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Fundraiser nets \$27,000-plus for WMHS projects



A table filled with beautiful cakes shows on part of how the community responded to a fundraiser.

Story and Photos By Rose Fant © April 13, 2016 @ 4:37 p.m.

WILLISTON -- Benjamin Franklin once said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

The Williston area community truly understands the significance of that statement. To say that the Williston Alumni Association's (WAA) fundraiser, "Get Your Piece of the π and Cake Auction" held on April 7 was a success would be a sizeable understatement.

The generosity of the community, in support of the new Williston Middle High School (WMHS),

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was overwhelming.

The fundraiser, spearheaded by WAA member Nancy Etheridge, was a huge success. Over 100 former Williston graduates and community guests, a total of 39 delectable southern-recipe pies and cakes, an added bonus of a double batch of Patsy Fugate's homegrown, chocolate-covered peanuts, Williston High School student volunteers, and a very convincing auctioneer - Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Senior Judge Joseph E. Smith brought in a final total of more than \$27,000 raised in support of projects for the new school.

When Nancy Etheridge started planning an event to raise money that would enable the WAA to assist in bringing our community heritage to the new WMHS, she was not expecting the overwhelming support it received.



Nancy and Frank Etheridge

She should not have been surprised, though. Whenever this community rallies for a worthy cause, the support is always immense.

WAA is proud to be representing the past and future graduating classes in seeing to the provisions of the new WMHS. The bighearted support will allow them to help ensure a quality learning environment for Williston students, both now and in the future. We hope to be able to continue to offer many of the opportunities Williston students have come to expect, while at the same time creating new opportunities for continued learning experiences. For now, WAA will turn its attention to providing many of the things that will allow students to experience the rich history Williston's past has to offer and continue to carry Williston pride through to the next generation.

In the coming weeks, many projects will begin, while others are already in progress.

Some of these projects include designing trophy cases from the wood of the Williston Vocational School gymnasium bleachers; making frames for the class composites from the same wood to hang in the halls of the new school; landscaping; and an on-site memorial in honor of Limbaugh-Dunlap-Phinney families.

Of all the entries in the auction, there were a couple that were remarkable, even by Williston's already high standards.

"The Philpot Cake," an edible icing photo cake made with pictures of the late Robert Philpot surrounding the perimeter and topped with the blue and yellow FFA logo, was the entry that garnered the most attention from bidders, selling for \$1,000 to Frank Etheridge. Philpot was a longtime Williston High School ag teacher and Levy County School Board member. The WMHS is being built on Robert Philpot Way, and the vocational wing of the new school is dedicated in his honor. This was definitely a special cake.

Yet, that cake was not the top-selling entry. That honor belongs to the triple-layer coconut cake baked by Donna Willis Weeks in honor of her father, James Willis, City of Williston founding family descendant; mother, Pat Willis, as this was her favorite cake; mother-in-law, Barbara Weeks, a retired Williston teacher; and her sister-in-law, Catherine Davis, also a career

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teacher dedicated to Williston students.

The “icing on the cake” was the serving dish for that highest bid cake. It was a cake plate formerly belonging to Amelia Erwin, Williston principal from years ago. That cake brought in \$1,300 by Mike and Gail Williams of All American Cleaning and Restoration Specialists.

Many parents, teachers, and community members go above and beyond to bring positive change to Williston schools. WAA is appreciative of the selfless contributions made for the school district that make this community the amazing place that it is and extends a heartfelt thanks to everyone who volunteered, cooked, baked, and/or attended the “Get Your Piece of the π and Cake Auction.”

WAA has a lot of work ahead of them and looks forward to continuing to partner with the community to meet the needs of the students. Great things are ahead for the students of Williston Middle High School!

To find out how to help WAA, for membership, or to make donations contact a WAA officer: President Dedee McLeod at 352-494-9595, Secretary Treasurer Nancy Whitehurst at 352-528-2565], or Vice President Greg Yancey at 352-494-3648.



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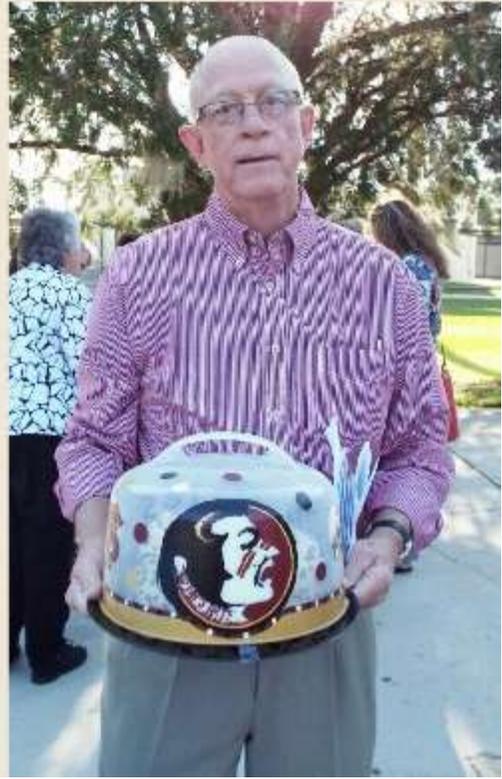


Here are some of the participants in the event -- (top left) Cara Fortney; Debra French Jones; (top right) Kathy and Jerry Lawrence; (2nd row left) Sandy and David Reckseit; (2nd row right) Laurie Kraft and Donnie McCoy, D.O.; (3rd row left) Brad, Shannon, Baylee, and Colby Etheridge; (3rd row right) Jerry and Sharon Mills; (bottom left) Matt Brooks and his son Bowen; Jettie Brooks (Matt's mother); and (bottom right) Lisa and Jim Posteraro, and Jeff Edison

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Bringing cakes are (top left) Katie and Lauren Taylor; (top right) Jennifer Kordgien Morgenthal; Annie and AnnaBelle Whitehurst; Linda Fugate, Priscilla Fugate, Annette Kordgien; (middle left to right) Regan Williams; Juanita Terrell; Donna Willis Weeks; (bottom left to right) Betty Ann Whitehurst Arnold; and the Hon. Joseph E. Smith, a senior judge with the Eighth Judicial Circuit.