

Making it to the top



After Brown's climb to the top of the 50-foot tower, shown below with fellow classmate Ralph Chapman, the students, in photo at left, discuss with Konarski, and Jim Gravely, center in cap, with Alpine Towers, the aspects of trust and how this exercise will help them assist other students. The students are, from left, Brown, Chapman and John Vu.

Staff photos by Kimmy Costner

Teamwork the key as WPCC students help classmate to the top

By KERRI L. McFALLS
The News Herald

MORGANTON — Teamwork is what it takes to participate in Cindy Konarski's Therapeutic Recreation class at Western Piedmont Community College.

On Tuesday morning, Konarski's class worked together to include all the students in an Alpine Tower exercise. The 50-foot tower, located on the college's campus, is used to teach teamwork and trust in fellow participants.

The class goal for the day was to have one student place a purple egg, which represents the unlimited and unknown potential of a student, on top of the tower.

The group of Student Ambassadors and Student Government Association representatives chose SGA Vice President Joni Brown, 22, to complete the task of taking the egg to the top.

Brown, who has muscular dystrophy and has movement only in her left hand, did not let the disease keep her from participating. In anticipation of the exercise, Brown, Konarski and others involved with the Alpine Tower, met to figure out how to get her to the top and came up with a special sling.

In the device made especially for her and with everyone participating in the event Tuesday, classmates hoisted Brown,



Tower

Continued from Page One

weighing just 36 pounds, to the top.

Before ascending, Brown admitted, "I am a little nervous, but you about have to be a little bit."

Fellow classmate Ralph Chapman, SGA treasurer, was along for the ride with Brown. He was hoisted up along side of Brown to make sure she had a clear pathway to the top.

"I just want to keep her absolutely safe and as comfortable as possible," Chapman said before the ascent.

Down below, classmates shouted encouragement: "Looking great Joni! Almost there! Doing good!"

After reaching the top of the tower and placing the egg on the top, Chapman said, "The student has reached the top."

But Brown, wanting to add some humor to the situation, had named the egg Elvis and she declared, "Elvis has reached the top."

The ride down was a smooth for Brown and Chapman. As soon as Chapman's feet hit the ground he said, "Oh, that feels great." Brown said she had fun and would do it again.

"To see her participate as much as we are is great," Chapman said.

"The inclusion isn't just about Joni, it's about all of us," said Konarski, emphasizing the importance of teamwork in reaching the top.

Every student has his or her own personal boundaries, Konarski said, and the job of other students is to learn each other's limits and how to work around boundaries and sometimes step out of "your circle or comfort zone."

As for her comfort zone, Brown said on Tuesday morning, "I jumped out of the circle."