

Faith, family, farming

Burlsworth Foundation honors Farm Bureau president and pawpaw

— Story and photos by Cary Jenkins

At first glance, the similarities between late Razorback football player Brandon Burlsworth and Farm Bureau President Randy Veach may not be obvious, but speakers at the Brandon Burlsworth Foundation Legends Dinner drew several parallels.

Marty Burlsworth, brother of the former walk-on Razorback who died in a car crash in 1999, said at the Statehouse Convention Center on Aug. 7 that the honoree is one of agriculture's most passionate leaders, and — like Brandon — has a great work ethic, a willingness to help others, “and most of all a strong Christian faith.”

Ewell Welch, retired vice president of Arkansas Farm Bureau, said that Burlsworth could be summed up with “three simple words, faith, family and football, while Veach's three words were faith, family and farming.

“Randy is an All-American when it comes to advocacy for American farmers.”

Veach's son, Brandon Veach, joked that what his father was being honored for that evening gets him named Pawpaw of the Year every year back in Manila. On a more serious note, he told his dad, “You are what I want people to see in me and in my children.”

Veach said he accepted the Legends Award on behalf of Arkansas farmers and ranchers and all those who work with them every day. That night, he was also awarded the inaugural Lindsey Reed Award, a bronze sculpture topped with a replica of Burlsworth's famed black glasses.

Also speaking at the dinner were Mark Waldrip, Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., and Rich Hillman. Will Rockefeller served as the master of ceremonies. Marty Burlsworth serves as the foundation's chief executive officer and his wife, Vickie, as its executive director.

More than 700 guests from across the state, many from the agricultural community, attended the fifth annual dinner.

The foundation provides academic scholarships and a football walk-on scholarship for students at the University of Arkansas, hosts a football camp and provides optical care to low-income students through the Eyes of a Champion Program. In addition to the Legends Award, the foundation presents the Burlsworth Trophy, in conjunction with the Springdale Rotary, to an outstanding Division I football player who started as a walk-on.





Marty and Vickie Burlsworth, Barbara Burlsworth and Thelma and Randy Veach



Mollie Dykes of Hot Springs with Mark Waldrip of Moro and his daughter, Lauren



Angela Waldrip of Moro, University of Arkansas System President Don Bobbitt and his wife, Susan, and Amy Lyman, all of Little Rock



Sen. John Boozman of Rogers, Will Rockefeller of Little Rock, Rich Hillman of Carlisle and James Peachey of Jonesboro



Tony Crowell of Manila with Cristy and Zach Believ of Jonesboro



Lee and Beverly Bodenhamer with Gus Vratsinas and Brock Martin



Don and Nancy Marley of Rogers, Nathan and Kristin Reed of Marianna and Cathy Boozman of Rogers