Harper receives Hometown Hero Award

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

TRINITY — Principal Sharon Harper had been a vital part of the Honeybee Hive at Hopewell Elementary School for the past 17 years. It was only fitting that during an awards ceremony held this month that the retiring administrator would receive an award herself.

Kim Cates, a financial representative with Modern Woodmen of America, surprised Harper with a Hometown Hero Award. Joining her was Fred Burgess, a managing partner with Modern Woodmen of America, who is also a member of Randolph County School Board.

“Ms. Harper has been in education for 33 years,” said Cates. “During that time she has touched countless lives.”

After earning her undergraduate degree in elementary education at Elon University, she spent 12 years in the classroom teaching elementary ages four to 10 in Summerville, S.C. and Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools. In 1992 she earned her master’s in education with certification in administration and certification as a curriculum specialist from UNC-G.

For the past 23 years, she has served as a school administrator, 21 of them in Randolph County Schools.

Cates said, “Her (Harper’s) greatest achievement has been to open Hopewell Elementary School where she has served as principal for 17 years.

During the presentation everyone present in the gym reflected back to the time when Hopewell Elementary School opened with no “extras.” From playground equipment to awnings, from books to computers, Harper worked tirelessly and often wore many hats to accomplish her mission to ensure that students and staff alike had what it takes to get the job done.

Under her leadership, the school earned the following awards:

2003 — Lighthouse Award
2009 — Signature School
2011 — National Finalist for Award for Academic Excellence in Immersion Programs
2014 — 21st Century Learning Exemplar School Award.

Cates continued, “These achievements do not happen by chance. Ms. Harper gives credit to the outstanding staff who work diligently to meet the needs of all our students and the continual community support that has always been a contributing factor to our great success as a school.

“Ms. Harper, we want to wish you well in your well-deserved retirement.

On a personal note, I am so grateful that you have developed a school where my daughter can learn and grow. She has so many advantages in life that she would not have had if it weren’t for you.

Thank you for your leadership, friendship and loyalty. Your influence, your ideas, your impact and your imprint will remain in these halls forever.”

Staff writer Debbie Hightower may be reached at dhightower@atnonline.net or 336-888-3576.