Derby Day Gala Turns Up Roses

Northwest State’s Foundation turned Bristol’s H.P. King Building into a miniature Church Hill Downs May 5 with a fund-raising gala that featured hats, horses, hoorays. More than 200 persons attended, dressed in full Derby Day attire. The event’s goal was to raise funds for Northeast State student scholarships and attendees participated in a silent auction and sponsored their favorite horse. No actual wagering occurred.

“We wanted to do something that was different and fun and that allowed people to step outside themselves a bit,” said Dr. Heather Cook, executive director of the Foundation. “The dress-up aspect of the event really helped make for a true Derby Day experience.”

The second floor of the building featured a club-house atmosphere with three wall-sized video screens for viewing the race. There was an abundance of roses, food, and fun. After the race, the band Grand Torino provided up-tempo soul and blues.

As a special feature, patrons could have their photos taken with horses at the entrances of the building. Passers-by on State Street shared the fun as they stopped by to pet the animals and soak up some of the Derby vibe.

J. Allen Hurley, CEO of Vision, Inc. and a Northeast State alumnus, recently purchased the H.P. King Building at 620 State St. from the City of Bristol, turning the facility into a downtown attraction. The building was perfect for the event with its rich wood interiors and grand architecture.

The event raised $10,000 for scholarships. Cook said the Foundation is looking to make the Derby Day event an annual occurrence and plans will soon be under way for an even bigger and better event next year.
We educate and build the local workforce to improve economic growth in our region.

Our first-generation students are welcomed by faculty and staff who create an instant support system for them.

Northeast State continues to offer more programs, expand campuses and increase graduation rates.

Northeast State is the best deal going, and with donations, the Foundation can leverage gifts to help more students.

It is rewarding to know that you helped a student achieve a dream he or she never thought they could.

How to Give to the Foundation:

Credit Card
Planned gifts—bequests, wills
Pledges with payment options
Cash
Real estate
Stocks and securities

Contact:
Heather Cook
Executive Director of the Foundation
Northeast State Community College
2425 Highway 75, P.O. Box 246
Blountville, TN 37617
advance@NortheastState.edu

423.354.2439
www.NortheastState.edu
Student Spotlight, Brittany Thomas, recognized with all-USA academic honors

Northeast State’s Brittany Thomas was one of 20 outstanding students named to the All-USA Community College Academic Team this spring. She was chosen from more than 1,700 applicants representing 800 community colleges across the nation. She is the first Northeast State student to receive the honor.

The American Association of Community Colleges, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, USA Today, and the Follett Higher Education Group collaborate on the annual honor, focusing on students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and community and college involvement.

Thomas received a $2,500 award and a medallion at a ceremony in Orlando, Florida. USA Today featured the team in its April 23 edition.

In addition, to the All-USA Academic Team honor, Thomas was named the New Century Scholar from Tennessee for receiving the state’s highest All-USA Academic Team application score. For this honor, she will receive an additional $2,000 stipend from the Coca Cola Scholars Foundation and Coca Cola Refreshments.

“I never imagined I would be on this level with other people in the country,” Thomas said. “Getting national recognition makes me feel like I can do everything I want to and be the best possible person I can be.”

Thomas, a graduate of Hampton High School, is a nursing major and plans to transfer to East Tennessee State University where she has been offered the Midway Scholarship. From there, she plans to sign on for a U.S. Air Force tour and pursue a master’s degree. She eventually hopes to become a nurse practitioner.

Thomas is president of Northeast State’s Alpha Iota Chi of Phi Theta Kappa chapter, coordinator of Foundation programs for the Scholars Foundation, and a Volunteer Northeast State member. She also served on the Foundation’s Because of You Campaign and Scholarship committees. Thomas said her Phi Theta Kappa experiences have served her well academically and helped her learn more about leadership and service.

“Phi Theta Kappa has built me up and made me a better person,” Thomas said. “It’s prepared me to take the next step in college and given me so many opportunities and experiences.”

Phi Theta Kappa recognizes academic excellence in the two-year college with more than 2.5 million students inducted since the society’s founding in 1918. The society is comprised of more than 1,200 chapters at community, technical, and junior colleges in all 50 states and several foreign countries.
Alumni Spotlight, John Williams, Class of 1992

Whether serving his country or the public’s health, Northeast State Community College alumnus John Williams, ’92, has spent a good part of his life making life better for others.

A Kingsport native, Williams enrolled at Northeast State in the summer of 1989 after being honorably discharged from the United States Army. His education met a delay one year later when Williams was activated as an Army Reservist for Operation Desert Storm.

“I continued my studies upon returning home in 1991,” Williams recalls. “I was able to work at IBM while I finished my degree.”

He graduated in 1992 with an associate of applied science degree in Instrumentation Engineering Technology and moved on to Tusculum College to be the Network Manager and completed a bachelor’s of Arts degree in Computer Information Systems. He later joined the Johnson City Power Board as the assistant supervisor of Data Processing.

In 2001, after earning his Master’s of Arts degree in Organizational Management at Tusculum, Williams joined Lexington, Kentucky’s nationally-lauded Kentucky Cancer Registry (KCR), an integrated cancer control effort of the Markey Cancer Control Program. The Registry tracks cancer diagnoses of the state’s residents. The data is used to initiate cancer control programs, evaluate intervention activities, or conduct epidemiological research. One of his projects involved implementing a map-based incidence and mortality tool to provide the general public information about cancer rates in the Commonwealth. Eleven other states now use this application.

“Northeast State prepared me well for academic and career challenges,” says Williams. “I think it is important to support Northeast State because it is the first stepping stone to prepare and educate us for the rest of our lives and careers.”

Donor Spotlight

J. Louie Greene

With an easy smile and a chuckle, J. Louie Greene admits he was a lot like the students he wants to help with his scholarship.

“When I got out of high school, I didn’t know where I was going in life,” said Greene, a Carter County native and Happy Valley High School graduate. “Up until the age of 25, I was living paycheck to paycheck.”

A mentor suggested he read Napoleon Hill’s personal success book Think and Grow Rich. The volume opened Greene’s eyes to the principles of success and he began to save, invest, and set goals for his future.

Greene served four years in the Air Force and later joined the National Guard, retiring after 20
years of service. He also worked eight years for the Arkansas Highway Department and 14 years for Citizens Bank in Elizabethton. The investments and goals inspired by Hill’s book allowed Greene to retire at age 47.

Nonetheless, he still remembers those early years when his grades weren’t so good and his plans were few and far between. He identifies and sympathizes with those individuals who need just a bit of help or a nudge to get started.

“I read somewhere that mankind is like a giant oak tree and each one of us makes up its branches and each time we help a branch we help the tree as a whole. My wish is that my scholarship will be able to help some of the branches of the future, which will help the giant oak tree as a whole.”

Greene has funded college scholarships for Happy Valley graduates for 20 years, but recently he started looking for something more structured and permanent. On the advice of former Citizens Bank colleague Joe LaPorte, Greene contacted Dr. Heather Cook with the Northeast State Foundation. She helped him set up the J. Louie Greene Endowed Scholarship for a recent Happy Valley graduate with a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

“I wasn’t the best student, but I turned my life around. Hopefully this scholarship will help some other high school graduates as well,” Greene said.

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Staff Spotlight, Robin Dice, Executive Director, RCAT

As executive director of the Regional Center of Applied Technology in Kingsport, Robin Dice is at the helm of the College’s cornerstone building in the Northeast State at Kingsport landscape.

Dice started as a student at Northeast State earning her associate of applied science degree in Accounting. She went on to earn her bachelor’s degree at Tusculum College and master’s degree at East Tennessee State University. She joined Northeast State as an employee in 1991.

Dice was named director of RCAT when the facility opened in August 2002. Three hundred students were enrolled during that first fall semester.

As the Regional Center for Health Professions, Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing, and Kingsport Center for Higher Education opened their doors, RCAT opened up student services to accommodate the growing enrollment. Northeast State at Kingsport now enrolls more than 2,000 students at four downtown facilities. Students can fulfill their business and admission requirements on site rather than having to drive to the main campus at Blountville.

“Northeast State at Kingsport has become a major asset to students in Sullivan County and beyond,” says Dice. “Students using our services have increased 43 percent since the 2009–10 academic year. We served 4,800 students during the past academic year.”

The RCAT also houses GED testing services, career services office, and opens health care tests including the Nursing licensure exam. GED exam gets big response with hundreds of students earning high school equivalency.

“I believe when you get to a certain point in life you need to give back to the community,” says Dice, who contributes to several scholarships through the Northeast State Foundation. “It is a way to payback the kindness that was shown to me when I began as a college student.”
President’s Update  Summer Highlights from Dr. Janice Gilliam

- The Chronicle of Higher Education’s College Completion Web site lists Northeast State as having the top graduation rate among public two-year colleges in Tennessee.
- The College also was the top performer in efficiency, spending an average of $33,023 per completion, compared with the state average of $47,537 per completion.
- Northeast State served nearly 8,800 students last year and awarded more than 1,000 degrees and certificates at the May 8 commencement exercises.
- Work continues on the Northeast State at Johnson City location with bids issued for design, exterior cleaning and painting. Signage is under way for the facility.

$400,000 donation to benefit Learning Support Institute

A $400,000 donation from Northeast State benefactor G. Bruce Kidd will help fund the College’s Learning Support Summer Institute 2012.

Kidd, a retired Johnson City automobile dealer, said he decided to make the donation because he was so impressed with how the College had motivated his grandson, a recent graduate. Kidd’s grandson is now enrolled in Stetson University’s College of Law.

The summer institute—scheduled for July 5 through Aug. 8—allows Learning Support students the opportunity to complete all or most requirements in math, reading, and writing. Students attend the Institute from 8 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Students may enroll in individual math, reading, and writing courses or a combination of each subject.

Cook’s Corner  News from the Northeast State Foundation Director

Welcome to summer! It seems like yesterday that I began working at Northeast State. May 16 was my one-year anniversary date, and I love my job more now than I did when I first started. I give credit to our faculty, staff, students, board members and community leaders for making such an effort to see that Northeast State continues to be the fastest-growing community college in Tennessee!

We just completed our inaugural spring fundraiser—The Derby. We had live horses…live coverage…live music and much more to entertain the region and why not have a little fun while raising money for our students!

Please read our student spotlight for this issue. Brittany Thomas is one of 20 in the nation to be selected for the All-USA Academic Team. A first for Northeast State! Way to go Brittany!! We’re so very proud of her.

I love that we are changing lives!

—Dr. Heather J. Cook, Executive Director, Northeast State Foundation