

PHIFER LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

Phifer center dedicated

By LETA PARKS
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A Learning Resource Center named after a couple who strongly supported higher education received its official dedication Sunday at Western Piedmont Community College.

A crowd of spectators gathered in front of the Phifer Learning Resources Center to dedicate the building and to honor the couple for whom the building is named — Mary Adair Edwards Phifer and the late Edward William Phifer Jr.

"I can't think of any more people who were more dedicated to education and to helping people get an education," said Saul R. Cheslock, who gave the dedicatory prayer for the new building.

The center houses eight classrooms, a library, a drama studio, an expanded audiovisual center, offices, meeting rooms and a life-size reproduction of the late Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr.'s library.

H.G. Jones, curator of the North Carolina Room for the Wilson Library at the University of

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Western Piedmont Foundation President Otto Woerner speaks at dedication Sunday as, from left, Martha Cross Sexton, Judge Claude Sitton, Mary Ad-

air Phifer and Jim Richardson look on. (Photo by Mark Hannan)

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North Carolina at Chapel Hill, described Edward Phifer as a man who was interested in history and the "contemplative life."

Although Phifer was a doctor, his interest in history led him to search among different libraries for knowledge about historical events. Eventually, that research resulted in award-winning historical writings.

"He enriched his own life, and even more importantly, enriched our knowledge and understanding of the history of Burke County, North Carolina and the nation," Jones said.

Jones also praised Mary Adair Phifer for her partnership with her husband. He described her as "his partner whose support, enthusiasm and love enabled her husband to excel in two quite different fields."

College President Jim Richardson acknowledged the Phifers' contributions to the school, calling them "two people whose names are synonymous in Burke County with higher education."

Judge Claude Sitton, chairman of the WPCC Board of Trustees, praised the couple for their contributions to the college.

"This lifelong commitment to Western Piedmont has been and probably will be unsurpassed," he said.

Phifer was instrumental in the 1960s in organizing the efforts to start a community college in Burke County, and later served as the first chairman of the board of trustees from June, 1964 until he died Feb. 19, 1980.

His wife was the first female trustee in WPCC's history, and was chairman of the board from 1983 to 1985.

She is currently a director of the Western Piedmont Foundation Inc.

But the Phifers were not the only ones to receive praise during the dedication ceremony.

The fund-raising efforts of those who campaigned to get money for the building's construction and the financial contributions of Burke County residents also received praise.

"I would like to thank each of you who made a contribution to this fund," Sitton said to the crowd of spectators.

Otto Woerner, president of the Western Piedmont Foundation Inc., also praised the efforts of the community which raised \$1.3 million to help build the center.

"It was the work of all those volunteers (who campaigned for funds) and the generosity of all the people in this county that made this Resource Center possible," he said.

The state provided the additional \$2.7 million for the \$4 million project.

During the ceremony, Woerner and Sitton unveiled portraits of Edward and Mary Adair Phifer which will hang just inside the lobby at the entrance to the building.

Audience members at the dedication were given guided tours of the new facility, and watched college officials install a time capsule which is scheduled to be opened April 2, 2014.