

# HRWC...from Page 1A

"We have a big educational program," Kanack said. "(We have) On the Ground Restoration, where we do a lot

of exotic and invasive plant removal, and planting of native trees to reduce erosion. We do leaking and failing septic system repair through grants. In each of the four counties we do a free program for middle school kids in the summer and it's all about water quality and it has a lot of information that they have to test on for their 8th Grade EOGs."

The next event the HRWC is hosting is a hike to Big Stamp via Rockhouse Creek on Sunday. The following Tuesday, a full moon paddle trip on the Nottely River arm of Hiwassee Lake. For

more events and updates visit: [www.hrwc.net/events.htm](http://www.hrwc.net/events.htm). To register for the events, e-mail Executive Director Callie Moore at: [cmoore@hrwc.net](mailto:cmoore@hrwc.net).

The Coalition's 20th Anniversary Celebration will take place on Aug. 22 at the Historic L&N Depot and River Walk in downtown Murphy, NC from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. New memberships will be only \$20 at the event.

You can visit the Coalition's website at [www.hrwc.net](http://www.hrwc.net) or they can be contacted by telephone at (828) 837-5414.



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developing and having community parks."

Fouse mentioned a number of community parks that have camping facilities in the area, as well as boat ramps and trail projects that TVA has been assisting with. There are also stream access sites available on the Hiwassee and Toc-

coa rivers.

"And you've got the Po-teete Creek recreation area that was formerly a TVA project that Union County has taken over and operates," said Bowling. "They're in the process of expanding that and adding some additional camping facilities there. There are a lot of opportunities for families to get out and enjoy these reservoirs and these lake areas during the summer season, so I'm excited about that and excited about the expansions that are going on there in North Georgia."

For the first time ever, TVA will be hosting a summer photo contest via social me-

dia, of people having a good time out on the lakes.

"This is exciting, because we've really never done anything like this before, and we're really excited to see if folks take advantage of this, send their photos in and win some prizes, possibly," said Travis Brickey with TVA Public Relations.

"The way that would work, the contest actually starts on Monday the 18th, the week before Memorial Day. It runs through Labor Day, so all summer long, and folks can get out and they can take a photo and tag it with #TVA-summer. They can post that

on their Twitter account or Instagram, or they can upload it by Facebook, and then they'll be entered into the contest. So, that's a really fun thing for folks to participate in."

First prize will be a Go-Pro Hero4 Extreme Camera Kit; second prize will be a Fit-bit Surge Fitness Superwatch; and third prize will be an Eton Hand Turbine Rechargeable USB Battery Pack.

Even before the contest started, people had already begun using the #TVAsummer tag, leaving TVA representatives optimistic about the eventual overall success of the campaign.

## MECHS...from Page 1A

tional Achievement.

The 27 seniors with at least a B-average made up the majority of the 40 MECHS graduates who will embark on the subsequent chapter of their lives.

Union County Site Administrator Roy Perren welcomed the near-capacity crowd to the graduation exercises inside the 900-seat Performing Arts Center.

"We've grown so large over the past few years that we have four graduation ceremonies," Perren said. "Today we have the honor of presenting the Union site and the Fannin site with their diplomas."

"These diplomas reflect not only the hard work and determination of these students, but the support of their families, community organizations, local businesses, the MECHS staff and governing board."

Honor Graduate Shara Camp was next at the podium to greet those in attendance. She also gave a shout out to family, friends, and the MECHS faculty and staff, from top to bottom.

"On behalf of our class I would like to welcome you to the graduation of the Class of 2015," she said. "We're more than happy to have our parents, teachers, friends, and loved ones here to share this exciting day with us and to celebrate all of our achievements. As the Class of 2015, we need to express our gratitude for the wonderful opportunity that we were exposed to. Our thanks must go to all of the staff and management of the Mountain Education Charter High School. We thank absolutely every teacher, mentor, counselor, coach, principal, and superintendent for sharing their talent, time, knowledge, encouragement, and support that drove us to this day."

Brandon Panter gave the Fannin County Senior High Honor Address. Panter plans on attending North Georgia Technical College and enroll in the nursing program.

"I can't say thank you enough to all of the teachers that stayed on me, called me to make sure I was coming to school, and make sure I graduated."

Union County Senior High Honor and Star Student Address was given by Victoria Nguyen who plans on attending the University of North Georgia where she will enter into the ROTC program and major in Psychology and Art. After graduation she hopes to train service dogs for disabled veterans. She opened her address with some humor, offering a reliable escape-plan for those bored by her speech.

"I really don't want to give a boring speech because I have sat through so many throughout my life," Nguyen said. "So before I begin, I'd like to point out some brief safety procedures. If you wish to leave, the emergency exits can be found to the left and the right of you. Also, your seat can also double as a flotation device, in the event that my speech crashes."

She followed by reciting a poem about her generation that was penned by a then-14-year old boy named Jordan Nichols. It speaks volumes of 21st Century youth and the first few lines read.

"Our generation will be known for nothing," Nguyen

read aloud. "Never will anybody say, we were the peak of mankind. That is wrong, the truth is, our generation was a failure."

"Thinking that we actually succeeded is a waste. And we know living only for money and power is the way to go. Being loving, respectful, and kind is a dumb thing to do."

However, when read in reverse, the poem sings a different tune about the generation commonly referred to as Generation Z (those born after 1995).

"Being loving, respectful, and kind is the way to go. Living only for money and power is a waste. And we know we actually succeeded thinking that our generation was a failure. That is wrong, the truth is, we were the peak of mankind. Never will anybody say, our generation will be known for nothing."

Before awards, scholarships, and diplomas were handed out Fannin County Site Administrator Lori Chastain recognized the Class of 2015 and its honor graduates, then gave an abbreviated history of the Mountain Education School. According to Chastain, MECHS opened in Blairsville in 1993 with three graduates. This year, the school expects to graduate 270 students across 11 sites rang-

ing from Gilmer and Pickens County in Northwest Georgia to Elbert County, which sits east of Athens-Clarke County on the South Carolina border.

The President's Award for Educational Excellence, which included a congratulatory letter from President Barack Obama was awarded to Nguyen, Kirsten Callihan, Mary Edwards, Blair Stuart, and Noelle Vaughn.

Up next was the Presentation of Scholarships with 31 local businesses lending a helping hand to deserving students.

Finally the moment that the anxious senior class was awaiting was the diploma presentation by MECHS Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens.

Graduates entered the stage from the left side as high school students, and exited the right side as men and women of their respective communities.

Union County Site Administrator Angie Burns concluded the ceremony by thanking everyone for supporting the students.

"It takes everybody to get our students as far as we have," Burns said. "You are now Class of 2015 graduates."