

Greene County High School's Class of 2026 celebrates achievements at Class Night

— From Staff Reports —

The Greene County High School Class of 2026 had a stormy Class Night last Thursday, with rain pounding against the roof and thunder loud enough to hear over the applause and cheer. But the rain didn't slow down the celebration as this year's graduating seniors were recognized for their many achievements and accomplishments and thousands of scholarship dollars were awarded.

Seniors Graham Breland and Jase Mathews led classmates into Ricks-Wilkerson Gymnasium with the USA and Mississippi flags, respectively. Family, friends and teachers watched as seniors made their way to their seats for one of their last events as a student at GCHS. Pride and excitement filled their eyes as they stood together as Wildcats.

Class of 2026 Salutatorian Lillian Rau gave a brief history of the American flag as well as the freedom it represents before leading the ceremony in the Pledge of Allegiance. Caroline Holder introduced Shevy Maurer, who sang The Star-Spangled Banner. Lillian McLeod interpreted the national anthem in American Sign Language (ASL) as it was sung by Maurer.

Class of 2026 Valedictorian Sarah Beth Barfield made her way to the podium next to welcome guests to the night's event and thank everyone who helped her and her classmates reach this milestone in their lives.

"Good evening and welcome friends, family members, faculty and other esteemed guests to Greene County High School," Barfield began. "On behalf of our class, I would like to welcome you to our class awards night."

"As we come here to celebrate our journey together,

we are filled with joy, pride and excitement, but we know that very soon, we will go our separate ways. You, our family, friends, teachers and administrators, have been there for us along the way, and we truly appreciate your presence here tonight to celebrate this moment with us."

After Barfield's welcome, Keri Graham, Jaci Thornton, Riley Kate Byrd and Akeelah Hartfield made their way to the podium. Graham encouraged her classmates to remember their days at GCHS while moving into what's next.

"Tonight is filled with reflection, celebration and gratitude," Graham said. "As we gather for Class Night, we recognize how far we've come, not only as students, but also as individuals. Over the years, we have learned lessons both inside and outside the classroom. We have face challenges, celebrated victories, built friendships and created memories that will stay with us long after this year ends."

"There were days when the workload felt overwhelming, days when we questioned ourselves and days when the future seemed uncertain," Graham continued. "But through every obstacle, we continued moving forward. Tonight is a reminder that growth often comes through perseverance and that every step of the journey has helped shape who we are becoming."

Thornton shared devotion with classmates and guests by quoting Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."



Photo by RUSSELL TURNER | Herald Editor

GCHS graduate Rhett Keel is shown getting a warm reception from his classmates and guests as he made his way toward the podium to receive one of a couple scholarships and awards he claimed during last Thursday's Class Night ceremonies at GCHS.

Thornton then said, "As we prepare to enter a new chapter of life, many of us are filled with excitement, but also with uncertainty."

"Some are heading to college, some into careers and others are still discovering what path lies ahead," Thornton said. "No matter where life takes us, this verse reminds us that our future is not unknown to God."

Byrd continued by saying, "We may not always understand what comes next. There will be moments of change, challenges that test us and seasons where we feel unsure of ourselves."

"But even in those moments, God is still working," Byrd said. "He is still leading, still providing and still preparing us for the purpose He has placed before us. Tonight is not simply about looking back on what we have accomplished, it is also about looking ahead with hope, faith and confidence in the journey to come."

Akeelah Hartfield led the invocation.

"Heavenly Father, thank you for allowing us to reach this special moment in our

lives. Thank you for the strength, guidance and encouragement you have provided throughout our journey. We are grateful for

our families, teachers, friends and everyone who has sup-

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GRADUATES!

We are so very proud of the accomplishments of this year's Greene County graduates
(Kindergarten, Fourth Grade, Eighth Grade, High School & Collegiate)

OUR GRADUATES HAVE REPRESENTED OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY VERY WELL AND WE WISH EACH OF THEM NOTHING BUT THE BEST!

from Supt. of Education Charles Breland, Board of Education members Shannon Walters, Shena Knight, Dorothy Clark, Clark Rounsaville & Robin McCoy, along with all the administrators, teachers & support staff