to go ahead and sign up now, promising that next year will be even better than this one.

"Everybody has such a good time doing this that they want to keep coming back," said Thomason. "And those who haven't been out here before, they want to come out and see what's going on."

"It's just a really fun time. It's a beautiful setting, great food and good company. You can't beat it."



Juniors, sophomores and freshmen students received recognition on Honors Day for their hard work this school year. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild Outreach Program



Quilt Camp, a Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild outreach program, worked with the Joy of Learning School to complete a school quilt to hang in their foyer. Each student and teacher contributed at least one block for the project. NT(May24)Z6CA