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memories that I feel like you're my second family," she said. "However, at times, I would like to strangle both of you."

"We have shared laughs, tears, good times, bad times, but most of all we have shared love and grown close through the years. As we stand here this morning, we will start a new chapter in our lives. Not only will I miss my classmates but my basketball teammates. I will truly miss playing ball with you all and wish you the best of luck next season."

Dockery then thanked her teachers at Woody Gap for their support and encouragement, reserving a special thank you for Butler, Cantrell and Glenn Kough. In closing, Dockery thanked her family for guiding her through the first 18 years of her life, and thanked God for her Alma Mater.

"Finally, I want to say thank you to my family, who have loved me and supported me. Thank you for pushing me



Zach Woody delivers his valedictorian speech on Saturday at Woody Gap School's graduation. Photo/Todd Forrest

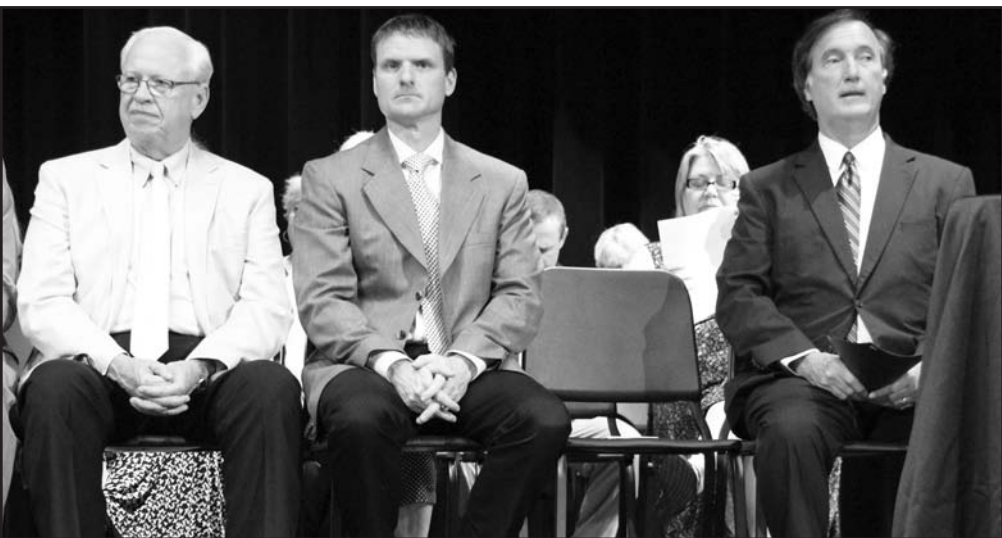
because without you, I would not have made it here at this point of my life. As we stand here before you like so many others in the 75-year history of Woody Gap, ready to graduate and start a new chapter in our lives, I would like to thank God for allowing us to attend a school like Woody Gap, and may God bless you all."

Following Dockery and Woody, Co-Principal Sheila

Tritt-Collins presented the Woody Gap Class of 2016 with their diplomas.

The graduation exercises concluded with a Senior Video that provided a slide show of pictures from the lives of each graduating senior, and a Candlelight Service where the Class of 2016 passed the proverbial torch to the upcoming seniors from the Class of 2017.

MECHS...continued from Page 1A



Gary Stepe, Dr. Darren Berrong and Roy Perren witness the graduation of 44 MECHS students at the Union County Fine Arts Center in Blairsville. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

and Circumstance," as the students walked the aisles and took their seats onstage.

Union County graduate Bryson Perry led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Union Site Administrator Roy Perren sang the national anthem.

Angie Burns, also a Union Site Administrator, welcomed guests and graduates to the ceremony.

"Mountain Ed has grown so large in the past few years that we are now having four graduation ceremonies like this across the state," said Burns. "Tonight, we have the honor of presenting the Union and Fannin site students with their diplomas."

"These diplomas reflect not only the hard work and determination of these students, but the support of their families, their community organi-

zations, local businesses, the MECHS staff and Governing Board."

Union County graduate Patricia Ray offered the greeting for the evening, extending her own welcome to those in attendance.

Alana Johnston of Union delivered the MEC Salutatory Address, having earned the second highest grade point average among 2016 graduates from all 12 MECHS sites, and the highest GPA at the Union site.

"I'm not going to stand up here and tell you individuality is the key to success as we all don identical caps and gowns," Johnston said. "But as we all come together before diverging on our separate paths, I'd like to share a quote with you from Mark Lewis, who said, 'The person who

you're with the most in life is yourself, and if you don't like yourself, you're always with somebody you don't like.'

"So as we move forward, I wish you not only the best, but that you never lose sight of who you are as you strive for success. As I address you for the final time, remember to be proud of how far you have come, and to be excited for how much more is to follow."

Johnston plans to study biology at Kennesaw State University before moving on to the Emory School of Medicine to learn anesthesiology.

Area businesses and civic organizations presented many scholarships to graduates that evening, and 28 students between the Fannin and Union sites graduated with Honors.

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