

## Mabel School Remembers Deputy Mast

Written by Steve Frank

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Mabel School honored one of its own Wednesday as the school remembered William Mast Jr., a deputy in the Watauga County Sheriff's Office who was killed in the line of duty last July. The school dedicated a tree to Officer Mast, a former student of Mabel, and placed a memorial plaque in his honor next to the tree. The ceremony included opening comments by Mabel Principal Mark Hagaman, a poem read by third grader Jayla Gregg, and brief remarks by Watauga County Sheriff Len Hagaman. It concluded with an unveiling of the plaque and the reading of its inscription.

Principal Mark Hagaman noted that the observance was part of the school's recognition of American Heroes Day in connection with Red Ribbon Week. Red Ribbon Week is best known as an event to promote drug abuse education and prevention, but the event originated after a Drug Enforcement Administration agent gave his life in service to his country.

In his remarks, Watauga County Sheriff Len Hagaman asked students to look at the tree and the plaque honoring Deputy Mast and to "remember each and every day that he was here for us...and remember not only him but others who are out there to protect all of us."

The family of Officer Mast was in attendance, including his widow Paige Mast and infant son Hunter, who was not yet born at the time of his father's death. Mabel students and a number of personnel from the Sheriff's Office were also present, along with representatives of the Board of Education and the WCS central office.

The memorial plaque reads "This tree was dedicated in honor of William R. Mast Jr. for his selfless lifestyle that was dedicated toward creating a better life for others. Thank you from your Mabel family and friends."