

Airman Patrick Thomas selected airman of the year

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The 725th Air Mobility Squadron (AMS) recently honored Senior Airman Patrick Thomas with an award for 2006. Thomas, an environmental technician, was named Airman of the Year.

Being named Airman of the Year was a surprise for Thomas, who said he is not really sure what set him apart from his fellow airmen. "I feel that we all work hard day to day for the success of the mission," he said. "If I had to pick something I guess I would say that I am always trying to help other airmen on and off duty."

Thomas, one of 28 Senior Airmen is the 2006 Levitow Award recipient and is a key player in the launch of more than 1,200 AMC war fighter missions. Additionally, Thomas was praised by the U.S. Transportation Command for pinpointing and fixing

an electrical fault during an aircraft launch, as well as supporting engine runs as safety ground observer for Presidential support aircraft. Thomas also responded to smoke in the cargo compartment of a C-5 and took charge, ensuring the safe evacuation of bystanders.

"To me being named Airman of the Year means to represent what a lot of us do everyday," Thomas said. "That is to go out and do your job to the best of your ability for mission success, and to be active in the squadron and community, while helping anyone that needs a hand; to not only work to better yourself, but others around you as well."

Sgt. Airman Thomas is a 2001 graduate of Mt. Tabor High School, Winston-Salem. He is the son of Marjorie Thomas Jones; grandson of Mary G. Thomas and great grandson of Martha G. Jones of Winston-Salem.



Thomas

Magnet school, teacher honored

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Ashley Elementary School, a magnet school in Winston-Salem, has received statewide honors for efforts to provide its students with an international education.

Ashley was recognized as "North Carolina School of the Year" by the Visiting International Faculty Program, the largest international exchange program linking U.S. schools and teachers worldwide. At Ashley, VIF teachers help bring an international perspective to the school's dual immersion program. Students in dual immersion classes are taught in both in Spanish and English every day. Ashley also is a magnet school for the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme.

The award from VIF recognizes Ashley for "significantly fostering global perspectives in students through efforts in international education."

VIF also recognized Sara Vera Quiñonez, a reading and Spanish teacher from Ecuador, as an



Sara Vera Quiñonez entertains students.

Outstanding Cultural Ambassador. Quiñonez teaches at Kimberley Park Elementary School in Winston-Salem.

This school year, the VIF Program is sponsoring 38 interna-

tional teachers in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools and about 900 in North Carolina. Overall, about 1,700 teachers from 52 nations are teaching in 10 states through the VIF Program.

Awards

from page B14

ed with the Safe Bus Company. We have also enjoyed a longtime relationship with the late Mr. Charlie Clinton, a passenger who rode the buses for years. He always said that he was just socializing."

Artis believes that socializing with friends helps make a person happier. Since many of the operators are now retired, he encourages them to get together more just to socialize.

Hugs, kisses, and laughs dominated the body language around the room.

"This is old friendship. Everybody has been away from each other," said Jacob Johnson. "We enjoy each other. We even enjoyed our passengers. The people lift you up, and sometimes you lift them."

Jimmy Gardner retired after 32 years as an operator. He greeted several friends and posed for many snapshots.

"I haven't seen my friends in a while. I love



James Miles, Patsy Rogers and the Rev. Terry Leak share a laugh.

spreading that love, that spirituality," said Gardner. "If I didn't do this, they would think I was mad at them."

Gardner explained his work schedule. He arose each morning at 3:30 a.m., arrived at work by 5:30 a.m., and worked until 1:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. He enjoyed his job as an opera-

tor. Willie Meadows, 66, was an operator for 20 years. Driving the bus was a great comfort to him.

"I felt comfortable behind the wheel. When you drive, there is no one standing over you to tell you how sharp to turn. You are free to be the expert," said Meadows. Sometimes the passengers talked with me about their

problems on the job. I met many friends on the job."

The Rev. Robert Coleman has officially retired, but he still keeps driving.

"It keeps me active. I get to meet a lot of people. I can give them an encouraging word," said Coleman.

Artis and the others look forward to next year's celebration.



Union President Marvin Artis.

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"We have relationships with larger banks as well, but with M&F Bank it's like we're neighbors. The City Executive and staff have always been very helpful. And the Bank's 100th anniversary is significant because it shows that businesses can support each other, and we can compete in the marketplace without being swallowed up by larger companies and losing our identity."

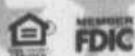
—Vivian Joiner & Stephanie Tyson, owners of Sweet Potatoes — A Restaurant

"We've been customers since M&F Bank opened here. There is such a warm and welcoming atmosphere at the bank, and it means a lot to know that people know who we are. They've always been here for us, and we've never had any interest in banking anywhere else."

—Veronica & Jacob Hughes

"Thinking about what the 100th anniversary means, what comes to mind is the time when our church needed financing and no other bank responded with a 'yes' except M&F Bank. It's good to see the organization grow, but they prove that a small bank can make big things happen. We've always had an excellent relationship with the local staff, and it's just been a good banking experience all around."

—Darrell Slade & Gordon Slade, CPA



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