



THEATRE TEACHER MOLLY RICE RECEIVES HANCOCK-SETTLEMYRE AWARD

HICKORY -- Molly Rice, theatre teacher at St. Stephens High School, received the Hancock-Settlemyre Award at a banquet held recently at First United Methodist Church of Hickory.

The award is presented by the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center to recognize an individual, group or business that has worked to enhance the quality of family life, reduce family stress, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Established in 1980, the award is named in honor of Jean Settlemyre Tashman, former administrator of Frye Regional Medical Center; and Millie Hancock Schumpert, a retired pediatrician.

Rice was nominated by one of her students, Kyla Little, who said Rice spent many extra hours encouraging her students. In addition, she leads her students in adopting a social cause each year. The students learn about the issue and produce a play to help raise money for that cause. In the past, her classes have studied and helped the Guardian Ad Litem Program and the problem of homelessness in Hickory.

An emotional Rice said she was abused as a child and was inspired to become the first member of her family to attend college by a caring teacher. "It takes that one person who says, 'You can,' " she said through tears. ""The arts saved me."

As an adult, she spent several years working with children in Northern Ireland and teaching them through theatre that they can overcome centuries of religious intolerance and violence.

Also nominated for the award was Susan Lee, executive director of the Parenting Network, for her many years of offering parenting classes in the area.

A resolution of appreciation by the CAPC Board was presented to Pamela Brooks, a retired social worker who was a leader in Catawba County's early efforts to combat child abuse and neglect.



Nancy Hughes (left), executive director of the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center, presents this year's Hancock-Settlemyre Award to Molly Rice, theatre teacher at St. Stephens High School.



Beth Brandes, retired assistant director of Catawba County Social Services, was the guest speaker. She said that although the county has done much to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to punish abusers, the need continues. She encouraged the audience to help raise funds to endow the CAPC, to ensure its future financial stability.

On display at the banquet was a quilt made to memorialize the North Carolina children who died in 2014 as a result of neglect or abuse by their caregivers. The Hickory High School Art Club creates tee shirts each year in honor of each child. These shirts are displayed at a vigil held each fall. Linda Henson, a local volunteer, then makes a quilt incorporating the shirts. The winner of last year's award decides where the quilt will be displayed in the coming year. This year, Cathi Dillon selected the CAPC for that honor.

The Children's Advocacy & Protection Center is a non-profit organization that exists to build a community dedicated to the prevention of and the coordinated response to child sexual abuse and/or severe physical abuse. For more information about the organization, and to find out how you can help, call 828-465-9296 or go to catawbacountycac.org.