Speakers challenge grads

From Review Staff Reports

Rockingham County high schools observed baccalaureate services Sunday as they prepared for this weekend's graduation ceremonies.

Reidsville High School held its baccalaureate service Sunday evening with George Macklin selected as the featured speaker.

"What can I tell them they already don't know?" was Macklin's response when Senior Class President, Tiffany Williamson, asked him to speak at the service several weeks ago.

"Just tell it like it is," Williamson responded.

Macklin passed on his "Tools of Life" to the estimated 168 seniors. He began by telling the students to build their foundations on God.

"We need something solid under our feet as well as above our heads," Macklin said.

He told the students to keep in focus, stressing the importance of knowing and realizing your opportunities.

"Plan to live forever and live as if to die tomorrow," Macklin urged.

He also advised the seniors to live with fruitfulness, "gaining knowledge, loving and caring for one another."

In concluding his speech, Macklin told the seniors to "watch your thoughts because they become words; watch your words because they become actions; watch your actions because they become habits; watch your habits because they become your character; and watch your character because it becomes your destiny."

Macklin, who describes himself as a "product of the Reidsville City School System", graduated from RHS in 1971 and served as assistant principal at the school from 1982-92.

Principal at Lincoln Middle School, he also is a former teacher and wrestling coach of Reidsville Junior High School as well as former coach of the high school track and football teams between the years of 1975-1982.

Members of Rockingham County High School's Class of 1997 were inspired by an address delivered by the Rev. Frank Verdi.

He was selected by the senior class officers because of his background as assistant pastor at Community Baptist Church and his role as coach of the high school's track, cross country and wrestling teams.

"He's very well thought of by our student body," said principal Dr. Raymond Cooke.

Verdi spoke of landmarks — including goals, giving, enthusiasm, growing, perseverance, self-worth and God — for the students to live by.

"If you stand for nothing you will fall for anything," he said.

To illustrate his point, Verdi told a story about Paul "Bear" Bryant — former coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide — who suspended his star quarterback, Joe Namath, for breaking training.

Despite many pleas to let Namath play in the final two games of the 1963 season, he stuck to his decision.