

Whirlie students compete in first annual Battle of the Books for Guilford County

BY JACOB WOODS
Photographer and Reporter

Nine high school teams gathered in the Chance-Cousins auditorium on Friday, March 1, for the first high school Battle of the Books in Guilford County. Students read 15 novels that Guilford County officials chose and then answered questions regarding details from the various literary works, which required titles and authors in their responses.

Offering incentives to promote reading, Battle of the Books is a program geared to students from third through twelfth grades. It has been in operation for over twenty years and began in Beldridge, California in a small rural district. The program has expanded across the nation and is also utilized in schools overseas.

According to its website, <http://www.battleofthebooks.org/mission>, the organization's "hope is to sponsor a national battle of the books competition during the next decade."

Thanks to competitors Annie Chen, Avery Fink, Ayana Cain, Ayashe Ramey, Callie Daniel, Charlotte Fowler, Claire Hendrickson, Doha Medani, Lia Bauert, Maddie Braye, Malena Martin, Olivia Gerald, Selena Drees and Victoria Alexander, the Whirlie team took first place.

"The description of Battle of the Books is all in its name. You read, comprehend, and battle on the memorization of the details from the books you have read. Battle of the Books is just like your normal club, except that in this club, you go on many adventures in different books and learn different things you never knew," said junior Ayana Cain.

Participation in Battle of the Books is an impressive feature for a student's college application since it is an extra-curricular activity. It is common knowledge that avid readers, who build upon reading skills from an early age, grow into well-educated adults.

"Battle of the books is a lot of fun because you get to hang out with your friends. It's a pretty good experience and it looks good on a resume," said sophomore Malena Martin.

Competition comes in all forms; for some students, it is through sports, music, art, drama, or GPAs.

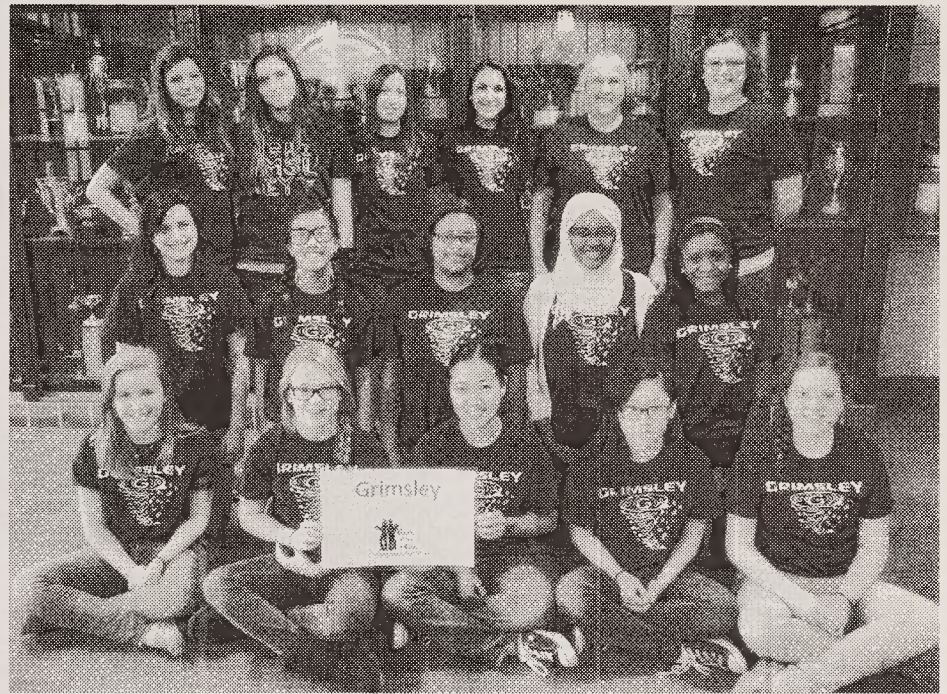
"Football players use their strength to succeed, we use our minds. We're like the fab five, except there are fourteen of us," said junior Olivia Gerald.

For some of the students involved, it was not about competition; rather, it was an engaging opportunity to feed their passion for reading.

"Battle of the books is a way to find good books to read and helps you cultivate a love of reading," said junior Victoria Alexander.

Media specialist Jessica Sherard organized and ran the event. Her encouragement toward her team members certainly increased the Whirlie team's success.

"I'm so proud of our Battle of the Books team; they read 15 novels (roughly 4,000 pages), created questions for the novels, and practiced a total of three and a half hours every week for the last two months. They've worked so hard, and I was happy to see all of their hard work pay off," said Sherard.



Front row, let to right: Claire Hendrickson, Victoria Alexander, Callie Daniel, Annie Chen, and Ayashe Ramey. Second row: Avery Fink, Lia Bauert, Ayana Cain, Doha Medani, and Olivia Gerald. Third row: Selena Drees, Maddie Braye, Charlotte Fowler, Malena Martin, Sylvia Meisner (Coach), and Jessica Sherard (Coach and Media Specialist). Gruer photo

Whirlie Walk wins big with strong turnout, generous donations

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Students, teachers, staff, alumni, and members of the community joined together in a fundraising event that the Grimsley Alumni Association sponsored on Saturday, March 23. The association provides student scholarships, grants and instructional materials for teachers, and an array of other donations to meet the needs of the school population. Sound systems for the gym and auditorium, security cameras throughout the campus, reforestation of the front lawn, and a donation to maintain the annual Senior Tea were just some of the contributions from the group's previous efforts.

Participants of the Whirlie Walk met at Jamieson Stadium, and from there, they departed at approximately 9:30 am, following a route along the Benjamin Parkway sidewalk across the street on in the park and into the Westwood neighborhood and back. The walk took about one hour, and upon their return to campus, drinks and snacks were available.

Several of the students joined forces as teams created from school clubs, sports teams, and other organizations. They walked with a purpose, aware of the school's immediate needs, such as improvements to the auditorium and the purchasing of additional technology for the classrooms.

"I walked with other members of National Honor Society. This was my first Whirlie Walk," said senior Rachel Cox, "and it was a lot of fun."

Major sponsors of the event were NIKE and North Carolina Graduate Services. Nike provided two pairs of sneakers for a raffle and offered a notable discount for the t-shirts, while NC Graduate Services made a very generous donation. Each year, the association distributes a pamphlet with information regarding the Whirlie Walk and a table for participants to list their sponsors and the amount they wish to donate.

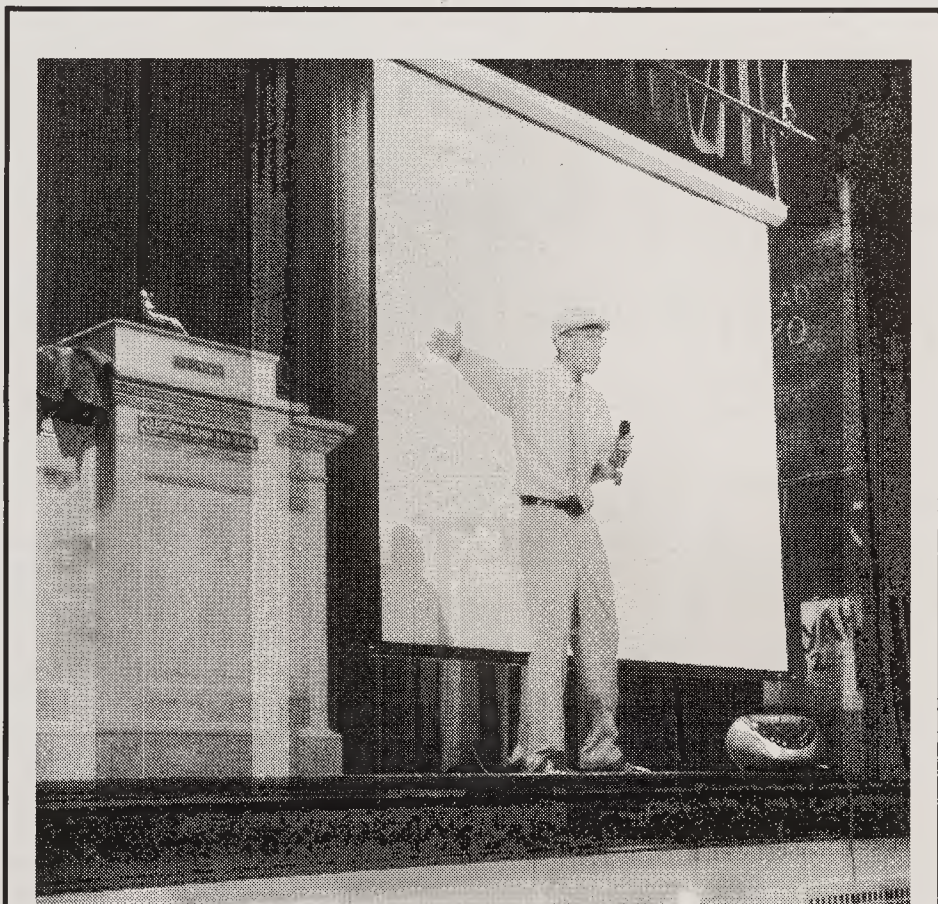
Now an annual event, the Whirlie Walk has grown in popularity over the past few years, for which the Alumni Association and the recipients of their kindness are most grateful. Volunteers are also a must for such an event. Members of the math department, Athletic Director Lewis Newman, and Student Resource Officer Marc Ridgill were among those who assisted this year.

"The Whirlie Walk started about seven or eight years ago, and we did not hold it for a couple of years. Money raised the first year was over \$10,000, and I think it was a little over \$4,000 last year," said Alumni Association member and teacher Joe Franks.

While over 200 participants showed up in some years, there were also times with fewer than 100 participants," said Franks, who hoped for "over 150 this year."

Like Joe Franks, math teacher Roberta Rohan is very proud to be involved with the Alumni Association.

"We had about 80 participants on the walk this year, but some people who did not make the walk still made donations. We raised about \$3600," said Rohan.



Because of marketing teacher Atiba Bethea's good intentions, students from all subject areas had the opportunity to hear motivational speaker Larry Rivera on February 21. Rivera has been a friend of Bethea for many years, and both serve as examples of young men overcoming adversity during their lives. Rivera encouraged his audience to live responsibly, make smart decisions, and value education as an ongoing process. He openly expressed stories of his past when he served prison time. Making the most of a difficult situation, Rivera obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration while incarcerated. Woods photo