

Carpenter credits 'teamwork' for many high school feats

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One could probably make the case that Erica Carpenter is the busiest kid in town.

She sings (Kings Revue), she acts (major parts in KMLT productions of "Liberty Mountain" and "Mary Poppins") and she literally runs all over the place (that would be cross country, indoor track and track and field throughout high school).

That's not to mention the numerous mission trips she's made with members of her church to Greensboro, New York City, New Jersey and Jamaica and the fact that she's a Cleveland County Youth Commissioner, and is currently serving as Teen Miss Cleveland County and Gaston County.

Carpenter is an honor student who is a member of the Beta Club, The National Honor Society, Ambassador Club, the Drama Club, the International Thespian Society and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She's also a five-time winner of a Daughters of the American Revolution essay writing contest.

But if all that activity

might lead folks to think she's simply too busy to also be a popular student at the high school, they'd be wrong about that. To wit, Carpenter managed to get elected class president of her sophomore, junior and senior classes.

"Track, school, 'Mary Poppins' ... complete chaos," she says with a spontaneous laugh and quick smile when she dropped by The Herald for a chat before graduation, conceding that her schedule can be a bit much at times.

"People see me as a leader," she said. "They say 'Erica can do it -- she's got it under control.' But the fact is you've got people helping you. It's teamwork and I definitely have support."

As senior class president, Carpenter is tasked with presenting her fellow classmates at KMHS' graduation Saturday, June 6.

"In a nutshell, my message to those graduating is what we must learn from what we've done, take something positive away from the high school experience. Then I'm going to wish everyone good luck and find a (memorable) way to say farewell." Carpenter isn't the only



Erica Carpenter is the 2015 senior class president. She says she'll advise her fellow seniors on graduation day to take something positive from their high school experiences.

one in her family who's had to prepare for a big graduation-themed address. Her father, Scott Carpenter, who is pastor at Temple Baptist in Kings Mountain, delivered the baccalaureate address to seniors and their family on Sunday. And Carpenter himself was his senior class president at KMHS when he graduated from the school in 1976.

So, where does young Erica get the energy?

"Good genetics maybe," says dad with hearty laugh. "Seriously, she is hard to

keep up with at times for my wife (Linda) and I."

If there's one thing you learn when talking to Carpenter it's that she genuinely loves Kings Mountain, its history, its pace and its people. That devotion to her hometown is part of the reason that when it comes time for many to ship off to colleges in Boone, Chapel Hill, Greensboro or destinations out of state, she's keeping it local with plans to attend Cleveland Community College.

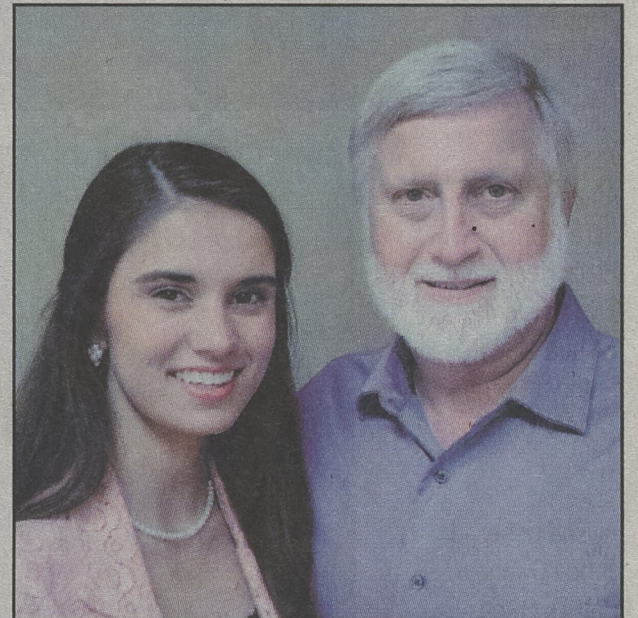
She thinks she'll study there for a year or two, picking up credits toward an eventual program in dental hygiene. Later on, she plans to attend Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte to get her formal dental hygiene training and licensure.

"I love teeth!" she chirps brightly.

But don't think that as Carpenter ascends past the teenage years that's she dropping some of the fun stuff that's consumed so much of her time in school. Since she was very young, she's been involved in drama, with many roles

in the Children's Theater at Shelby High School, including "Big Bad Musical," "101 Dalmations," and "Winnie the Pooh."

"I have to get my singing and theater out of me somehow," she said, adding that her interest in local theater productions will remain high. "I might try out for Little Theater of Gastonia productions. There is supposed to be one about the life of Johnny Cash, and I might try out for the part of his wife, June." She also said she's also got her eye on a Kings Mountain Little Theatre play called "Born Yesterday."



Erica Carpenter and her father Scott.

Graduation ceremony survival tips

School commencement ceremonies are right around the corner, meaning thousands of students and assorted friends and family members will participate in celebrations littered with life-affirming speeches and the distribution of well-earned diplomas.

Graduation can certainly be a momentous event that is remembered for years to come. But some ceremonies are remembered for all the wrong reasons. Lengthy run-times and uncomfortable conditions can turn commencement celebrations into exercises in survival. Nerves may run high, and boredom may set in. But there are ways to make the best of the situation.

* Get adequate rest before the ceremony. Soon-to-be graduates should go to bed early the night before the ceremony in preparation for their big day. Some commencement ceremonies begin early in the morning, and feeling rushed or exhausted from a poor night's rest can only compound nerves and anxiety. Graduation eve should be a low-key night when grads and their friends and family enjoy a quiet meal and some time to reflect on the last several years.

* Dress accordingly. Grads should watch the weather report and dress for the weather under the gown. Many schools opt to hold the proceedings outdoors because the open space can accommodate more people. This subjects participants to the weather, whether that means

blazing sun or wet and rainy conditions. Be sure to dress comfortably. If the ceremony is indoors, realize it may be hotter than normal in the auditorium or they may have the air conditioning turned up to overcompensate. Dressing in layers is may be your best option.

* Leave young kids at home. Graduation ceremonies can last for several hours, during which the audience is expected to remain quiet and attentive. Such expectations may prove challenging to youngsters. Encourage family members to keep young children at home; they can always enjoy the post-ceremony party later on.

* Protect your skin when attending outdoor ceremonies. Even if the meteorologist warns of thunderstorms, play it safe and coat yourself in sunscreen. This will protect your skin if you're sitting out in the sun and afterward when standing outside as well-meaning family members insist on taking photos on campus.

* Eat before the ceremony and stay hydrated. Don't skip breakfast on graduation morning. Eat a hearty meal that will hold you over until after the commencement. Make sure to stay hydrated and bring a bottle of water with you to the ceremony.

A graduation ceremony is a special event, but one that can be lengthy and tiresome. But there are ways to make it through the ceremony more manageable.

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