

**Franklin County Education Foundation Awards Banquet
Franklin County School – Saturday, May 29, 2010
Mayor Van Johnson's Remarks**

To the parents, students, support staff, faculty, and school leadership here at Franklin County School... good evening.

It really is a great honor for me as Mayor of Apalachicola to have this opportunity to speak to such an exemplary group of people.

First, I like to thank Dr. Catlin, the Youth Advisory Council, and the Education Foundation for putting together this end of the year banquet to recognize the real unsung heroes in our community.

I'm here tonight to address the value of a good education and the importance of recognizing and honoring those who make a difference.

To the parents and especially to the students, in general, the more education that you have means the more money you can earn over a lifetime.

More education also gives you greater employment options, and better job security. On the average, a college degree is worth an extra \$23,000 dollars per year.

According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor and Census Bureau, those who have an advanced degree can expect to earn an average of \$78,000 dollars per year.

Those same statistics indicate that the average earning power of a college graduate is around \$52,000 dollars per year.

In addition, an adult with just a high school diploma can expect to earn \$28,000 dollars per year.

However, your earning capacity is greatly diminished when you choose the path of dropping out of high school.

A high school dropout can expect to earn only about \$19,000 dollars per year and that depends upon which area of the country that they choose live in.

The more economically depressed the area the lower the salaries.

Also greatly reduced, is the ability of a dropout to contribute back to society in a meaningful manner.

Seventy-five percent of all future jobs in this country will be looking for employees that have at least a license or a certificate.

Also projected to grow at a fast pace are jobs that require a bachelor's degree, nearly twice as fast as the national average for all occupations.

Now that's the monetary value and the potential earning capacity resulting from achieving a quality education. However, there are many other benefits. What comes to mind and perhaps most importantly, is that through education human beings are formed as people, we acquire knowledge, wisdom, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and the ability to think for ourselves, feel, and act in particular ways.

Education produces active citizens, energetic workers, managers, and leaders, which in turn build sustainable and vibrant communities where businesses prosper and quality of life issues prevail.

When we look at the success and potential of our communities, we have to look toward the people who make it all possible... our teachers.

We are fortunate to have so many good teachers in our community who have dedicated themselves everyday to educating our children.

You are the gatekeepers to our future!

There may be a police officer, a senator, a doctor, lawyer, or even a small town mayor sitting in your classroom, and researchers have concluded and I concur that your classrooms are the most significant factor in the achievement of our students.

I liken your role in society to that of a preacher, while preachers minister to our souls. You minister to our intellect inside temples of high expectations, such as this facility. Where you accelerate the minds of our children to dream big and reach far, where you drive them toward the future with both passion and purpose.

I believe that your chosen profession should be respected, and that as parents we should give you that respect by giving you the freedom to teach.

We give you the freedom to teach, by sending you our children behaved, ready, and eager to learn.

I believe in the Holy Scriptures, which states that a worker is worthy of his hire and that as a community we should demand that you be amply compensated for the extraordinary hard work that it takes to be a teacher.

You and your support staff are the real unsung heroes and our continued democracy depend upon your efforts.

As Mayor of Apalachicola, I just want to join with the others in recognizing and honoring that, and to say thank you.