

Lapidary Arts...from Page 1A

the 30 years. Of course, now I would like to see it go on for the next 30 years, because it's a wonderful place. People come, and their families - it's just one big happy group."

Wagner, one of six Sparks children, took classes at the school after it began, but worked out of Florida running her own tax and accounting business. She kept the books for the nonprofit lapidary school and served on the board of directors, but after her father died and her mother became ill in the early 1990s, she came aboard as William Holland's director.

The main building of the school is Sparks Lodge, named after her father when he passed away, and it contains 29 bedrooms, 13 classrooms, a large dining area and kitchen. Sparks Lodge was built nearly entirely by volunteers from

different rock clubs.

Since Wagner took the helm, the school has added extra lodging with Mary Lou's Cottage and Otto's Lodge, and students typically stay a week per class.

Prospective students may visit the campus to pick up an application, or check out the website for the online form at www.lapidaryschool.org.

William Holland Lapidary School owes its success to the original vision of its founding father and mother, a vision which is summed up succinctly in the rockhound motto - each one, teach one.

"For each one you learn, you teach one," said Wagner. "That's what we plan to do, that's our motto here, is to make sure that we don't lose this craft. There's so many crafts that have died out because nobody has passed it on.

That's what people who are rockhounds like to do, they share. And instructors will say that they've learned a lot from their students during the week."

Many teachers of the school were at one point students themselves, and so far, more than 60 students have signed up to take classes before this 30th season opens. Wagner, along with her brother Mike, a board member, who comes down from Minnesota to take classes each year, is looking forward to another great season.

This year will also mark Bob Terebayza's fifth season as the school's director, and Wagner would like everyone to know that she expects it to go on for another 30 years, even if she's no longer in that particular leadership role.

After all, before she



came in, some people thought the school might fail after her father passed away.

"They didn't think it would go on, and I proved

them wrong," said Wagner.

"And so, now I'm trying to back out of the daily stuff so that people will know that it will go on. We have eight

people on the board, we have a good director, good staff there's no reason for it not to go," Wagner said.

PAES...from Page 1A

the works for nearly two and a half years before finding funding through a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

"This grant is typically used for infrastructure, but they're trying to get more out of the box and help with workforce development," said Nancy Smallwood with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. She and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams wrote the grant application that funded the lab.

The grant from the ARC was a matching grant, with the ARC providing 50 percent funding at \$11,826 to the Union County Board of Education's 50 percent at \$11,826, for a total of \$23,652.

"Once a student has completed the PAES class, a comprehensive report is developed," according to the grant's project summary. "This report can easily be used to develop individual education plans, transition plans, school-to-work plans and career development plans for students."

Throughout the lab, students discover which work-related tasks they enjoy the most



or are right for them, which will aid them on their journeys into the workplace after graduation.

"Education is about more than a paper diploma - it's about getting students ready for the workplace," said Mitch Griggs, executive director of the Union County Development Authority.

Students from the high school, middle school and alternative school on campus

will be able to take advantage of the lab in order to maximize its reach and utility.

"We're very pleased to have the PAES Lab on our campus, available to our students," said UCHS Principal John Hill. "The goal for a secondary school is to create qualified, skilled workers for the workforce, and this is going to enable our kids to obtain employment and help be productive members of our

society."

Union County School System Superintendent Gary Steppe knows all about career-oriented training, as he worked previously as Career, Technical and Agricultural Education director with the Georgia Department of Education.

"We're trying to focus more on career and career skills that will help them to get a good job when they get out of school," said Steppe.

Kim and Herb Rabb attended the open house with their son, Somerset, who is in the 10th grade and currently enrolled in the PAES Lab.

"It's helped to build his confidence," said Kim Rabb of her son. "It's very much needed. I think the utilization of it will be good - the more kids they get involved in it, the better."

Many more parents and students, as well as various

members of the community who wrote letters in support of the grant, attended that Tuesday, and the excitement over this latest addition to the schools' curriculum was more than apparent.

"The kids love it, they ask to come on a regular basis, and they're really learning some valuable life skills at the PAES Lab," said Principal Hill. "Parents, kids, everybody is very glad to have it."

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