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One Hart Beat

THE HARTWELL SUN, PAGE 16

MAY 14, 2020

The Hartwell Sun, the Hart County Chamber of Commerce and the Hart County Charter System have partnered to demonstrate how Hart County is truly #ONEHARTBEAT. Each month, a school and a local Chamber of Commerce business will be spotlighted to show how the business and the schools are working together to prepare all students for their futures. This month, The Hartwell Sun is featured, as the host for the #OneHartBeat campaign.



Sunshot by Michael Hall

Hart County High School's STAR student, Sean Pak, left, and STAR teacher, Rob Elliot, right, demonstrate a virtual reality game in February that they had hands in creating. It is one of many stories from the Hart County Charter System covered by The Sun.

The Sun, schools a great match

By Anna Hall
Hart Co. Charter System

When the OneHartBeat campaign launched last September, the idea was to bring the community together and share ways and reasons local business and industries have, and are, supporting education and Hart Charter System schools.

It was a clever name for a monthly column, appropriately following the popular #OneHartBeat post used system-wide on social media to connect all Hart County schools and support each schools' individual achievements and news.

Back then, last fall when school first started for the 2019-2020 school year, it seemed like a monthly OneHartBeat article linking one school a month to one business a month was an innovative, multi-fold means to raise money for the REACH Hart Community Education Foundation and promote how the business and school communities support each other in The Hartwell Sun.

That was back then. Remember back then? Before late February when phrases like "ever-evolving," "new normal" and the thought of closing schools for a few weeks to "slow the spread" seemed like an other-worldly option. Then, the spiral into the novel coronavirus rabbit hole started to grow. Soon, COVID-19 would close schools first for two weeks, until spring break. As we know now, that was not meant to be.

As Michael Hall, publisher and editor of The Hartwell Sun saw first-hand, reports would flutter in about schools staying shuttered until the end of the school year, which was moved up to May 15. Sports did not come back. Normal end-of-year festivities and events were unable to be celebrated. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten registration would be moved into June. Prom was postponed. Graduation plans would be postponed. And sadly, the senior class of 2020 would see its final year of high school thrown off course greatly.

"Schools closing for the

academic year and students completing online learning was certainly not what we were hoping for here at The Sun," Hall said. "Some of our favorite stories to cover come from the school system just wouldn't happen. Whether it is an academic tip-of-the-hat earned by a student or club or the sports that show our local youth's athletic prowess, we work regularly with Hart County Schools to report on the good things happening there for our local families. It has been heart-breaking that those stories just can't be told."

Yet, while it seems devastating that the school year had to play out as it did this spring, the thought of OneHartBeat was a strong silver lining pulsing through the community. People came together, from the school system, from local businesses and from those who may not even have children in Hart County schools, to support one another in a way that can only happen when they are all riding out the same storm.

Teachers and school offi-

cials stepped out of their normal roles, volunteered for lesson-plan handouts, for meal distribution days, for meal packing days. Everyone took on a new normal, and ran with it with open hearts, all beating together as one to ensure the best for students and their families, Hall said.

"The OneHartBeat campaign became a great way for The Sun to help the Hart County Charter System show off some of the great things happening in our local schools, even while the school year ended in an unprecedented way," Hall said. "Together with the Hart County Chamber of Commerce and the school system, we were able to merge traditional print media and online social media to show how our schools and business community truly do approach education with one heart beat to bring out the best in our students. It has been an honor to host this campaign and program, and we look forward to seeing those relationships flourish in the future."



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