Georgia Zumwalt is NGTC’s 2015 GOAL winner

At the recent Habersham Rotary meeting, Georgia Zumwalt was announced as the North Georgia Technical College Georgia Occupational Award for Leadership (GOAL) winner for 2015.

GOAL, a statewide program of the Technical College System of Georgia, was actually started at NGTC in the early 1970’s. It is a program that honors excellence in academics and leadership among the state’s technical college students. Local GOAL winners are selected at each of the state’s 25 technical colleges. From across all three of North Georgia Technical College’s campuses, students representing 11 programs were nominated as candidates to represent NGTC in the state competition.

“The GOAL program allows us to highlight exemplary achievement and professionalism at the college through the success of our students,” said NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton. “We are grateful for the partnerships we have with the Rotary and the area Chambers who support our celebration of these exceptional students and their teachers.”

Each year the Habersham County Chamber of Commerce, White County Chamber of Commerce, and Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce show their support with monetary awards to the finalists and their nominating instructors. The Rotary Club of Habersham supports the program not only by hosting the event, but they also give the GOAL winner and all of the nominating instructors an award.

Through a series of competitive interviews and speeches conducted by NGTC faculty and staff, a list of the top twelve was narrowed down to four who were selected for advanced competition: Brian Crowe in Environmental Technology, nominated by Kevin Peyton; Angela Morris in Criminal Justice Technology, nominated by Pamela Segers; Emily Sullens in Accounting, nominated by Tim Green; and Georgia Zumwalt in Photography, nominated by Jeff Gulle.

These four engaged in yet one more round of interviews, this time with representatives from the professional community including Chamber of Commerce representatives. They then each took a turn at the podium before the Rotary Club of Habersham, delivering their prepared speeches.

Georgia Zumwalt, a resident of Jefferson, was a professional photographer several years ago. “I put the camera down when digital photography came out,” she said. “I was afraid of it and didn’t want to learn.” Georgia recalled that the lessons her mother had taught her growing up eventually made her realize it was time to take a chance. “She put a poster with a quote on my wall that said, ‘Your attitude isn’t the result of your success – your success is the result of your attitude,’” said Georgia. “When I decided to reestablish my career, I taught myself a lot of the technology, but I realized I had a lot of holes. So I chose technical education to get the foundation that I have to have to be successful.” A long-time member of the Georgia Professional Photographer’s Association, she attended some seminars at NGTC and realized the strength and quality of education offered at this campus. “I have learned that my failures were successes because they taught me lessons.”

Brian Crowe of Clayton was self-employed for many years and decided it was time for a career change that would allow him to embrace his passion for outdoors and wildlife. Listening to a local radio station, he heard Environmental Technology Instructor Kevin Peyton describe the program of study at North Georgia Technical
College. “I figured out later in life the importance of technical education,” Brian explained. “I was a little nervous coming back to college at my age, but it is a privilege and an honor to work with these younger students. They are caring and respectful, and they have made my journey back to school pleasurable.”

Angela Morris of Blairsville returned to school after 24 years of being a stay-at-home mom to ten children. “I needed a sense of accomplishment for me,” she said. “I realized I had no employable job skills, and I couldn’t tell my children it was important to go to college if I didn’t do it myself.” To maintain her family duties and pursue her goals, she needed something that was flexible, affordable, and doable. “North Georgia Tech is right here in our community, and it was the right answer for me.”

Emily Sullens of Alto explored several different programs at more than one college. In January of 2014, she enrolled in an Accounting class. “Everything just clicked with me and I absolutely loved it,” she said. In fact, with just a few weeks of class under her belt she entered the Phi Beta Lambda Region contest in Accounting, advanced to State, and then finally placed fourth in the nation in July. “I have learned more at North Georgia Tech than just class material,” she says. “I have learned a lot about myself.”

As the NGTC 2015 GOAL winner, Georgia will now advance to represent NGTC at the region level which will be held in March at the Lanier Technical College campus in Forsyth County.

GOAL candidates are nominated by an instructor and must carry at least a 3.0 GPA and demonstrate strong work ethics and leadership skills.

Picture: White County Chamber President Cindy Bailey and Habersham Rotary President Joely Mixon presented GOAL Winner Georgia Zumwalt with an award at the luncheon announcement. (L-R) NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton, Cindy Bailey, Georgia Zumwalt, Joely Mixon, and Photography Instructor Jim Loring.

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