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By: Michael A. Lough

Lucas honored with annual ceremony

Five years and about two weeks ago, Elaine and David Lucas buried their son Al.

But Wednesday night, they and about 100 friends and family celebrated Al's life with the annual ceremony and reception to help selected Bibb County public high school students further their education, courtesy of the Al Lucas Memorial Scholarship.

"Al would be so happy," Elaine Lucas said after the ceremony at the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame. "He really would."

Al Lucas died on April 10, 2005, after suffering a spine injury during an Arena Football game in Los Angeles. His parents, brother Lenny and wife De'Shonda soon formed the scholarship fund, which has grown in donations and supporters.

The ceremony's program listed 10 Gold Level donors (\$1,000-\$9,999) and 22 Silver Level donors (\$250-\$999) as well as two \$10,000 donors and more than 200 who have contributed up to \$250.

The scholarship recipients this year were Taylor Adkins, Westside; Emmanuel Carter, Central; Tierra Coleman, Southwest; Crystal Fuller, Howard; Trey Simpson, Rutland; and Albertina Dean and Quentarious Jones of Northeast.

Al Lucas graduated from Northeast and also spent part of his offseason teaching and coaching at the school.

The qualifications of the recipients included top-10 class rankings and volunteer work as well as senior class officers.

Former Mercer president Kirby Godsey was the keynote speaker, and the ceremony included several musical selections, including three from Central's chorus.

Terry Smith of AT&T presented a check for \$10,000 to the fund. Mayor Robert Reichert, Macon City Council president Miriam Paris and council members Larry Schlesinger and Nancy White attended the ceremony.

Julia Wood of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, which manages the scholarship, gave the gathering a bit of surprising — and good — news.

“Since 2005, they’ve given 25 \$1,000 scholarships,” she said. “This year, the recipients will receive a \$1,500 scholarship.”

Wood said those involved in the scholarship tried to get an update from previous scholarship winners, and she noted five, including one — Beau Brown of Central in 2006 — who is headed to Cornell’s law school after graduating this spring from Georgia.

One reason for the update was financial. The scholarship fund was able to award an additional \$500 to those five students.

“We really wanted to keep track of them and make sure they would finish school and help them,” Elaine Lucas said. “David and Lenny came up with the idea that maybe there was money to give a little bit to the kids to help them with their expenses.”

This year’s recipients were the beneficiaries of an improving economy. Elaine Lucas said it was decided around the first of the year to increase the scholarships by \$500 each after discussions with the CFCG.

“They assured us that even though there was a loss on investments last year that the market was rebounding and that the fund was in good shape,” she said. “We would be able to first of all increase the amount of the scholarship, and then give the previous recipients an additional \$500.

“And Al would be, that would just bring a smile to his face. There was that little grin that he had. He would have been so happy to see this.’