Wheatmore High School reaches zero dropout rate

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

TRINITY — One high school’s quest to ensure that every student has support in their goals to earn a high school diploma has paid off in a big way. Wheatmore High School achieved a zero dropout rate for the 2014-15 school year.

In his December newsletter, N.C. Senator Jerry Tillman had to brag on them. In his story called “Wheatmore High School Makes History” Tillman wrote, “Randolph County School System is excited to report a 1.29% dropout rate for grades 9-13 for the 2014-15 school year. RCSS has 7 high schools, including the Early College. RCSS continues to reduce the number of drops with the help of Randolph County Drop-Out Prevention Coordinator, Mrs. Kim Waggoner and Student Advocate Specialists located in each of the high schools. We are extremely proud that for the first time in history we have a high school that reported zero drops for the 2014-15 school year.”

“I would like to recognize Allison Mosely’s efforts for this well-deserved recognition,” said Tillman.

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Mosely, who has a sin cere wish that each student graduate, said she’s just doing her job. “I attribute the zero dropout rate to a team effort,” she said. We do a great job collaborating and working together as a team. I work closely with administration and our guidance staff as an advocate for our students.”

Mosely said Wheatmore teachers care about students, but they spend their time teaching and don’t have the time to devote to individual dropout issues. In these cases, teachers let Mosely know when students are having difficulty.

“I work closely with the students on attendance (problems) as well as those with discipline issues and even academic failures to get them to come up with a game plan,” said Mosely. “I meet with the teachers, the guidance counselors and administration and parents. I may partner with them with a tutor which many times can be upperclassmen or other staff members. As far as their attendance, I meet with them one-on-one to see why they are missing so much school, make sure that they don’t miss any more and stay on track.”

Mosely keeps current on homeschool curriculum, online resources and other acceptable alternatives. Those who enroll in an alternative setting do not count as a dropout.

Former Wheatmore student Gregory Sifford is glad Mosely kept after him.

“I had missed a bunch of school,” he said. “I really didn’t go much and got really lazy about it. She figured out a way that I would get my math credit during my last semester at Wheatmore. She kept after me until I enrolled in New Hope Christian Academy. I have a good job right now and I’m in the process of getting my diploma.”

“She really saved my butt,” School Board member Gary Cook said he can’t say enough about Mosely and all the other hard-working student advocates.

“I was on the board several years ago when the dropout rate was high,” he said. “We started a student advocate position at Trinity High School funded by Archdale-Trinity Tax Advisory Council. Later A-T Tax funded a position at the middle school. Todd Henderson, who is principal at Trinity, was the first one in that position there.”

Cook and Archdale-Trinity Tax Advisory Council Chairman John Cable agree that student advocates have definitely played a role in the lower dropout rate.

“They’re invaluable,” said Cable. “Randolph County Dropout Prevention Coordinator Kim Waggoner was the first student advocate at Trinity High School. She was just as excited as Mosely when the statistic was released one month ago. In her 30 years of experience in education, she has never heard before of a school that achieved that zero mark before.”

Waggoner credits student advocates at each Randolph County middle and high school with working with any students who are having difficulty.

“I’m so proud,” she said. “I definitely think our Student Advocate Specialists are very compassionate and nurturing people. I’m thankful that the Board of Education and Dr. Gainey continue to support our schools through having them. It’s important because they have the opportunity to connect with the students. If we didn’t have them, our dropout rate would increase.”

Mosely said she’s glad she stayed behind those who were having difficulty.

“I went to their homes, showed them their grandparents’ porches, I laughed with them, cried with them, had tea with them and offered alternatives. I stayed on to them until they finally enrolled in an alternative setting.”

Superintendent of Randolph County Schools Dr. Stephen Gainey said, “I am really proud of the work by all of the staff members at Wheatmore High School with regard to their efforts to reduce the school’s dropout rate. Success in relation to reducing a school’s dropout rate requires a team approach by all members of a school’s staff. Also, the positive response from the school’s efforts from the parents and the students must be noted in this successful result. Nonetheless, you can not overlook the great efforts by the school’s staff members with regard to building positive relationships with students as well as a positive school culture. These positive relationships and the school’s positive culture play a major role in keeping students in school. I commend the staff members at Wheatmore High School for their great work!”

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When Wheatmore High School’s 100 percent graduation rate was announced, no one was happier than Student Advocate Specialist Allison Mosely. She specializes in bringing in resources to support students in their goals to earn a high school diploma. Even those students who didn’t walk across the stage at Wheatmore’s 2015 graduation earned their diploma online, through homeschool or in another school setting. Mosely has held the position since Wheatmore opened in 2009.

Holding their high school diplomas after Wheatmore High School’s 2015 graduation ceremony are a very excited Casey Hawkins, Michala Washburn and Kristina Byerly.

Thursday, December 10, 2015 — Archdale-Trinity News – 3