



RAY LIGHTNER/DAILY NEWS

Chuck Copeland was honored as Spalding County Golden Eagle recipient for his service to the community. Copeland is the president and CEO of Griffin First National Bank and serves on the Flint River Council Board of Directors.

Copeland and Smith named Golden Eagles

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Thursday night, two community leaders were recognized for their efforts to improve lives in Spalding and Pike counties.

Chuck Copeland and Billy Smith were honored at the annual Spalding Pike Golden Eagle Dinner, "as someone of character and integrity," said David Luckie, Golden Eagle Dinner co-chair.

Luckie also recognized longtime Scouting supporters Bill Edwards and Henry Walker, both Eagle Scouts who have passed away, as well as the past honorees.

The dinner serves as a fundraiser for the Flint River Council Boy Scouts of America in those two counties. To that end, the dinner raised \$107,500 for Scouting, which will "help provide

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books, uniforms and assist with camp for Scouts in need," said Luckie.

The donations, said Doug Hollberg, Golden Eagle Dinner co-chair, "ensure we have the financial security to continue offering a quality Scouting program to the youth of our communities."

Dakota Fox, a Life Scout from Troop 107, reported on the outstanding year for Scouting in Spalding and Pike counties, with 880 youth and 186 adult leaders and 21 organizations sponsoring units to bring Scouting to Pike and Spalding.

Dakota said there were 14 Eagles in Pike and Spalding in 2018 and 23 total in the four-county Ronotahachi District.

"Sixty percent of the Eagles were in our two counties," he said.

"Scouting has grown for the fourth straight year. It changes the lives of young people," Dakota said. "In the 109 years, 115 million have been members. Thank you for providing that opportunity."

Luckie introduced Copeland, president and CEO of First National Bank and the longest-serving chairman of the Griffin Spalding Development Authority.

Copeland has been with First National Bank for 23 years and serves as a board member on the Flint River Council Boy Scouts of America. He is also co-chair of the Griffin-Spalding Archway Partnership, finance chair for the Griffin Salvation Army, a past president of the Rotary Club of Griffin, past senior warden at St. George's Episcopal Church, and past chair with the Griffin-Spalding Chamber of Commerce, Griffin-Spalding United Way and the

Griffin-Spalding Education Foundation.

When first approached about the honor, Copeland said, "I was a bit taken back. I was not much of a Scout, and was a failure as a Scout parent," noting he his son found other interests after Cub Scouts.

Copeland said he was told "it was not about my personal experience, but service to community."

To that, he credited his father, and the Stricklands for teaching him about service to the community. "My father worked for the Stricklands for a number of years, doing a little bit of everything. I too went to work in the general store," he said, "but for me, mostly it was not the work, but the examples of lives well lived. The Stricklands are what held that community together" in Concord.

John Strickland was his Scoutmaster at Troop 138 out of Concord Baptist Church. "We learned things, did things, I witnessed firsthand service to others. I'm not sure what rank I ended up with, but I do remember earning the mile swim badge at summer camp. John swam beside me, side by side, stroke for stroke."

Copeland said he fell into community service by his role as a community banker. And he fell into community banking, thanks to the Stricklands.

When he graduated from UGA in 1983, Copeland said, he did not have a job in mind, just wanted to get back home. While at school he'd found a job on campus working in a cabinet shop, something he stayed at for three years, and his younger brother followed.

"After graduation, I was sitting around the house, waiting for an opportunity. Roger Strickland called, not with a job, but to fix a busted drawer in a cabinet," Copeland said.

"While I'm laying on the floor, working on the

busted drawer, he asks, 'what are your plans for work?' I didn't have any. He asks, 'have you thought about banking?' I can get you in at the bank'. I jumped, and said 'I sure would be interested in banking.'"

Copeland said he learned about service to others through his parents, the Stricklands and being a community banker.

He shared a quote about there being no such thing as a self-made man. "I am honored to stand on the shoulders of those who came before me and showed me the way," Copeland said.

He thanked his team at the bank, "and my family, so much better than I deserve," thanking his wife Teresa and three children, Anna, Margaret and John.

Golden Eagle Dinner Co-Chair Howard Johnson introduced Pike County honoree Billy Smith. He thanked the Council staff, especially Rebekah Florence, who taught him a lot about Scouts.

Johnson introduced his pastor, who came to Zebulon to start a church, Christ Chapel. He asked people who know Smith to come up with one word to describe him.

Those words included wow, leader, visionary, missionary, anointed, loyal, honest, demanding, passionate. "I found all of these to be true, he is a leader, mentor, friend. Thank you for your willingness to use imperfect people to do God's perfect will."

The church, Johnson said, "started in 2003, on the back porch with friends, and I watched it grow to two locations and now 1,800 regular members. It's so cool when God takes a vision, and it outgrows a church."

Smith he said, loves basketball and the University of North Carolina (where Michael Jordan played) and has shared this quote from him:

"Some people want it to happen, some people wish it to happen, other people make it happen."

Billy Smith, Johnson said, "is one that makes it happen."

Smith said, "I hope part of what he said is true. Howard thank you for being a friend."

Smith said, "this church, I had very little to do with it. I've got an incredible group that makes me look better than I really am. The church board is a great bunch of guys."

Smith's father was a pastor and now serves on the staff at Christ Chapel. Smith was called to preach at age 16 at a youth camp. He and his wife Tina have four children.

Smith said he would be brief, but took the opportunity to share "Jesus loves you, there is not one time you have strayed from his grace. I am here

by the grace of Jesus."

Christ Chapel is home to Cub Scout Pack 107, Scouting BSA Boy Troop 107, and Venture Crew 107, which Smith founded.

Johnson spoke about the benefits of Scouting, of what's learned about the program, and what he's seen. "This is worth supporting. I would not ask you to give what I have not. If you don't give to the main body, things don't go out from it."

When you get involved, he said, "you see value in what they do." The donations, he said, "this is what they operate on. You see some great things come out of it."

Sponsors for the Golden Eagle Dinner included presenting sponsor The Associates Group Insurance, platinum sponsor Chandler & Chandler Law Group; and gold sponsors Kiwanis Club of Griffin, Johnson Battery,

and M+H Interior Trim.

Silver sponsors included Beck, Owen & Murray; Griffin First National Bank; Middle Georgia Water Systems; Andrew Blake; Jeff Jacobs; Newton Crouch Inc.; United Bank Pike Division; Cidan Machinery Inc.; McLeroy Inc.; and Tenant Mechanical.

Table hosts included Otis Blake, Tom Gardner, Dick Brooks, Doug Hollberg, Jerry Crawford, Kelly Smith and Don Crider.

The leadership team for the Golden Eagle Dinner included Otis Blake, Stewart Esary, Benny McElwaney, Brian Upson, Jerry Colwell, Tom Gardner, Dee McLeroy, Don Crider, Brad Glass, Kelly Smith and Stephanie Windham.

Scouts from Troop 2 at Griffin First Baptist Church and Troop 107 from Christ Chapel presented the colors.

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