

Sen. Gooch presenting a proclamation to Woody Gap Principal Carol Knight and Student Council President Austin Clark. Also pictured: Lamar Paris, Lee Knight and Georgia Senate Pro Tempore Butch Miller.

Gap School in this way started with community service, as Woody Gap Principal Carol Knight volunteered at the Byron Herbert Reece Society's "Maters & Music" event last August.

Knight ran into Sen. Gooch, who was there to grab a tomato sandwich with Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, and their ensuing conversation about the 78-yearold school proved fertile ground for the resolution.

Woody Gap social studies teacher Brock Gordon made sure to give the students a good civics lesson ahead of the trip.

"We took that Monday and Tuesday before Wednesday to go over the roles of the legislative branch and what they did," said Gordon. "We even talked a little bit about the executive branch.

"We had our picture with Gov. Nathan Deal, which was really awesome, so they had an idea of who he was and what his job was. It was a great experience for our kids.'

The students took that photo with the governor after arriving at the State Capitol Building, then attended a reading of the resolution by Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle on the senate

Afterward, they had lunch in a room reserved for them by Sen. Gooch, who met with the students to talk about state

government, answer any of their questions, and pose for selfies.

Later, the kids toured the Georgia Capitol Museum, where they studied portraits of past governors and witnessed oddities like the famous two-headed cow and other exhibits, before heading back to Suches after a long day at the capital.

"I would like the kids to feel a closer connection to their representatives, that government isn't something that happens somewhere else that they have no influence over," said Knight following the trip. "They can reach out to their representatives and senators and have their opinion heard. "And also, that people are

noticing what we're doing here. We're small, but we think big.' Molli Tritt is in the

seventh grade at Woody Gap, and she serves as middle school representative on the School Governance Team.

"I was impressed with the architecture of the building,' said Tritt. "The dome was pretty cool, and all the paintings, the statues and the stairs.

Senior Austin Clark is president of the Woody Gap Student Council, and he said he appreciated how well the students were received in Atlanta

"We got treated with a lot of respect," said Clark, who

got to stand on the senate floor as his classmates sat in the gallery during the reading of the resolution.

Continued Clark: "Steve Gooch, he's an amazing guy, he treated us well. It wasn't just a handshake, hey, how are you - he asked us what we enjoyed, what our plans were. He's a really great guy.'

Reid Dyer of Hayes, James and Associates was also volunteering at the Byron Herbert Reece Farm the day Sen. Gooch proposed Woody Gap School Day to Knight, and he attended the reading of the resolution with Union County Tax Commissioner Lee Knight and Commissioner Paris.

"Once the proclamation was ready, then Sen. Gooch spoke about the value of the Woody Gap School, and Carol Knight did an outstanding job representing the school in her talk to the senators about the virtues of the school," said Paris. "It really was a wonderful event, and thanks to everyone for making Union County and Woody Gap School and the Suches community so proud."

The school was recognized in a similar fashion in 2001, when the Georgia Senate commended Woody Gap School "on its outstanding dedication and commitment to excellence in

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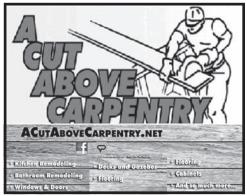
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