

CROCKETT VALEDICTORIAN WINS NATIONAL EXCHANGE CLUB LEGACY AWARD

By Ron Barry

Please don't ever let Ashley Boone suspect you of abusing a child. And if you really want to get her worked up, light up a cigarette while you're at it.

If you do, you might receive a gentle but well-worded admonishment for the smoking. But fully expect her to come off the top rope on you for the abuse offense.

Crockett County High School's most recently graduated valedictorian achieved some significant highlights during her time on campus: FCCLA officer and statewide competition winner; entertaining roles in school musicals; member of the cross-country and tennis teams; and, of course, earning the system's top academic honor at commencement.

But when Boone found time to set her busy feet off-campus - putting her finely-tuned natural leadership skills to work - the Cavalier teen shone so brightly that a national organization took notice.

Friday, at its national convention held in Louisville, Kentucky, the National Exchange Club named Boone as its 2025 National Legacy of the Year Award winner for outstanding community service and leadership.

Ironically, Boone had to leave the national convention of the Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) in Orlando, Florida - where she and classmates Gayle Prescott and Hope Stewart were winning another award for Professional Presentation - to fly to Louisville to accept the Exchange Club honor.



Left: Ashley Boone (far left) with her CCHS FCCLA classmates at the FCCLA National Convention in Orlando, where her Professional Presentation with Hope Stewart and Gayle Prescott received a national third-place award.

Boone was selected for the Legacy Award for her advocacy efforts in Crockett County to prevent child abuse and statewide in Tennessee for helping her peers recognize the danger of tobacco and nicotine products, an issue that became all too real for her after watching her grandmother die from lung cancer after a lifelong addiction to smoking.

"This motivated me to become a TNSTRONG Ambassador during my sophomore year," Boone said. (TNSTRONG stands for Tennessee Stop Tobacco and Revolutionize Our New Generation. "It hurt me to see my peers destroying their bodies with e-cigarettes and nicotine products the same way my grandmother did. TNSTRONG is a youth-led organization. I have given presentations, advocated for a more specific tobacco policy in our school system, and helped plan the TNSTRONG Youth Summit (a conference in which youth from across the state learn how to advocate for tobacco prevention)."

Even as impactful as her efforts with TNSTRONG have been, however, what Boone is most proud of is her work with the local Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse. She has volunteered for many fundraisers for the Center each year, such as the "breaking the Chains of Child Abuse" run; the dinner and auction benefit; the annual car show; the spring yard sale; and many others.

"I helped build the park behind the Carl Perkins Center for the children who require their services, so they have a chance to play without worrying about what they have been through," she said.

This semester, Boone, Prescott, and Stewart partnered with the Center to create a presentation for approximately 120 students from the fourth-through-seventh grades in Crockett County from three different schools, teaching them how they can recognize what child abuse is, report the signs they see in their peers or themselves, and refer to a trusted adult or professional to cope with trauma.

That presentation won first place statewide at the Tennessee FCCLA State Convention and last week placed third nationally at the Orlando FCCLA convention in the Professional Presentation category.

The daughter of Chris and Angela Boone, Ashley credits her mother with inspiring her love for service and advocacy.

“None of my accomplishments would have been possible without her,” Boone said. “She has been the Exchange Club of Crockett president for the last four years and the Division 4 director this past year. She has inspired me to be a community leader through service and introduced me to the Carl Perkins Center and its amazing mission. There is nothing more special than serving with your family, and the Exchange Club has given us many opportunities and memories that will last a lifetime.”

Boone will be attending Union University in the fall and majoring in Cell and Molecular Biology on a pre-medicine pathway, with the goal of becoming a pediatric oncologist or psychiatrist.

“While at Union, I want to be on the local Carl Perkins Advisory Board to help plan fundraisers and prevention efforts,” Boone said. “Serving children, families, and communities is my goal throughout my education, career, and life.”

She’s off to a wonderful start.

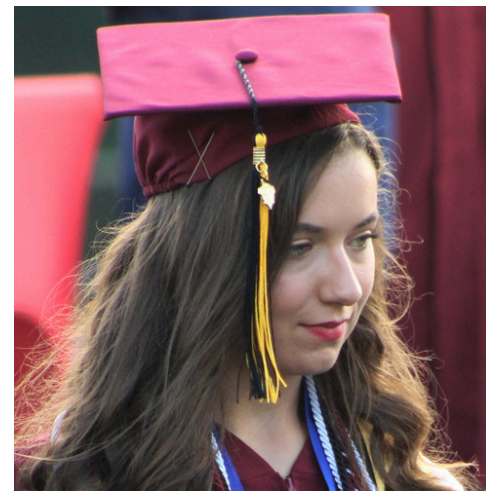


Left: Ashley Boone displays the program page detailing her accomplishments prior to the awards ceremony at the National Exchange Club.

Below: Ashley Boone was the Crockett County High School valedictorian for 2025. (photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Part of a cross-country team that earned back-to-back state tournament appearances, Ashley Boone competes in the CCHS Invitational in Fall 2024. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Ashley Boone was also a member of the Lady Cavalier tennis team, continuing to expand her list of school activities. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Making her acceptance speech at the National Exchange Club Convention in Louisville, Ashley Boone receives the National 2025 Legacy Award.