

West End High School National Alumni Association 2023 Reunion



Hosted by the Mecklenburg Chapter, the West End High School National Alumni Association (WEHSNAA) held its reunion on the weekend of June 23-25, 2023, at the Chase City Banquet Center. Being the first in-person reunion since the pandemic, the reunion lived up to its 2023 theme, “Keeping Our Vision Strong by Faith”. Not having the annual event in 2020 and 2021, and embarking on a virtual reunion in 2022, alumni and friends came together to celebrate reminisce, and keep the spirit of West End High School (WEHS) alive.

The activities began on Friday night with a Meet and Greet, where alumni and friends gathered to fellowship, renew friendships and have fun in a relaxed, casual environment. Wanda Hardy Royster (class of 1965, Treasurer for WEHSNAA and a member of the Mecklenburg Chapter) opened with greetings and led the attendees through fun activities. Recognition of alumni present included the oldest, 84 (Joan Hardy Gee), class of 1958; the one who traveled the furthest, (Willie Townes, class of 1965, traveling from California; the first to register for the event from each chapter, Mecklenburg, Metropolis and Richmond (Mary V. Tucker- class of 1968; Jerry Coleman- class of 1965; and Robert Barnette, Jr.-BHS class of 1970, respectively.

Kicking off the events of the day, the Saturday morning Prayer Breakfast presented Elder Jacqueline Baskerville Hargrove Coleman (BHS, class of 1970) as the speaker. Her message titled, “Keeping the Faith in the Vision,” focused on the vision of the alumni. Mary V. Tucker and Linda Brown Williams-(class of 1968) lead the memorial service in remembrance of those who had passed and was no longer with us. The business meeting followed the breakfast with outgoing National President, Robert N. Barnette, Jr. (BHS class of 1970) presiding. The Association’s business included electing new national officers. The officers will be installed at the next quarterly meeting scheduled for September. The reunion culminated on Saturday evening with the Scholarship Awards Banquet. Mecklenburg Chapter President, John C. Royster (class of 1965) served as Master of Ceremony. Reconnecting with alumni and friends through food, fellowship

and proliferated through those who attended. There was recognition of all those that attended but did not graduate from WEHS. Those classes included Bluestone High School graduating classes of 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973. There was the opportunity to take group and individual pictures by photographer Thelma Jones. Highlighting the banquet and introduced by Alice Hardy Miller (BHS class 1970, and Scholarship Committee Chairperson) was the award of scholarships to six descendants of WEHS alumni, totaling \$12,000. Recipients are 2023 high school graduates, Kameron Jackson, Kington Ross, D'zhiya Thompson and Sydney Walker and college students Tyra Dennis and Selena Mayfield. The Association extended congratulations to each of them and is proud to play a role in their continued education. Also highlighted and led by Pauline Blackwell Keeton BHS class of 1972, Mecklenburg Chapter Secretary and Scholarship Committee member) were four previous scholarship recipients, who updated the association on their careers since receiving the scholarships. Among them were Jaime Carter Walls (daughter Garland Carter and the late Estell Hardy Carter), Darius Baskerville (grandson of Norman and Gloria White), and Tyra Dennis (granddaughter of Clarice Smith). Darius Gregory (grandson of Ethyleen Williams Taylor) could not attend but sent his written remarks. Each delivered inspiring messages and extended appreciation to the Association for its role in their success. The evening ended with dancing, music played by DJ Willie (Sugarfoot) Degree. As the evening continued, it was quite evident that those present were in no hurry for it to end. On Sunday morning, the group worshiped together at Rocky Mount Baptist Church, where Reverend Dennis King serves as Pastor.

Everyone truly enjoyed their time together and look forward to gathering again next year. Congratulations to the Mecklenburg Chapter of the West End High School Alumni Association for a successful reunion. Thanks for all your hard work.