

Childres wins national award

By JOHN CALLAHAM
News Herald Staff Writer

When Elsie Childres was first appointed to the board of trustees at Western Piedmont Community College by the Burke County School Board, she had a goal of trying to improve education in Burke County.

"Education has always been one of my ambitions," Childres said.

However, even she did not know how much time or effort she would give to the college for 17 years, helping with fundraising as well as the expansion of WPCC, both in building size and in courses of study.

The work Childres has done to promote WPCC and community colleges in general has not gone unnoticed by others and, on Sept. 25, she will be honored on a national level.

Childres will travel to San Francisco on that day to accept the M. Dale Ensign Trustee Award from the American Association of Community College Trustees.

The award, named for a former ACCT president, is the highest award that can be given to a community college board of trustees member. It has been given annually since 1972 and Childres is the first winner from North Carolina.

The award is presented to a lay trustee based on his or her activities at the local, state and national level and the influence they have had on



Elsie Childres

the community college movement.

WPCC President Jim Richardson said the best description of Childres came from Helen Dowey, the current executive director of the North Carolina Trustees Association. "She said, 'Elsie is the ultimate model for a trustee,'" Richardson noted.

Richardson is in full agreement with those remarks. "Elsie is not in this for glory or recognition, but for the students and their education," he said.

Childres was born 74 years ago in Burke County, living most of her life in the Hildebran area. Although

Please turn to Page 11A

Childres

From Page One

she worked briefly as a teacher in the county school system, most of her life has been as a co-owner with her husband of Arlene Hosiery.

Childres said she believes in the community college and its idea of helping people who might otherwise not get an education. "We can get students who have fallen through the cracks," she said.

Childres also feels the college has helped to create better workers through its training courses.

Since working as a trustee, Childres said she is proud of the efforts of the college and its staff. "I feel we have some of the best administration in the state," she said. "We don't have a lot of the problems a few of the other colleges have."

In addition to serving on the board at WPCC, Childres has also served on the North Carolina Trustees Association for the past 10 years, including a time as its president.

Childres also has spoken about

community colleges in various training seminars across the nation, often traveling at her own expense, according to Richardson.

This year, however, it seemed Childres' work at WPCC was put to an end when the school board did not reappoint her to the board of trustees. "I was disappointed," Childres said.

The trustees did not miss her for long, however, as Gov. Jim Hunt appointed Childres to the board to fill a spot vacated by local attorney Juleigh Sitton.

Childres admits to being shocked at the news of winning the Ensign award from ACCT, and said, "I'm not sure I deserve this award. There are trustees all over the nation that do a lot of work."

Still, it is Childres who will travel across the nation in September and stand up on a podium with the Ensign award in her hand. Asked if she has thought out what she will say at that time, she smiled as she said, "Not yet."