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Communications

August 10, 2015

Keith Rhodes to Share Barber Talents to Help Families in Cleveland County, N.C.

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb’s Keith Rhodes knows the importance of a good children’s haircut and the struggle with its cost for families who have limited resources. When Rhodes was 10 years old, his single mother Janade couldn’t afford a haircut for her son’s picture day at school. Embarrassed at just the thought of going to school to take a picture without a sharp style, Rhodes retreated to his home’s bathroom with the tools to carefully prepare his own hair to face his classmates and the camera.

“Having that haircut gives a child an extra boost of confidence in class,” Rhodes shared. “I’ve been there and can relate to students and parents in families who struggle financially. That’s why I decided on the Saturday before school starts back that I’m going to cut hair, for free, for as many kids as possible.”

For the fifth straight year, Rhodes will provide free back-to-school basic haircuts at Maple Springs Baptist Church between Shelby and Boiling Springs. All girls and boys up to high school age who attend classes in Cleveland County can get a haircut from 1 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 22, at the church at 1231 Maple Springs Church Road.

Rhodes said his pastor, Robert Dover, and local barbershops have helped support and advertise the haircut program, which started with about 20 kids the first year and has since more than doubled in the number of children served each summer. He said people come from across the county for haircuts, including one father who drove his son on a moped to the church to get a haircut the first year and now comes every year.

“When I went to school with the haircut I gave myself, nobody knew the difference, and from that time on I cut my own hair,” Rhodes offered. “The first time I cut my hair it took me six hours. I got faster and faster to where I could cut it in 20 minutes.”

After people noticed his hair and started asking him who was cutting it, Rhodes admitted his skills and started cutting his brothers’ hair, then his cousins’ hair, followed by his teammates and then members of the community. Eventually, he went to school and became a barber in Spartanburg, S.C. He has since switched occupations several times,

serving as a high school and elementary basketball coach and now as associate director of admissions in Gardner-Webb's Degree Completion Program (DCP). Through his nonprofit organization, Camp Coach Rhodes, he continues to serve the community through coaching at a summer basketball camp and through programs such as the free back-to-school haircuts.

"God gave me these talents, and He tells us in the Bible to share our talents," Rhodes explained. "Kids need to have a positive attitude and outlook when they go to class, and a haircut can help do that."

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).