



The Ruston High School Alumni Association



August 2014



390 Valley View Drive, Ruston, Louisiana 71270



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www.rustonhighalumni.org

Welcome to the 2014-15 edition of the Ruston High School Alumni Association Newsletter. You are encouraged to visit our alumni website at www.rustonhighalumni.org to see all the exciting things going on with the Alumni Association and to keep up with your classmates and friends from RHS. Send us any suggestions as to what you would like to see in future editions of our newsletter. This association is yours and we want you to help make it even better.

ONCE A BEARCAT, ALWAYS A BEARCAT

President's Message

The bell sounded on August 18th and thousands of Lincoln Parish students returned to the classroom to begin the 2014-15 school year. The first day of school represents a new beginning, an opportunity for students to commit to doing better this year than last. In many ways the RHS Alumni Association makes that same commitment each year. This newsletter affords members a look back at the highlights of last year and informs members of goals and plans that will make this year the best yet.

Last August the Association embraced technology and for the first time, sent the annual newsletter via email to those members who had provided their email addresses. This allowed 68% of the membership to receive the newsletter sooner and saved the Association the cost of printing and postage for 581 newsletters.

RHSAA hosted the 10th Annual Awards Luncheon on October 11th at Squire Creek recognizing three distinguished educators and four distinguished alumnus. Those honored were well chosen, each highly respected and successful in their profession. The banners of the City of Ruston and Ruston High School were held high by the honorees as they acknowledged the role the community and the school played in influencing and preparing them for their future pursuits. Also honored at the Awards Luncheon was Willie Green (Class of '55), who was recognized for his role in conceiving, organizing and chartering the RHS Alumni Association in 2004. He held the office of president from 2004 through 2007.

In May the Association presented a \$1,500 Outstanding Achievement Award to RHS senior, Mary Elizabeth (Beth) Ramirez. This brings the total awarded to outstanding RHS seniors since the inception of the RHSAA to \$17,500. (See further information about Beth Ramirez later in this newsletter).

The Association received donations from a RHS alumnus who attended his Class of 1963 reunion where 2008-2011 RHSAA President Jackson Thigpen and current Chairman of the Outstanding Achievement Award Committee Allen Tuten made brief presentations about the association and its activities. The classmate gave a \$100 check for \$50 in dues for himself and a friend and a \$50 donation. His additional \$1,500 donation was designated to fund an Outstanding Achievement Award to a future RHS senior.

The Association continues its Platinum Level sponsorship for the RHS *Chatterbox*, the school's award-winning newspaper. RHSAA encourages alumni to support this Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) business project by advertising in the paper or sponsoring them with a cash donation. (See further information about the *Chatterbox* later in this newsletter.)

Membership increased last year. RHSAA Board member Rickey Burton, assisted at times by Board members Janice Evans and Betty Jo Fagan, set up a table at home football games last year, visited with alumni, and handed out membership applications. More than half of the 27 members gained can be attributed to this effort. Rickey will take the same approach this year, attending games in other sports as well. Volunteers to help with this project would be welcomed. Membership growth will continue to be a focus during the next two years. All Association members are encouraged to spread the word to other RHS graduates about the value of 'giving back' to RHS. As membership grows, so will the association's ability to provide assistance to the school. Membership applications are available at www.rustonhighalumni.org. Plans and efforts continue to set up a PayPal account linked to the website so that payments can be made online for membership dues, Awards Luncheon tickets, and donations.

Last year was a great year for RHSAA and with your support, this year will be better!

Candy Williams Daniels '65

2014 RHS Football Schedule

Sep. 5	NEVILLE	Home	Oct. 10	Natchitoches Central	Away
Sept. 12	Airline	Away	Oct. 17	West Monroe	Away
Sept. 19	Rayville	Away	Oct. 23	OUACHITA	Home (Thursday)
Sept. 26	HAUGHTON	Home	Oct. 31	*ASH (Alexandria H.S.)	Homecoming
Oct. 3	CAPTAIN SHREVE	Home	Nov. 7	Pineville	Away

**** Homecoming: Friday October 31, 2014** All games are at 7:00 p.m.**

Ruston High School Alumni Association

Honors Educators and Graduates

The Ruston High School Alumni Association honored distinguished educators and graduates at its annual luncheon in 2013. Each year, the association honors one current teacher, one retired teacher, and one deceased teacher, along with three alumni and one young alumnus.

Distinguished educators honored were current RHS history teacher Heather Reeder, retired history teacher Earvin Ryland, and the late business teacher Edna Erle Kavanaugh. Distinguished alumni honored were Dr. William R. Higgs, Allen Tuten, Dr. Lynda Brown-Wright, and Young Alumnus Significant Achievement Award recipient Lee Denny.

Heather Reeder, Class of '97, is a third generation Bearcat whose parents were teachers in Lincoln Parish schools. Reeder graduated summa cum laude from Louisiana Tech University in 2001 with a B.S. degree in Social Studies and a minor in English. She earned the M.S. degree in Curriculum and Instruction/Education Leadership in 2005 and is currently working on her M.A. in History. Reeder's career began in 2001 at Choudrant High School teaching U.S. History and World Geography, and coaching cheerleading. She was selected CHS 2002-03 Teacher of the Year. In 2004 she transferred to RHS and teaches Dual Enrollment/AP/Honors U.S. History, Civics and Free Enterprise. Outside the classroom, Reeder serves as Pepette Coordinator and Varsity Competition Cheer Coach. She is certified by the American Association of Cheer Coaches and Administrators and the Louisiana High School Athletic Association as a cheer coach in stunts, safety and first aid. She has served as guest speaker at the LHSAA annual cheer convention, was featured in *Cheer Coach and Advisor* magazine as the Scholastic Coach of the year in 2010 and was selected as the first ever LHSAA Coach of the Year in 2011. She coached the 2011 and 2012 National Cheerleaders Association Game Time National Champions and the 2012 and 2013 LHSAA Champion Cheerleaders. Reeder is also a RHS Teacher Leader and serves as Chair of the Lincoln Parish Social Studies Content Specialist/Vertical Alignment.

Earvin Ryland, a 1946 graduate of Bolton High School in Alexandria, graduated with a B.S. degree in History in 1950 from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches. In 1954 he earned a M.S. degree in Education from George Peabody College in Nashville. Ryland taught at schools in Arkansas, Tennessee and in Louisiana's West Carroll Parish before accepting a position at Ruston High School in 1957 teaching Geography, American History and Civics. Ryland realized early on that a lot of students didn't like history and he prided himself in taking boring or hard subjects and through unorthodox and unusual teaching methods, made learning more interesting. Many of his students remember having to write and perform a song for an Americanism vs. Communism unit. In addition to teaching, Ryland was faculty sponsor for the Key Club throughout his 12-year tenure at RHS. From 1963-1966 he earned his 30+ graduate hours at Louisiana Tech University, the University of North Carolina and the University of Wisconsin. After leaving his teaching position at RHS in 1969, Ryland continued to serve as System Supervisor with the Lincoln Parish School Board until he retired in 1990.

Edna Erle Kavanaugh began her career in education immediately after graduating high school by teaching a 6th grade class in Mississippi while waiting for her sister to graduate. She and her sister attended Mississippi State Teachers College, now The University of Southern Mississippi. After college graduation and teaching business education in a local high school, she obtained her M.S. degree in Business Education from Indiana University, taught at East Mississippi Junior College and served as sponsor for the school's yearbook. In 1939 she moved to Ruston, accepting a position at Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, now Louisiana Tech University, as Assistant Professor of Business Education. In 1949 Kavanaugh began a career at RHS that would span 26 years. In addition to teaching bookkeeping, typing and shorthand, she was the school's first bookkeeper. She started and advised the Future Business Leaders of America club at RHS, sponsoring one of the first FBLA State Conventions at Louisiana Tech in 1953. (FBLA continues to thrive at RHS and has received state and national awards.) Kavanaugh also started the Cooperative Office Education program which provided her students with first hand knowledge of the business world. She belonged to many educational organizations and served as a consultant for many business education workshops. She expanded the business curriculum for students at RHS and helped get the first computers installed in the business department before her retirement in 1975.

William R. Higgs, M.D., Class of '61, earned a B.S. degree in Zoology and Chemistry at Louisiana Tech University followed by his Medical Degree in 1969 from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. In 1970 he completed his internship at the University of Tennessee. Higgs completed his residencies in General Surgery and Vascular Surgery under Dr. Michael DeBakey at Baylor College of Medicine in 1974 and his residencies in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery at Emory College of Medicine in 1976. He served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps Reserves from 1969-1979 and earned the rank of Major. Licensed in Alabama, Georgia and Texas, Higgs is certified by the American Board of Surgery, the

American Board of Thoracic Surgery and the American Board of General Vascular Surgery. He is affiliated with numerous major professional organizations and has held academic appointments in many major prestigious colleges and universities. Higgs started three new cardiac surgery programs, two in the Mobile area – the Mobile Infirmary and Providence Hospital. A third program was begun at Kessler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. Although he is still called upon to perform heart surgeries, in 2004 his interest and full time work shifted to the field of hyperbaric healing of wounds and limb preservation, where his research continues. Because of his outstanding contributions and achievements in healthcare, Higgs has been included in America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals.

Allen Tuten, Class of '63, graduated from Louisiana Tech University with a B.S. degree in Business in 1967 and a M.S. in Business Administration in 1969. As a student at Tech in 1993, Tuten began his 38-year career at Lincoln General Hospital, advancing from clerical work, through numerous promotions to being named Chief Executive Officer in 1987 where he was successful in making many improvements to the hospital before retiring in 2001. Tuten has served on the Louisiana Hospital Association Board of Directors, including one year as the Board Chairman, was elected President of the Northeast District LHA, earned Diplomat status in the American College of Hospital Executives, and served on the regional policy board for the American Hospital Association. He is one of only six to be awarded lifetime membership in the LHA. Tuten has now turned his time and talents to the role of humanitarian, having led over 50 mission trips, built houses and supported rural churches and communities in Alaska and worked on construction projects in the jungle villages of Peru, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. In India, he lived and worked for three weeks in an orphanage. He has helped the Navajo Nation in Arizona. After Hurricane Katrina, Tuten became certified as an "Early Responder" by United Methodist Committee on Relief. Through the Louisiana Volunteers in Mission he was trained to take small teams into disaster areas immediately after hurricanes and other natural disasters. He serves as a shelter leader at Trinity Methodist Church, assisting those affected by Hurricanes Ike, Gustav, and Isaac and volunteered in Long Island, New York after Hurricane Sandy. Tuten, a member of Ruston Rotary Club since 1974, wrote a grant for the "Back Pack Program" that provides weekend food and snacks for 50 at risk children. He has been an active participant in numerous local and national organizations and associations and served on the Board for the Lincoln Parish School Board, Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Methodist Children's Home and North Central Louisiana Habitat for Humanity.

Lynda Brown-Wright, Ph.D., Class of '73, was a 1976 honor graduate from Grambling State University. She attended the State University of New York and Texas A&M University earning a doctor of philosophy degree. One of seven students who desegregated her seventh grade class and the first African-American to ever be admitted to the graduate programs at SUNY and Texas A&M, Brown-Wright knew early on that her desire was to help pave the way for those who came after her. Her collegiate studies prepared her for a position as the school psychologist with Harris County in Houston and a teaching position at the University of Georgia before she moved to the University of Kentucky where she was appointed Counseling Psychologist and served as chairwoman of the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology for 20 years. She was responsible for transforming the department to be inclusive and multicultural in all aspects. Brown-Wright currently serves as a professor and founding Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at Georgia State University tasked with increasing faculty diversity at the school. Brown-Wright is a researcher for the National Institute of Health studying risk factors for cardiovascular disease in African American youth. She is a prolific writer for many publications, has taught courses in assessment counseling and multicultural psychology. In her spare time, she is a lay pastor having served as the Director of Christian Education for over ten years.

Lee Denny, Class of '92, graduated from Louisiana Tech University in 1996 with a B.S. degree in Human Resource Management and in 1998 earned an M.S. degree in Industrial Psychology. In 2008 he graduated from the Louisiana State University Graduate School of Banking of the South. Currently Denny is employed as Vice President of Lending at the Bank of Ruston. A leading investor in the Ruston community, he provides hours of time to non-profit organizations in Lincoln Parish. Denny has previously been a member of the Ruston Jaycees and the Steering Committee for the Louisiana Peach Festival and served as Chairman of the Lincoln Leadership Program. He has served on the Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce Board, and the Emerson Centre Board of Directors. He currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Lincoln Parish Crimestoppers and the Louisiana Tech Alumni Association. A tireless worker, Denny continues to raise funds for the North Louisiana Boys and Girls Club, Methodist Children's Home, United Way, Boy Scouts of America, the American Heart Association, and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Principal Milstead Has Left the Building and There's a New Man in the Office

Mike Milstead served as RHS principal for the past 7½ years. At the conclusion of the 2013-14 school year Mr. Milstead left to accept the position of Chief Academic Officer at the Lincoln Parish School Board Office. This was not new news to the local community as the announcement was made more than a year ago of his departure and that a replacement was being sought. Under his visionary leadership, RHS has achieved great success in every aspect of its operations, garnering recognition and respect at the state and national levels. We thank him for all that he has done for our Alma Mater and wish him the very best in the future.

The new RHS principal is Ricky Durrett who returns to the school after serving four years as principal at Simsboro High School. Durrett previously taught and coached girls' basketball at RHS for 13 years so he is a familiar face to many of our alumni. We welcome Mr. Durrett back to RHS and look forward to working with him and hearing from him at the October Awards Luncheon.

Nominations Sought for Distinguished Educators and Distinguished Alumni

Nominations are being accepted for the Ruston High School graduates of distinction and distinguished teacher awards to be honored at the RHS Alumni Association's 2014 Awards Luncheon on Friday, October 31st.

All current and former teachers and all RHS graduates are eligible for consideration. The RHS Alumni Association's purpose is to seek, find, and recognize those RHS teachers and alumni who by their good works, deeds and accomplishments inspire current and future RHS students and faculty to believe that they too can achieve distinction in their chosen field of endeavor, and their affiliation with RHS will facilitate and enhance their chances for success.

The deadline for receipt of nominations is Friday, September 12, 2014. Nominations should be mailed to RHS Alumni Association, 1208 Edwards Drive, Ruston, LA 71270 or emailed to bettyjofagan47@gmail.com. Persons making a nomination should include their name and telephone number where they may be contacted for additional nominee information.

11th Annual Distinguished Educator and Distinguished Alumni Awards Luncheon

Friday, October 31, 2014
Squire Creek Country Club

Contact Pat Smith '64 for reservations
Phone 318-255-4303
Email patoms@att.net

Tickets go on sale October 6, 2014 and may be purchased at:
CTB Financial Center
1511 North Trenton Street
Ruston, LA 71270

Check-in and socializing begin at 11:00 a.m.
Program begins and lunch is served at 11:30 a.m.

Plan on joining other RHS alumni, faculty, and friends for a great time and help honor some of RHS's outstanding alumni and teachers.

RHS Alumni Association's 2014 Outstanding Achievement Award

Mary Elizabeth (Beth) Ramirez was the 2014 recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award given annually by the RHS Alumni Association. The \$1,500 award is given to an RHS senior who has exhibited personality traits of tenacity, strength of character, adaptability and has earned the admiration and respect of the faculty of RHS and Alumni Association.

Beth was very active in numerous school activities at Ruston High School. She was a four-year member of the Student Council and also earned a place all four years on the Honor Roll, Principal's List, and Academic Awards List. She was also a member of the National Honor Society, FCA, Homecoming Court, FCCLA, Spanish Club, Ambassadors, Interact, Keywanettes, and Key Club. Beth was also active as a cheerleader her entire time at Ruston High School. Among her accomplishments as a cheerleader were being a member of the Freshman Cheer Competition Cheer National Champions, participating as a member of the LHSAA Cheer State Championship Team, and competing as a member of the RHS NCA National Championship Team.

Beth was also selected by the senior class of 2014 as "Miss RHS" and "Most Dependable".

Chatterbox

“The Voice of Ruston High School”

RHS Alumni Association proudly continues its Platinum Level sponsorship for the Ruston High *Chatterbox*, the school’s award-winning newspaper. During the coming school year, the 28-page newspaper will be published monthly September 2014-June 2015 (10 editions). *Chatterbox* is distributed to nearly 1300 RHS students and to over 125 faculty, staff, administrative, and support personnel as well as to Ruston Junior High School, A.E. Phillips, I.A. Lewis, the Lincoln Parish School Board, and the Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, copies are provided to businesses that advertise in the *Chatterbox* and to its sponsors.

As a classroom course, *Chatterbox* is funded by the school and receives excellent academic and classroom support, but the production and distribution of the newspaper is a business project funded solely by organizations, businesses, and individuals. As a business, the *Chatterbox* has won the State Championship in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) “Partnership With Business Project” for four of the past five years and has represented Louisiana at the National Conference all five years. *Chatterbox* students and adviser Lloyd R. Bruner have a goal of attaining the title for best high school newspaper in the nation. It’s possible. Check it out at <http://rustonhigh.lincolnschools.org/pages/chatterbox.php>.

Ads, cash donations, and sponsorships assist the *Chatterbox* in its quest to attain national recognition and to ensure that future publications will be available at no cost to students. The RHS Alumni Association encourages all Bearcat Proud alumni to support this business project by advertising in the paper or sponsoring them with a cash donation.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Mr. Bruner at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.

Ruston High School Alumni Association
390 Valley View Drive
Ruston, LA. 71270

Return Service Requested

RHS Alumni Association Board of Directors

Candy Williams Daniels '65 – President

Kathie Richmond Farmer '65 – Vice President

Shonna Jordan '83 – Secretary

Bobby Williams '91 – Treasurer

Rickey Burton '74, Janice Gray Evans '86, Betty Jo Johnson Fagan '65, Lance Hall '91,

Jim Hilton '72, Trott Hunt '72, Tommy Rogers '70, Pat Oxford Smith '64

