

Students receive missionary union scholarships

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Recent high school graduates including a firefighter, a media specialist and a student attending the Citadel Military College of South Carolina received scholarships last week from the Hoke County Missionary Union.

The missionary union held its 14th annual scholarship award banquet Friday night at the Matthew Rouse Community Resource Center. The banquet honors the students and helps raise money to support the scholarship fund.

The 10 honorees this year were a diverse group with goals ranging from becoming entrepreneurs and owning their own businesses to pursuing careers in healthcare and animation.

Yulla Hines, president of the missionary union, offered some words of wisdom for the young people gathered at the banquet, many of whom will be leaving home soon.

"Keep God first in your life, pray and come home sometimes," she said.

Rev. Dr. LaMont Johnson Sr. was the guest speaker for the evening. Johnson is a member of Greater Galilee Baptist Church of Charlotte, director of music for the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, a former officer for the Pee Dee Educational Missionary Baptist Association, the vice president at-large for the Music Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention and has degrees in religion, ministry and theology from schools including Shaw University School of Divinity, Drew University School of Theology and Virginia Union University. He was ordained at the age of 19 by the New Hope Association of North-Central New Jersey, where he was born and raised.

The 10 awardees included Brittany Anderson, who received the first-time presentation of the White Oak School scholarship. Anderson plans to attend Fayetteville State University this fall.

Shalonda Branch, the daughter of Brian and Georgeanna Branch, is a member of Buffalo Springs Missionary Baptist Church. She is a 2015 Hoke High graduate and will attend the University of North Carolina at Greensboro this fall. While a student, Branch volunteered with Food Services and served as a babysitter and tutor at a local daycare. She was a member of the drama club and participated in talent contests. She is active in her church, where she serves as a member of the Youth Ministry, Women's Ministry, Choir Ministry and Ushers' Ministry among other roles. She aspires to create and own her own businesses.

Jhamal Chambers, the son of Pearl Bratcher, is a member of Silver Grove Missionary Baptist Church. He is a 2015 Hoke High graduate and will attend Sandhills Community College. He plans to transfer to North Carolina A&T to earn a degree in graphic design. Chambers enjoys art and tapping into his creative side, and seeks to explore and develop his skills in animation, typography and multimedia design software. He aspires to work creating art for signs, commercials, movies and more. As a church member,



This year's class of Hoke County Missionary Union scholarship recipients included a student at the Citadel, a volunteer firefighter and several musicians.

he enjoys playing the drums and videotapes worship services.

Darrell Cozart, the grandson of Alice Green, is a member of Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. He is a 2015 Westover High School graduate and will attend Shaw University this fall. Cozart participated in marching band and is a dedicated drummer at his church, where he works with the music ministry. He aspires to be an entrepreneur and own a beauty and barber shop franchise. He will be the first in his family to graduate with a four-year degree.

Randy Geiger Jr., the son of Randy and Caroline Geiger, is a member of Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church. He is a 2014 Seventy-First High School graduate and will attend N.C. A&T this fall. While in high school, Geiger was a member of the National Honor Society, National Society of High School Scholars and the Gentlemen of Distinction club. He is active in his church where he serves as a media specialist, records worship services and makes DVDs. He also works with the missionary department and the Youth Ministry. He aspires to be an entrepreneur and wants to create and market technology devices.

Ny'Lexzia McCollum, the daughter of Portia McCollum, is a member of Leach Springs Missionary Baptist Church. She is a 2015 Hoke High graduate and will attend Sandhills Community College. She plans to then transfer to North Carolina Central University after graduating from Sandhills. McCollum aspires to study nursing and healthcare, and her goal is to give back to her community. She serves with her church as a member of the youth choir and praise team, a praise dancer and an usher.

NaiQuez McLean, the son of

Clyde and Margie McNeill, is a member of Center Grove Missionary Baptist Church. He is a 2015 Hoke High graduate and will attend Sandhills Community College this fall, where he will study public safety, fire and rescue services and motorcycle mechanics. While attending high school, McLean played baseball and football and was a member of Skills USA, where he placed fifth in the regional competition. At his church, he serves as a drummer, is a member of the men's chorus and also serves as Sunday School secretary. He is a volunteer firefighter with the South Antioch Volunteer Fire Department, and believes that furthering his education will help him become a more valued asset as a firefighter.

Reginald McMillan, the son of Carolyn Love, is a member of Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church. He is currently a sophomore at the Citadel Military College of South Carolina, where he is majoring in criminal justice. He will graduate in May 2018 and plans to be commissioned into the United States Army as a second lieutenant. McMillan has served in his church as assistant Sunday School superintendent, Youth Choir president, is a member of the community outreach program Mighty Men and is a youth usher. McMillan realized at an early age that his passion in life is to serve and protect others, and he plans to commit fully to his calling.

Darryl Sean Shaw Jr., the son of Darryl and Pamela Shaw, is a member of Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church and received the 2015 Clark-McNeill Scholarship. Shaw is a 2015 Jack Britt High School graduate and will attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he plans to major in media and design. While attending high school,

Shaw twice received awards from the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) and was very active in organizations including the National Honor Society, the Spanish National Honor Society, the Key Club, the Prestige Ambassadors, the track team and Men of Distinction. He competed in track and currently holds the Jack Britt school record in the triple jump, and is the North Carolina State Four-A triple jump winner. He also played football for his high school, and is a member of the Lewis Chapel Youth Praise Team. He aspires to positively affect the lives of others.

Macaela Latrice Watkins, the daughter of Oscar and Joyce Watkins, is a member of Laurel Hill Missionary Baptist Church. She is a 2015 Hoke High graduate and will attend Fayetteville State University this fall. She plans to earn certification and a degree in law enforcement. While in high school, Watkins participated in the step team, drama club, dance club, Beta club and Student Government Association. She was also active in volleyball, basketball and track. She served on the Homecoming Committee and volunteered with Hoke High Special Olympics. At her church, she has been on the praise team, choir and praise dance team. She has participated in oratorical contests, was a Vacation Bible School teacher assistant and has worked with the kitchen staff.

The Hoke County Missionary Union has given more than \$20,000 in scholarships over the last 14 years.

Remember what's at stake Monday

By KEN MACDONALD

As most children in Hoke County prepare to return to public school next week, perhaps it's fitting to stop for a second and think about WHY we're getting ready to round up all eight thousand-plus of them, get them into buildings on 14 campuses for seven-plus hours each day, and begin with them a diet of subjects we've deemed important. After all, students, parents, teachers, school board members, business leaders and legislators want to be working in one accord, right? We're all after the same thing, right?

Well, I'm not so sure about that. While we're all trying to do good things, it seems to me half of us are working with kids' welfare in mind, the other half with society's.

In my admittedly amateur view (and perhaps simplistic for this space), students, parents and teachers generally view school's purpose with a focus on the student—to develop his or her full potential and character, to teach basic skills yet instill a love and competence of learning so that student can further seek out knowledge and understanding.

The others—school board members*, business leaders and legislators—generally think school is for society's benefit—to get students ready for jobs so that we can compete with other countries, keep democracy and our economy strong, and populate a workforce.

Again, both are good goals—missions, in school vernacular. But they are radically different, and drive radically different strategies and decisions as we begin to deal with these young ones once they take their seats in class.

For example, quality of education is probably parents' chief concern, but for CEOs and legislators, it's efficiency.

What is best for the child versus what is most cost-effectively acceptable.

We see this play out constantly in the news as subjects to be emphasized, teacher pay, classroom and school size and student assessment methods are debated.

At the end of this process, run to their extremes, we can end up with factory-like schools that are, as John Taylor Gatto describes them, "anti-life." Or we can end up with learning communities that send kids—to appropriate Walter Gladden's hymn—like a "shining ray, far down the future's broadening way."

Honestly, in Hoke County, we see each—much of the best, because of our teachers and administrators and staff who care about our children and see their welfare as their mission. Much of the worst because increasingly "reform" has made it all about test scores; leaders bent on comparing the U.S. to other countries have narrowed the focus to technology; and the resource-strangling current crop of legislators see only dollar signs.

Hug your child tight as he or she heads out the door Monday, and let us do it figuratively as a community. Let us remember what is at stake as we sort through these aims.

*So, apparently I'm wrong about school board members in general. In a 2010 survey of 875 school board members across the nation, roughly 81 percent said the reason we're rounding up these kids is to help them fulfill their potential, prepare them for a satisfying and productive life and make them well-rounded. In Hoke County, however, the school system's stated mission: "All Hoke County Schools' students will graduate college and career ready, globally-competitive, and prepared for life in the 21st Century."

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