

Rocky Mount TELEGRAM

Alumni association sponsors inaugural fellowship event

From Contributed Reports

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The W. A. Pattillo High School National Alumni Association Inc. sponsored its inaugural Fellowship Brunch on Feb. 6 at Pattillo Middle School in Tarboro.

The purpose of the brunch Scholarship Committee Chairwoman Charlotte Strong Privott said in her welcome remarks was "to support the education of the children in Tarboro and the Edgecombe County Community." It was the perfect occasion for the Edgecombe County Public Schools, the Tarboro/Princeville community and the alumni association to expand their collaboration.

Tarboro native Rochelle Riley, who is former elementary student of Pattillo High School and graduate of Tarboro Senior High School, was the guest speaker. Riley is an accomplished writer and public speaker who is now a columnist for the Detroit Free Press. Her columns written about former Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick were part of an entry that won the 2009 Pulitzer prize for local reporting.

With grace, humility and eloquence, Riley shared the story of her life and how it has enriched her existence.

"Pattillo was here and is still here," she said. "We lived — a loving community of African Americans whose stories deserve to be told and celebrated. And we must continue to tell them."

Her message was engaging and empowering.

Edgecombe County Public Schools were well represented at the event. The SouthWest Edgecombe High School chorus under the direction of Angela Sessoms performed two selections. They were accompanied by their principal, Craig Harris, who attended the affair in support of his students and the event. Princeville Elementary School Principal Annette Walker and Pattillo Middle School Principal Lauren Lampson were present and both graciously thanked the association for its continued financial support to their schools that the association has provided for the past four years.

The Rev. Milton Harrell, a 1956 Pattillo High School alumnus, played the harmonica. Also there were pieces of historical African American art displayed belonging to the personal collection of the late Robert "Bob" Whitehead. Several vendors were available, including a gentleman who attended Pattillo High School from grades 1 through 11 and graduated from Tarboro Senior High School in 1971 – honorary Pattillo High School alumnus and author, Cornell Boyd.



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The association has established a Scholarship and Awards Program that provides annual scholarships to college-bound graduating seniors and incentive awards to elementary and middle school students in Edgecombe County Public Schools. In the past three years, the association has donated \$2,000 in incentive awards, \$11,600 in financial assistance to Princeville Elementary and Pattillo Middle Schools, and \$23,000 in scholarships. On occasion, the Association has also rendered financial assistance to other organizations in Edgecombe County related to the educational and civic growth of ECPS youth.

The W.A. Pattillo High School National Alumni Association is dedicated to supporting the education of students in the Edgecombe County Public Schools. The association has high expectations of impacting the development of another generation of good, responsible citizens who know who they are, understand where they came from, and know where they are going. Through education, the association desires to motivate and influence students in the Edgecombe County Public Schools to learn well, live well and serve well.

Members of the association who attended the brunch were honored to hear the eighth-grade president of the Pattillo Middle School Student Government when he said, "Pattillo alumni the spirit of Pattillo is alive and moving. Thank you for your generosity to our student body and the role models you are to the Edgecombe County Community."