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Jim Richardson Addresses Anniversary Celebrants

'Community Determines Direction Of College'

By SARAH HELTON
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MORGANTON — Amid cooperative clearing skies and mild weather, Western Piedmont Community College's student body, alumni, faculty, staff and friends met Monday on the Plaza and breezeway areas of the college to commemorate the institution's silver anniversary.

Heading up the 25th year celebration was WPCC president Dr. Jim Richardson, who has led the college during the past 10 years — a decade termed "innovative" by educators and community leaders.

Richardson praised the foresight of college founders, who included Dr. W.E. Phifer, whose widow was present for the event.

"We would like to express appreciation to the founders of this institution — those people with a vision who felt there was a strong need for higher education in this community," Richardson said.

"We have always had the unwavering support from our community. We have always had a strong academic reputation in the state."

The president added that WPCC today has a better balance of programs, and he believes the college is "better fulfilling our mission."

Richardson pointed out, "On Sept. 8, 1966, Dr. W.E. Phifer Jr., in an address delivered to the college's first convocation stated, 'Thus the college is intimately associated with the community. You will have the opportunity to bend it and mold it, make it insignificant or make it great. What kind of college it evolves into over the years will depend, to a large degree, on what your at-

titude is toward it.'"

Richardson added, "The faculty, who has been the driving force of this institution deserves the credit for realizing Dr. Phifer's challenge."

He commended the faculty and staff, including charter members of the staff, Larry Clark, Gwen Eller, Jack Huss, Harold Olsen, Ruby Pharr, Shirley Smith and Lenada Williams.

"We know that students are the body of this institution, they are our reason for being," Richardson said. "However, the faculty is the soul of the institution, giving its purpose direction and meaning. They are the ones who bend, mold and make the significant impact to which Dr. Phifer alluded."

Richardson renewed the faculty and staff's commitment to the future, and pledged to maintain the quality of services and programs to the students and community.

Also addressing the group was Charlie Hinson, vice chairman of the board of trustees, who said he "reflected back with pride" on the college's founders and its proud history. However, he warned, "We can't rest upon our laurels, but must launch efforts to continue that challenge which will be good for the next 25 years."

Hinson said he was confident WPCC's leaders and students will rise to the challenge.

Benny Greene, president of the alumni association, spoke briefly, as did Theresa Hobbs, president of the student body.

The college was founded in 1964 and serves each year approximately 10,000 people — both regular and continuing education students.

Under construction is the \$4 million Phifer Learning Resource Center.