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## **CATAWBA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS NAMED COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF THE YEAR BY N.C. SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners was named County Commissioners of the Year for 2013 by the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA). Nominated by the Catawba County Board of Education (BOE), the Board of Commissioners received the honor on November 19 during the NCSBA's annual conference at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

The Board of Commissioners is comprised of Katherine W. (Kitty) Barnes, Chair; Barbara G. Beatty, Vice-Chair; Dan A. Hunsucker, Lynn M. Lail and C. Randall (Randy) Isenhower.

The County Commissioners of the Year Award is presented to a board of county commissioners "that has demonstrated extraordinary leadership that advances student achievement in the district", according to the NCSBA.

In its nomination, the Catawba BOE recognized the Board of Commissioners for increasing local support to public schools at a time when federal and state support is declining, for its commitment to safety in schools and the health of students, and for the commissioners' personal commitment to the schools.

"This board epitomizes a comprehensive commitment to public education," the Catawba County BOE said in its letter of nomination. "While funding from federal and state entities continues to decline, the local contribution has increased. The commissioners have maximized the power of local dollars through funding jointly-operated programs for the three school systems within the county, including a day treatment program for children in grades K-5 (ACT), a career magnet academy (HCAM), a separate public school for exceptional children (Conover School), and a before- and after-school program (Community Schools). Moreover, the county commissioners continue to support local teacher supplements in an effort to attract and retain the highest quality teaching force."

The Education Board pointed to the Board of Commissioners "unwavering commitment" to providing safe and secure schools for students and employees. The letter of nomination specified dedicated funds for security upgrades, including the addition of electronic locks, intercoms, and electronic release systems to control entries to school facilities. The Board of Education also detailed funding for building upkeep and repair, including the replacement of HVAC equipment, reroofing projects, repaving of athletic courts and parking lots, exterior lighting upgrades, athletic stadium renovations and guttering projects.

"Support for our students' health and safety is not limited to structural upgrades," the Board of Education's letter continued. "Additionally, the commissioners are committed to partnering with Catawba County Public Health to ensure that all public schools have access to a public health nurse. Similarly, their partnership with the Sheriff's Office supports the placement of full-time School Resource Officers (SROs) at every middle and high school.

The Board of Education described the Catawba County Board of Commissioners as “servant leaders”, noting that two commissioners (Barnes and Isenhower) previously served as school board chairpersons for their respective districts and that the commissioners maintain high visibility at myriad school functions from athletic contests to school-level PTO events and co-curricular activities.

“In the adolescent lexicon, they ‘walk the walk and talk the talk’ when it comes to demonstrating their support for public schools,” the letter said.

“In a time when some school boards have contentious – if not litigious – dealings with their county commissioners, our board rejoices in the sustained positive relationship we enjoy with the Catawba County Commissioners,” the Catawba County BOE said in concluding its letter. “It is our hope that this prestigious recognition will serve as a small ‘thank you’ for their steadfast commitment to educating the children of Catawba County.”