

---

# THE BENTON COUNTY DAILY RECORD

---

## NWACC Confers Degrees

By Jamie Brunk Staff Writer

ROGERS, AR—More than 300 new potential leaders were released into the world as Northwest Arkansas Community College held its annual commencement ceremony Friday night.

“Even though I get to talk to people all over the world, it’s not every day that I get a chance to talk to future leaders,” keynote speaker Paul Vitale said.

Vitale, a Russellville native, gave several nuggets of advice to the graduates gathered at the John Q. Hammons Center in Rogers. He encouraged them to not be afraid to pursue their dreams and to have endurance.

“Dreams are a simple vision elevated to pure passion,” he said. “When we chase our dreams we will be criticized ... but remember that for some, the only taste of success will come when they take a bite out of you.”

He also told the graduates to not forget the importance of values such as optimism, selflessness, happiness and humility.

“If you have something that burns in your soul, chase it. If you want to help others, don’t back away. If you have something to say, stand up and shout it,” he said.

Vitale’s words followed several important presentations, including an honorary degree that was conferred posthumously to Don

White, NWACC’s founding Board of Trustees chairman. White’s family received his Honorary Associate of Humanitarian Service degree. Incidentally, White’s daughter-in-law, Carola White, became the family’s first member to receive an NWACC degree. She received an Associate of Applied Science degree in general business Friday night.

“NWACC meant a lot to him,” said Mary Schneider, White’s daughter, about her father.

She spoke of the times her father helped start the college that was known as the “college without walls.”

“Although he is no longer able to walk the college’s halls, he was proud of the college that became a place of many walls.”

Sue Ann Pekel, children’s librarian at the Bentonville Public Library, was awarded the Dick Trammel Outstanding Alumni Award. She received an Associate of Arts degree from NWACC, a Bachelor of Science degree in organizational management from John Brown University in Siloam Springs and a master’s degree in library science from Texas Women’s University.

“By providing accessible, affordable and quality education,



Dr. Becky Paneitz, NAWCC President with keynote speaker Paul Vitale

NWACC helped me take the first steps in my educational dream,” she said.

Joyce Abrams received the NWACC Outstanding Graduate Award. On Friday, Abrams became the first person to receive an Associate of Applied Science degree in homeland security and emergency management from NWACC. Determined to be the first with that degree from the college, Abrams worked to complete the degree in one year instead of the traditional two. She spoke of her love for the college and how it helped her achieve her goals.

“At NWACC, you’re not just a student; you’re part of a family,” she said.

---