

## MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA

### A COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR BURKE COUNTY

(A Report on Community Service)

The News-Herald (circulation 6,500) undertook to help in a movement for the establishment of a comprehensive community college in Burke County, North Carolina.

The movement was successful, and the Western Piedmont Community College has been approved and organized.

The News-Herald espoused the cause from the time it was first suggested in January 1962 that Burke County needed a junior college. County-wide discussion was stimulated, and committees were formed.

This was prior to the work of the Governor's Commission on Education Beyond the High School which conducted a survey and recommended that North Carolina establish a system of comprehensive community colleges with counties providing capital funds and part of operating expenses. A Burke County delegation, with The News-Herald's editor as spokesman, appeared in a legislative hearing in support of the Commission recommendation.

Burke County, its interest already aroused by reason of earlier editorial support and discussion, resolved to try to obtain one of the first five such colleges to be established after the N. C. General Assembly enacted the Community College Act.

The News-Herald from the start had authorized its editor, W. Stanley Moore, to give as much time as necessary to the out-of-office organizational effort. This included speaking before and working with official boards, PTA's, civic clubs and other groups, helping to prepare Burke County's formal application to be submitted to the State, frequent trips to the capital, visits to high schools in this and neighboring counties for student surveys relating to potential enrollment, and many other tasks. Little of this work by The News-Herald was reported in the newspaper, but it was considered an essential part of any serious community service project.

The community college movement was under way before the contest year now under consideration. This preliminary work consisted of creating public interest in and desire for a community college, and it was directed by a voluntary Steering Committee of which our editor was a member and a member also of its executive group.

The year under consideration---November 1, 1963 to October 31, 1964---was a period of action, involving: Formal application made in November to the State Board of Education for approval in the face of competing applications from this area; Approval received in January subject to a local bond and tax election; Special election held March 21

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to provide necessary county support (approved by voters by a record-breaking margin of 17-to-1); Organization of college with appointment of Board of Trustees, selection of a president, and, finally, naming it Western Piedmont Community College.

Our editor was appointed a trustee following the election and is now Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

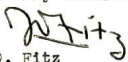
The information presented herewith is designed to tell its own story: How The News-Herald, already on record as advocating the community college, sought editorially and by news coverage to keep lively the already demonstrated public interest while the County's application was pending, and, then, when the State authorized the County to proceed with an election, to inform the public as to the educational opportunity which was before it. This was done by emphasizing the successful campaigns in the two first counties to be approved for colleges, by quoting statements from local residents and outside authorities as to why Burke County should obtain a college, and reporting the mounting wave of support throughout the county. This was done in a variety of ways to create an atmosphere favorable to passage of necessary bonds and tax. Local personalities were kept in the forefront, and The News-Herald sought always to avoid the appearance that this was a "News-Herald project."

No attempt is made in this simple chronological presentation by means of clippings to dramatize the role of the editor and staff in unpublicized work in the movement. For his work, our editor received the Kiwanis Club's Distinguished Service Award. His co-worker, Dr. E. W. Phifer Jr., Steering Committee chairman, was honored in 1964 as Morganton's Man of the Year, and Editor Moore (ineligible because he is a former Man of the Year) made the address in a ceremony so held as to further promote the community college election.

Made a part of this information is Burke County's application, in booklet form, which our editor assisted in preparing and which was submitted to the State Board of Education in November 1963.

Community service is a continuing responsibility of community newspapers. The News-Herald, perpetuated to be "an instrument of public service," is proud to have had a prolonged but successful part in one of the most satisfying and rewarding acts of community service in its history.

Respectfully submitted,

  
J. D. Fitz  
Publisher