Willis Selected for ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame

TIFTON—Whether the Fabulous Golddusters’ dance team from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College was performing at a Stallions’ basketball game or for an excited crowd of high school students in a packed house auditorium, the audience knew it was in for a great show. Andrea Pate Willis was the reason for that.
Willis, who directed the precision dance team at ABAC for 26 years, will be inducted into the 2014 class of the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame for her leadership with the Golddusters and for the 35 years she spent as a faculty member and administrator.

Tickets are now available at a cost of $30 per person for the induction dinner in Gressette Gym at 6 p.m. on April 4. The event is a part of the ABAC Homecoming Week activities. ABAC Athletics Director Alan Kramer said that persons who wish to attend the dinner can contact the Office of College Advancement at (229) 391-4895 for tickets. Tickets will only be sold in advance.

For the first time this year, the Hall of Fame event will be a part of the alumni awards ceremony. For more information on the 2014 Homecoming Week activities, interested persons can visit the ABAC web site at www.abac.edu/alumni.

Besides her duties with the Golddusters, Willis was the chair for the Division of Health, Physical Education and Recreation for nine years. She was associated with the Ms. ABAC event on campus for 31 years, 10 years as the choreographer and then as director.

Willis came to ABAC in 1974 after receiving her associate degree from Brunswick Junior College, and her bachelor’s degree in education and master’s degree in science for teachers from Georgia Southern College.

Teaching nine classes on top of her duties with the Golddusters was quite a workload for the self-described “city girl.”
“That was my first time choreographing or directing anything, even though I had been dancing since I was three years old,” Willis said in an interview when she retired from ABAC in 2009. “It was a true learning experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

The popularity of the Golddusters soared to an all-time high during the time Willis served as their director. The precision dance team traveled to high schools and civic club events all over the states of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. The Golddusters also danced at half-time of all the home basketball games and performed on the ABAC stage at the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition.

Elaborate costumes and strenuous dance routines proved to be a big hit for the Golddusters as they helped to recruit students to ABAC by performing in high school gyms and auditoriums, often traveling two or three times per week. The team even had color posters they took to events and autographed them for the students.

Willis still gets Christmas cards from former members of the Golddusters. Many of them followed in her footsteps, coaching cheerleading squads, color guards, and dance teams. In 2009, former members of the squad surprised her with a Golddusters’ reunion.

Other members of this year’s Hall of Fame class are Marshall Taylor and the 1993 state intercollegiate softball champions.

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