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McCollister gets recognition from hometown folks

By CAROL MURPHY
The Eagle-Gazette Staff

After being honored by officials at the Ohio State Fair, the Fairfield County Commissioners and the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives, Ralph McCollister was honored by people in his hometown of Amanda. The surprise celebration came yesterday at a Community Meals' lunch at the Amanda United Methodist Church.

McCollister's first words were, "I'm overwhelmed."

Over 70 people attended the celebration where citations issued to the 86-year-old were read. McCollister's awards began when he was named Outstanding Senior Citizen of Fairfield County at the Ohio State Fair Aug. 10.

McCollister was in education for 50 years. He began his career teaching in Laurelville. Then he taught 36 years in Fairfield County. He was superintendent of the Amanda schools, taught in Lancaster and was principal at East Elementary in Lancaster.

"I could have taught another 10 years," said McCollister. "I like youngsters. That's why I stayed in 50 years." He said the law made him quit teaching when he was 70 years old.

McCollister still teaches school in the old schoolhouse during the Fairfield County Fair. Every year he writes "Reading, Writing and Arithmetic taught to the tune of the hickory stick" on the blackboard.

McCollister told those present, "To the glory of God, my greatest accomplishment has been teaching Sunday school for 70 years." He is currently teaching the Friendship Sunday school class at Amanda United Methodist Church and occasionally teaches a Wednesday night Bible study class.


The self-taught musician told the group, "The richest child is poor without a musical education."

McCollister also taught music. He was orchestra director of Kingston High School for seven years and also was director of the Amanda High School band in 1943 during World War II, when no director could be found.

In 1942 he organized the Fairfield Fair Band Show. "The first year we had 1,000 in the county band," says McCollister. "We were really the first band in the county to put on the show at the county fair." He said the band formed an airplane and played the Army Air Corps song. The directors in front of the band twirled their batons to look like propellers.

Since 1972, McCollister has played with the Adelphi Band. Members of the band were present and a concert was given after the meal. McCollister played his clarinet with the band.

McCollister also helped Community Meals set up a site in Amanda. He and Betty Carpenter, members of Amanda United Methodist Church, talked to church officials and got permission for the site to be located in a new educational wing of the church. According to Carpenter, McCollister never misses a day at the site unless he is out playing with the Adelphi Band.



Ralph McCollister

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