

Southern seeks 'worldwide community' to help school

By Stephanie Bettick

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CATAWISSA — Over 50 years ago, three schools districts combined to create Southern Columbia Area School District, and through the new Development Office, volunteers are hoping to bring together a community of alumni to help preserve history and to assist the district in growth. Southern Columbia Area School District officially launched a Development Office Wednesday, inviting alumni representatives from Ralpho Township, Catawissa, Roaring Creek Valley and the SCA Tiger Football Alumni Association to a breakfast meeting in which they laid out goals the office hopes to achieve.

The mission of the office “is to create a worldwide community of alumni and friends who will partner with the district in its continued pursuit of educational excellence through philanthropic donations of money, goods, services and time.” Mike Yeager, 1967 South Columbia graduate and 13-year board member, is the head volunteer, saying he has wanted to create something like this for a long time. Paul Caputo, superintendent at Southern Area, said it was an “excellent meeting,” in which he and Yeager gave an “introduction of what the Development Office is, its mission statement, shared values, goals, and also a discussion on how this effort could assist existing organizations and what they could do to assist the efforts of the school district.”

Yeager explained that the logo created for the office shows that Southern was made up of three schools: Roaring Creek Valley, Ralpho Township and Catawissa, and that each of those already has its own alumni association. He said, “Each individual association has an alumni banquet every year, and the classes do things on their own, but there isn’t much in the way of alumni activities. That’s what we’re proposing to do. I think the whole thing is to try to get the alumni engaged in the school community again.” They intend on creating an alumni newsletter to keep people up to date on activities and news happening with the school and alumni. They are also planning all-inclusive events, such as a 5k run/walk, Homecoming tailgate party, golf tournament and a trip to see a Broadway show. Caputo said it is also important for the office to preserve the history of the schools. “These three schools did come together to form the Southern School District, so they’re a part of Southern, and we want to ensure that their history is preserved and cherished and remembered.”

Caputo and Yeager spoke to the representatives about the creation of two committees, Alumni Achievement Award Committee and Creation of a Foundation Board of Directors Committee. The Alumni Achievement Award was expanded in 2008 to honor a graduate of Southern Columbia Area High School or any former high school that helped form the district. The current committee consists of three school board members, the superintendent and high school principal. Caputo and Yeager proposed Wednesday to include a “volunteer from each association to be a member of the Alumni Achievement Committee.” Those volunteers would be responsible for “creating the by-laws and balloting procedures, evaluation and selection of award winners and attending award ceremonies.”

For the foundation committee, they said they are seeking a “volunteer from each association to be a member of a committee to develop the process for the nomination of candidates for a Foundation Board of Directors.”

Yeager said the one thing that will allow all of this to happen is for them to receive the addresses of alumni. “The one thing we wanted to do with talking to these associations is to get their database so we could start sending out information to the alumni of Southern Columbia,” he said.

If any graduates would like to send their address and email, they can send them to Southern Area Columbia School District, 800 Southern Drive, Catawissa, PA 17820.