

UCHS Graduation...from Page 1A



Graduating seniors and their families had a blast Friday decorating their vehicles ahead of the May 22 drive-in graduation at Union County High. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

degree in the medical field. As the second highest-achieving student in her graduating class, Evelyn McBride delivered the Salutatory Address, leading off by remarking on the fact that she is "not what you would call a typical high school student." "I prefer books to social gatherings, action-adventure movies to romantic ones," McBride said. "I would rather eat lunch in Mrs. (Alecia) Frizzell's room than in the cafeteria because I could get a jumpstart on my homework. I actually like homework, as long as it's not English, but I don't

think it gets any weirder than running for fun. "I say all this because it is who I am, and it is how God made me. And it is because of Him that I am standing before you tonight ... It is because of Him that I can say thank you friends, family, staff, administrators and all those viewing from home for supporting me and my fellow classmates during these difficult times." Continuing, McBride discussed some of the lessons she has learned over the years and how those lessons can help the members of the Class of

2020 connect with their future goals. "The most valuable lesson I have learned in all 18 years of my life is the culmination of every moment, every failure and every success, and that lesson is: no dream is too big to achieve with a little bit of grit," McBride said. During a weeklong seminar at the U.S. Airforce Academy last summer, McBride said "grit was mentioned over 100 times a day." "It was repeatedly said that we, the students, would not make it as cadets if we did not pack a little bit of grit with

our boots," she said. "Grit is defined as passion and sustained persistence. "Some synonyms for grit are daring, spirit and toughness. It is also said to be one of the key characteristics of success, but it is more than a characteristic. It is a mindset necessary to fulfill our goals and aspirations. Achieving our dreams is not a straight path; it never will be." McBride will be attending the U.S. Airforce Academy, which she described as her dream school, in the fall. While the Class of 2020 may have missed out on a traditional ceremony, Principal C.T. Hussion said the one these graduates got will certainly be remembered for years to come, as will the graduates themselves. "I'm not sure if anyone here has realized this yet, but the Class of 2020 is a pretty big deal," Hussion said. "They were born into this world with 9/11, they experienced and remember the Great Recession, and are going out in the midst of a global pandemic that shut down the entire world. Most would look at these challenges as an excuse, but they've made them tough and they've made them resilient. "I was fortunate enough to be a member of the 100th

graduating class of both my high school and my college, but I don't remember those ceremonies. I remember the events, I remember them through pictures, but you will remember this. "Your class will go down in history. You're not the lost class - everyone will remember you. They will talk about the Class of 2020 in 20 years." Graduate Adelia Pyle closed out the ceremony, speaking to her graduating class about their futures and what they can achieve. "I wasn't sure if I wanted to talk about how our senior year was taken from us right at the finish line, or if I wanted to brag about all the accomplishments of our class, and trust me, there are a lot of accomplishments," Pyle said. "Or if I should talk about the future and what it holds for us, which made me think about how the future is uncertain, and no matter how much I want to, I cannot control life. "I can only control my reactions and emotions. I will be the first to admit that not getting to finish high school with a normal experience was one of the hardest things I have had to come to terms with. "It made me realize that tomorrow and the day after

are unpredictable, that change is something that happens whether I want it to or not. We all experience change; graduating high school is a big one. No longer will we have set schedules Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. In the eyes of the world, we are adults." Also taking part in the ceremony were the UCHS Ensemble Choir performing the National Anthem and Alma Mater; Alec Youngblood with words of welcome; Elexia Ochoa and Sadie Underwood with a moment of reflection; Alexandra Sherry with special music; and Superintendent John Hill with the presentation of class. The drive-in ceremony concluded with the class song and video, as well as an amazing fireworks display at the high school in honor of the Class of 2020. Some students decided to host viewing parties for their own graduation ceremony, which was available online Friday evening, to watch at home with their families and friends. The full ceremony video can be viewed by visiting the Union County High School Facebook page.



The UCHS Graduation Ceremony may have been very different in 2020, but as usual, commencement exercises ended with a bang Friday night. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Woody Gap...from Page 1A

6 feet of separation throughout the exercises. "I want you all to know how proud we are of you for overcoming the many obstacles you've faced during your life," Hill told the Woody Gap Class of 2020. "Most of you guys were born during 9/11, and you're graduating during a global pandemic." Following a thank you to retiring Woody Gap Teacher Gary Butler and everyone who helped make the graduation exercises a reality, Knight offered a special message from the outgoing senior class. "The Woody Gap School Class of 2020 wishes to thank their parents for all of their love, support and encouragement through the years," she said. "They realized that without you parents, they would not be here this morning, ready for their next step." Knight went on to recognize the members of the graduating class, allowing each to step outside his or her vehicle for a round of applause as she announced the name of each graduate and their parents. "Superintendent John Hill, I would like to present to you, and through you, to all assembled here today, the Woody Gap School's graduating Class of 2020," Knight said. "As the



Kirstin Ledford was one of six graduates proudly participating in the May 23 ceremony at Woody Gap School. Photo by Todd Forrest

principal of Woody Gap School, I certify that these seniors have met all of the requirements set forth by the Union County Board of Education and Georgia Department of Education." Hill offered parting words toward the conclusion of the unprecedented ceremony. "(To the) Suches community, we would all like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the support you've shown to these graduates," he

said. "We're all very proud of what you have accomplished and what you will accomplish going forward." In closing, Principal Knight issued one final goodbye to the Class of 2020 and welcomed them into their new life as high school graduates. "Congratulations to the graduates, and now alumni, of Woody Gap School," Knight said. "We wish everyone safety and health."