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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 are spotlighted to show how the business and the schools are working together to prepare all students for their futures. This month, Wade's Tax Service, Hartland Farm & Home Realty and the Harold Warren Charitable Trust is featured, as they have been proven devoted partners for Hart County schools.

Organizations offer strong school support

By Anna Hall
Hart Co. Charter System



Sunshot by MIchael Hall
Angie McGee, owner of Wade's Tax Service and Hartland Farm and Home Realty, back, and Wade Gaines, front, executive of the Warren Foundation Scholarships, are pictured in their offices on E. Franklin Street in Hartwell.

Angie McGee has strong, deep roots in Hart County. She is a Hart County High School graduate and a native of Hart County. She also has an outstanding track record in education and agriculture in Hart County, serving as a booster and frequent contributor in both the high school and middle school's FFA programs. From catering FFA trips to devoting countless hours to both schools as a mentor and hands-on professional, McGee has a passion for agriculture and education, especially where the two combine.

Her legacy doesn't stop there. Before taking ownership of Wade's Tax Service, she owned and ran a farm for 11 years alongside her husband, and also served for eight years on the Hart Board of Education. She also owns and operates Hartland Farm and Home Realty. On the board, she was integral in creating the Hart College and Career Academy, encouraging renovations and expansion of the high school's new gym and was key in making the Agri-Science Center become a reality.

"Without farmers, where would we be? We need new generations to know how to run farms, how to handle matters of agriculture. It's a much more desired field than maybe some people realize," she said. "Hart County schools and the College and Career Academy are embedding that message along with other important topics through STEAM education outlets."

Like McGee, community is importnat to Wade Gaines. Though he may be a native of Elbert County, he has deep roots in Hart County. His name is repeated often this time of year thanks to his role with Wade's Tax Service. Yet aside from the tax season, Gaines stays busy year-round giving back through his contributions to local initiatives, the Hart County Charter System among them.

As the first person to attend college in his family, he believes education is crucial in making a successful life and is an endeavor to be pursued with passion and purpose.

That is why Gaines was honored to take over as the representative and executive behind the Warren Scholarship Foundation more than a decade ago. The foundation provides $1,000 scholarships annually to Hart County High School graduates for up to four years for post-high school education. Every year, upwards of 26 graduates are selected through a nomination process to earn the scholarship to help with either a two-year or four-year college education, or for post-high school career training. That comes to roughly $100,000 each year for higher education for Hart County students.

"Students have to have a 3.0 GPA to earn this scholarship and the have to be recommended by a teacher," Gaines said. "This is an opportunity to see our younger generation truly move forward and bring back to Hart County a quality of education and skills that will be a major benefit to the community as a whole. Education is a powerful thing and this scholarship is a great contributor to making success for our students possible."

The foundation also provides scholarships for adults looking to advance their college education, offering about six scholarships per year to students 26 years-old or older, who are hoping to finish a college career they once started.

"Some people need a little more time to really get a grasp on what they want out of life," he said. "Offering them this second chance to get that diploma is important."

Gaines came to be the executive of the scholarship foundation for many reasons, one being his desire to see Hart County students thrive, the other because he is an accountant who worked for Harold Warren, a Hart County native who was a lawyer with the U.S. Senate in Washington D.C. until his passing at the age of 93.

"I handled his money," Gaines said with a laugh. "He knew he could trust me, and he knew I was invested in education. Wade's Tax Service supports all kinds of school booster clubs, athletics, extra-curricular activities like SkillsUSA and TSA. Mr. Warren was a major proponent of education, he wanted Hart County to be a name bragged about around the state. I think he would be very proud to see Hart County schools, now, how they are blossoming and offering so many opportunities for our students. I know I am proud of that."

The Gaines name is a common one in Hart County schools. His youngest son Kevin Gaines is principal at Hart County High School. His older son, Greg, is the video and graphic design instructor and TSA advisor at the high school.

Much like their father, the Gaines brothers understand the value of educational support from the community. Opportunities such as the Warren Scholarship are important to not only providing a doorway to a new future for students, it also offers motivation to help their students see beyond high school.

"It allows our school to be a piece of developing a healthy economy and a healthy community," Kevin Gaines said.

Having the scholarship and businesses like Wade's Tax Service and Hartland Farm and Home Realty aid in funding and work-based learning support is something not every school district sees. Kevin Gaines knows this well.

"When people believe like this in education and they are willing to support it on such a dynamic level, everyone benefits," Kevin Gaines said."

The support provided by McGee, Wade Gaines and the rest of the Gaines family is not lost on school superintendent Jay Floyd. He sees first-hand how local partners play a vital role in putting education at the forefront in Hart County.

"We are grateful for the support of community members like Wade Gaines and his wife. Wade has been a supporter of Hart County Schools for a long time," Floyd said. "And he supports every aspect of the education process. He understands how education is the equalizer for every person."


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