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Bucking tradition

Coal Creek Watershed awards unusual scholarship

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The Coal Creek Watershed Foundation awarded a total of \$22,000 in scholarship funds to three local students at a May 13 reception.

The foundation awards annual scholarships to former Briceville students who have participated in the program and pledge to continue giving back to the community.

The scholarship winners often return to Briceville Elementary to talk to kids and participate in events held by the Watershed Foundation.

Since the program's inception in 2002 it has awarded college scholarships to 36 Briceville students.

This year's recipients were Emily Patton, Drew Payne and Lyndsey Phillips.

Typically the foundation honors soon-to-be graduating Anderson County High School students with



On stage at the Anderson County High School Awards Program, from left, Lyndsey Phillips, Carol Moore, Drew Payne, Emily Patton and Barry Thacker. — Photo Courtesy Coal Creek Watershed Foundation

scholarships to help pay for college. Coal Creek Watershed Foundation President Barry Thacker explained during his opening address at the ceremony that the foundation is breaking custom this year by awarding a current University of Tennessee student as well as two current Anderson County High School students.

Thacker recounted a story of how former ACHS grad Lyndsey Phillips

contacted him recently to say she is finishing up her undergraduate degree at UT and preparing to apply to the UT College of Law. She added that she now regrets not participating in the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation while she was in high school and asked Thacker if there is any way she can join the program late.

Upon hearing Phillips's story and learning of her career goals, Thacker

decided to buck tradition and bring Phillips into the program, providing a \$2,000 scholarship to help pay for law school.

"We decided to fulfill her request, so she can become our Coal Creek lawyer gal," said Thacker.

Thacker noted that, in return, Phillips committed to telling her

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story to younger Briceville students at the program's annual Scholars Day event.

"If she can motivate just one Briceville student to go to college, then our investment in her will pay dividends," said Thacker.

The foundation awarded ACHS Class of 2014 students Emily Patton and Drew Payne, respectively, with \$10,000 scholarships.

Thacker jokingly referred to Drew Payne as the "our level gal" because during Payne's first ever community service project with the Watershed

Foundation she ended up with the no-glory duty of mixing concrete. When Payne arrived to help at the next two community service projects she immediately grabbed the level, Thacker noted.

He gave Patton the moniker "Coal Creek rain gal. Patton explained that Patton recruited volunteers, lined up food supplies and even booked a band to perform at a Coal Creek trash clean-up event, but a day of rain dampened the festivities, thus garnering her the name "Coal Creek rain gal."

Both Patton and Payne will receive Nantglo Scholarships to help them pursue their respective career goals.

Thacker stated that Patton aspires to attend Lincoln Memorial University to become a nurse while Payne will study at Pellissippi State Community College to become a dental hygentist. He said seeing the students succeed is what it's all about for him and Coal Creek Watershed assistant Carol Moore.

"Our favorite day of the year is when our scholars in college return to serve as role models for current Briceville students," he said. "Last year's Scholars Day was a particularly memorable event, so we're looking forward to Emily and Drew carrying on that tradition."