

State of Union (Academy) Address by

Dr. Ann Walters, Headmaster

I don't think there could ever be a more exciting place to work than at Union Academy! This is the end of my third year as the Headmaster and has been by far the best yet. Our students, teachers, staff, parents and community have all worked hard to ensure that our school continues to improve in all areas.

So many positive things have happened since we kicked off the 2015-2016 school year last July 27th with almost 1400 K-12 students enrolled. During the first week of August, we had our first ever Union Academy Family Picnic and Showcase Event. Students and their families enjoyed an outdoor hotdog supper, live entertainment and were able to explore and get information on all clubs and extracurricular activities offered to our students. It was a great success and one we plan to replicate next August.

In September, the UA Homecoming Pep Rally was featured for three hours on Fox 46 Good Day Charlotte. We were told by Fox 46 that we set the standard for all other schools to follow. Through the relationships we formed with the Fox 46 newscasters and staff on this day, we have continued to receive televised "shout outs" for other accomplishments throughout the school year.

I spent a great deal of time in October having discussions with local and state elected officials about policies and legislation issues that impact charter schools. Hopefully, some of these discussions will lead to changes being made to current laws that really handicap charter schools and the 82,000 students they serve across the state.

The first Saturday in November always is the date of the UA Foundation Annual Ultimate Auction. The Foundation broke its record by raising over \$363,000 through this one event that was attended by more than 600 supporters at the Union County Agriculture Center. This is probably the biggest public school fundraiser in the state and speaks volumes to the support we have from our parents, staff and community.

We learned in January that Union Academy was named a 2016 North Carolina School of Character. This was a tremendous accomplishment considering we were one of only five schools in the state to get this recognition. We were recommended by the NC State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction to advance to the national level.

This spring we participated in a virtual tour and interview for the National School of Character designation. It was officially announced from Washington, DC on May 10, 2016, that Union Academy Charter School is one of only 64 schools in the nation designated a National School of Character for the next five years! We are so proud of this accomplishment and recognition.

At the end of January, Union Academy was the first charter school in North Carolina to win North Carolina School Public Relations Association's (NCSPPRA) Blue Ribbon Awards for outstanding marketing and publications. The Blue Ribbon Awards program is the most prestigious in the state for recognizing the outstanding work of professionals in the school public relations/communications field. Union Academy took top honors for seven of its publications.

In March all 1400 Union Academy students and staff members gathered at the Upper Campus location to pack more than 50,000 meals for malnourished children and their families in Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. What a great Community Service project!

The spring months were filled with numerous activities and events. As is our tradition, Union Academy hosted its Community Spring Carnival and 5K Trail Run. Both events were well attended and provided a lot of fun family time.

Also, this spring, for the first time ever, Union Academy partnered with the City of Monroe for their Beach, Blues and BBQ Festival. Our school hosted a pork barbecue plate sale during the event with all proceeds benefitting the Union Academy Foundation. The event was a great success and one we hope to continue in the future.

As the school year draws to an end, I want to congratulate our senior Class of 2016. An overwhelming majority (95%) of the class has been accepted into colleges and universities and to help them get there, they have been awarded almost \$7 million in scholarships. The 105 students in the Class of 2016 have contributed about 21,000 service hours to the community over their four-year high school career.

I wish each of our 2016 graduates many successes and I want to remind them to never, ever forget they have roots at Union Academy forever and are always welcome home! I also want to wish all of our UA families a safe and fun summer. I am already looking forward to a successful 2016-2017 school year which begins July 25th!