

LOCAL

# Jimmy Wayne sings for BCCHS students

Sitting on the edge of her seat clutching a disposable camera, Bessemer City High junior Amanda Gantt listened to every word spoken and every lyric sang by country musician Jimmy Wayne.

Wayne, a Bessemer City native and 1992 BCCHS graduate who dropped his last name, Barber, upon reaching stardom, returned to his high school recently for a concert touted as a surprise, but most students had already heard about their chance to be up close and personal with breakthrough star.

"He's really cute and he's very talented," said Gantt, a self-proclaimed fan seeing Wayne in concert for the first time.

Gantt, taking her attention off of Wayne, standing at

center stage with guitar in hand, just briefly to answer a few questions, believes his return to Bessemer City shows he hasn't forgotten his family and friends back home.

"It shows that Hollywood hasn't gotten to him, that he still cares about his hometown," said Gantt, adding that she appreciates Wayne taking time to give the end-of-school performance for his fellow Jackets.

Wayne entertained students for over an hour to end the school day, mixing personal stories with his popular tunes such as "Stay Gone" and "I Love You This Much." He told his rags to riches story of growing up in foster care, once having "long, nappy hair" resembling a mullet and eventually deciding to go after his

dream to become a country singer.

"I got my degree in criminal justice because I knew a lot about it," Wayne told the students, mentioning how his mother was in and out of prison for much of his childhood and how family members had run-ins with the law. "There was a lot of crime in my house and I was familiar with it. Fortunately, I went the other way."

A high school dropout without a family and looking for work, Wayne told of Bessemer City residents Russell and Beatrice Costner offering him a grass-cutting job and a place to live given he followed two rules, cut his hair and go to church. He lived with the Costners for six years, crediting the couple for helping him get

his life back on track.

He graduated from high school and later from Gaston College and worked at the prison in Dallas before heading to Nashville about six years ago. Wayne said people often kidded him about attending Gaston College, but he said he was proud to attend the school.

"I heard folks saying 'You go to Gaston,?' said Wayne, adding that his response was, "You damn right I go to Gaston."

Wayne dedicated the Hall and Oates song, "Sara Smile," to the students, saying his performance of the tune landed him a record deal once he arrived in Nashville.

BCCHS shop teacher Rick Davis said he worked for months to get Wayne to give a concert at the school. An

earlier scheduled performance was canceled. Davis said officials tried to keep Wayne's appearance a secret to avoid having the general public coming to the school, but most students already knew about the surprise concert.

Wayne fielded questions from several students, including one female fan who asked for his guitar. Wayne quickly said "No" to the request.

He also told that he started singing and writing songs at age 12 and stayed focused on achieving his ultimate goal.

"People kept asking if I had a plan B," he said. "I had no plan B because that's an ounce of doubt."

When asked by one student if he had any regrets, Wayne said, "I don't regret moving away to go after my dream. It was my dream and I had to go after it."

One student asked if he could take Wayne's picture to give to his girlfriend with Wayne replying for him to just send his girlfriend up on stage. That led to Wayne introducing Julie Roberts, who he referred to as a close friend, seated on the front row. Roberts, a Gastonia native, is the current Miss United States.

One question that showed Wayne's serious side related to downloading music off the Internet, a procedure that he referred to as stealing.

"Downloading is like someone coming into your house and taking your TV that you worked for," said

Wayne, who told of how he knows a songwriter who worked for 15 years to have one hit single. "It's people like me that used to think that people that make music are extremely rich, so it's okay. When people download that song, it not only takes away money for me, but from him (the songwriter) and his family."

Wayne closed out the concert with the song, "Paper Angels," a tune based on the children's wish lists that hang on mall holiday trees at Christmas. He recalled when he and his sister had their wishes on the tree since his mother couldn't afford to buy gifts.

"My sister and I have been on those paper angel trees at Christmas time," said Wayne, noting that one year his gift was a deck of Uno cards.

Since releasing the "Stay Gone" single in the spring of 2003, the song went to No. 3 on the Billboard country charts and the music videos for several of his tunes ranked high on the weekly countdown on CMT. He celebrated the release of his self-titled album during a promotional gig last June at Wal-Mart in Gastonia and recently gained nominations for several country music awards.

Wayne hopes his words and music shared with the BCCHS students will inspire them to chase their future aspirations just as he did when he packed up and moved to Nashville.

"If you've got a dream, just go get it," said Wayne.

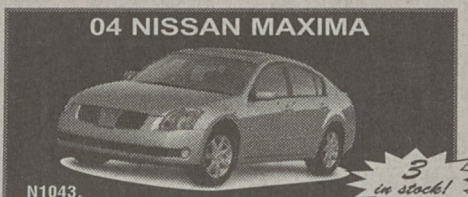
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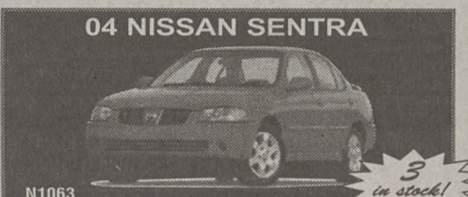
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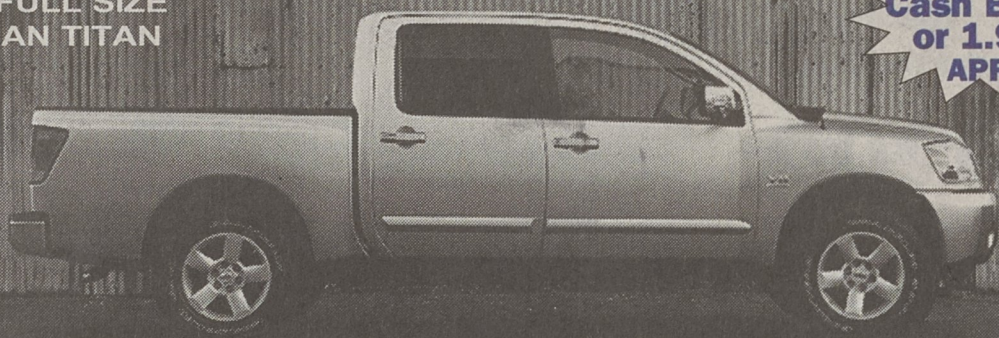
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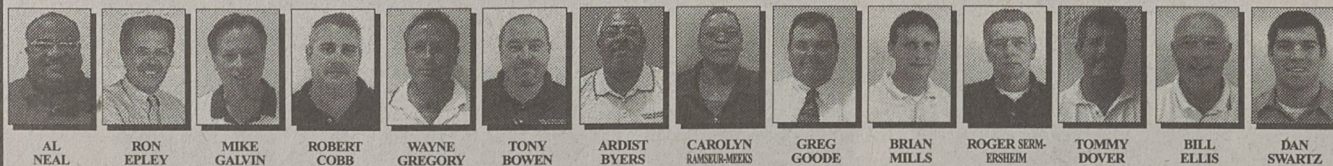
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## GOLF TOURNAMENTS

### Pro-Am set at Woodbridge

The Sunbelt Senior Professional Golf Tour will play its second annual Pro Am at Woodbridge Golf Links June 22. Local amateurs are invited to play with the pros. Teams are determined by a blind draw. There will be prizes for the first, second, third, fourth and fifth place teams, hole-in-one, longest drive, and a putting contest. Proceeds will benefit the Alzheimer's Association. For more information call Woodbridge at 482-0353.

### Benton tourney held at KMCC

The Jack Benton Memorial Golf Tournament was held Saturday at Kings Mountain Country Club. Twenty-six players competed in the captain's choice event. Jerry Lang, Clayton Clark, Todd Terry and Jim Palmer won with a six-under-par 66. Cal Moore, Dalton Moore and Scott Rhyne were second with a 67, and Brandon Letterman, Todd Parker, Matt Parker and Bodie Parker were third with a 68. Todd Parker won the closest to the pin and longest drive contests.

### Church to host golf tournament

South Gastonia Pentecostal Holiness Church, 321 South, Gastonia, will hold a golf tournament Saturday, June 26 at Woodbridge Golf Links. A four-man, captain's choice format will be used. Over \$1,000 in prizes will be given away. All proceeds will go toward a mission trip. Golfers and hole sponsors are needed. For more information, call Pastor Timmy Whitaker Sr. at (704) 937-3787 or Steve Jones at (980) 329-8230

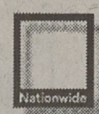
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