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## Yankeetown School students are recognized for success in reading program for nine weeks



The first place winners are first graders, seen here with the trophy at the center.

### Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © April 7, 2017 at 8:07 p.m.

YANKEETOWN -- There were many award winners during the most recent Yankeetown School program recognizing the previous nine weeks of schoolwork.

The Friday (April 7) program included honors for individuals and classes involved with the Red Hot Minutes Reading Program.

Some parents, grandparents, guardians and others enjoyed the opportunity to observe the ceremony.

**Video link above stories on April page.**

**This is a video of the Yankeetown School first graders who earned the first place trophy.**

Ruth Ruppert and her friend Freda Gibson are firm believers that “knowledge is power.” Knowledge is the product of reading, Ruppert said as she opened the first of three sessions for reading awards and other academic awards presentations that day.

Reading is the foundation to a good education, she said.

The two individuals were proud to be at Yankeetown School on Friday to award trophies for first through third place for the individual classes with the highest percentage reaching that 900-minute goal.

The first place trophy stands five-feet tall, and it is therefore taller than the first graders who earned the award.

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**The top reader in the school -- with 5,256 minutes in nine weeks -- was Amber Shearer**



**At 4,195 minutes, and the second highest reader in the entire school, was Kyra Dykes.**

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**Yankeetown School Principal Denee Hurst accepted the post as the leader of the school in February. The previous principal was Jeannine Mills.**

Before Ruppert spoke and made the presentations in the first of three sessions, Yankeetown School Principal Denee Hurst invited a couple of Safety Patrol members to lead the audience in saying the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

Principal Hurst just accepted her position in February. She said she is very pleased that Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison selected her to be the new principal at the school, and she intends to continue here for many years to come.

Yankeetown Media Specialist and Lab Manager Gayle Gattton spoke about the Red Hot Minutes Reading Program.

She explained why some children received certain awards and how different readers earned the different awards.

The first time a student reads 900 minutes in this program, they are awarded a red lanyard, a Yankeetown School book bag and a certificate.

After reading 900 more minutes, the student is awarded a pin that says "I Love Books" to put on their lanyard and they receive a second certificate.

The third round of 900 minutes that a student is documented to have logged in reading results in a second pin that says "Reading Rocks." They also get another certificate.

For the students whom complete their 900 minutes of reading in each nine weeks for the whole school years is awarded a special "Sand Gnat" pin to go on their lanyard, a certificate and a privilege pass for the first nine-week session of the next school year at Yankeetown School.

The school mascot is the sand gnat.

Gattton said one important part of the process is the parents, the aunts, uncles, grandparents, guardians and other responsible adults who allow the children to read to



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them, or read to them or observe them reading and log the time when this happens.

Gatton invites any interested adult to contact her to see if they can help students earn minutes of documented reading time in the Red Hot Minutes Reading Program.

When Ruppert began her part of the program, in which she named the winning class for first place, she mentioned there are 11 classes in the kindergarten through middle school grades at the school.

Yankeetown School has children in pre-K through eighth grade. Some grade levels have more than one class.

Almost every class improved on their reading percentages this most recently past nine weeks, Ruppert said, over the previous nine weeks.

“To reiterate,” Ruppert said as she echoed the words of Media Specialist Gatton, “Red Hot Minutes are something the student cannot do on their own. It takes a commitment by the student, their parents, guardians or older siblings, as well as some intense record-keeping by the teachers and Mrs. Gatton.”



**First, second and third place trophies await being awarded.**

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**Bridget Didsbury (left) and Shelly Mayes hold the leashes of the two bloodhounds just outside the auditorium as the program begins.**

Trophies will be displayed in the winning classrooms until the next nine weeks -- when they may change hands -- or maybe not change hands.

At the end of the year (the last award's ceremony is May 22), the name of the class with the highest percentage of students reaching their 900-minutes goal will be placed on the plaque of the trophy.

If there is a tie, it will be determined by the percentage of students reaching their goals for the year.

Ruppert then read the names of the students in this class – as it is a class trophy. She read the names based on height as the students marched in and went into two lines for photo opportunities for parents.

The first place trophy went to Mrs. Carson's first grade class led by Mrs. Carson, followed by Leland Roberts, Anna Green, Aryanna Rushing, Brayden Bolin, Ashlynn Porterfield, Colton Best, Nathan Kennedy, Kyra Dykes, Johnny Carbaugh, Jayse John, Amber Shearer, Savannah Seamen, Zack Hall, Jessica Baker, Ely Robinson, Frank Huggins, Alesha Adams, Jacob Gerber, Aiden O'Bry and Ms. Woodard.

There were two students who completed an astronomical amount of minutes for just this nine-week period.

They each received an additional award. They each went home with a Find-M-Friends tee shirt.

(Find-M-Friends is a local bloodhound nonprofit that helps law enforcement agencies find lost kids and older adults in this area of Florida.)

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**Ruth Ruppert reads the names of children who read 900-plus minutes during the past nine weeks. Book bags, lanyards and certificates are on the table in the foreground and to the right in this picture.**



**One of the sets of winners of certificates is at the front of the room. Notice the little boy looking at the bloodhound. The program was very nice and the children were all well behaved. A good time was probably had by all in attendance.**

Bridget Dudsbury and Shelly Mayes came from the group with two bloodhounds. The top reader in the school -- with 5,256 minutes in nine weeks -- was Amber Shearer.

At 4,195 minutes, and the second highest reader in the entire school, was Kyra Dykes. Yankeetown School is a very small school. It has total enrollment of about 250 students. It is located in the southernmost section of Levy County.

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In the fall of 2015, Yankeetown School began a reading program to complement its Accelerated Reading Program.

It went into effect in February of 2016 and was the brainchild of the then-Principal Jeannine Mills and then Reading Coach Ms. Wade.

The idea was for the students to read for at least 20 minutes per school night (five nights) for nine weeks ( $5 \times 20 = 100$  minutes per week  $\times$  9 weeks = 900).

Every student's goal was 900 minutes (pre-K through eighth grade). This was out of school reading (weekends and holidays too).

The fifth grade had been holding onto the first place trophy since the beginning of this school year (the trophy is based on the percentage of students in the class that meet that 900 minute goal).

There were two other sessions later in the morning to present the second place and third place trophies. Other academic awards were presented as well.

The young students in the auditorium appeared to be awestruck when the two big bloodhounds entered during the first program.