

# Andrew College

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## PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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### **Andrew College Commencement festivities mark end of academic year**

CUTHBERT, GA. – Commencement festivities brought the community and college together on the weekend of May 6. Forty-six graduates received their Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees in a ceremony marked by pomp and circumstance peppered with congratulatory cheers and clapping. State Senator Freddie Powell Sims gave the Commencement address, asking graduates to become game changers and closers and to shut out the noise around them, so they can think, rethink, inspect, examine and let go of negative energy so that they can hold on to meaningful, purposeful living.

Special awards were given. Philip Gille, associate professor of mathematics received the Phi United Methodist Church Exemplary Teacher Award. The Andy Award for Scholarship was received by John Gabriel Echols from Jacksonville, Florida; and an Honorary Doctor of Music degree was given posthumously to Cuthbert native son and jazz legend, Fletcher Henderson, Jr.

A Baccalaureate ceremony was held earlier in the morning at the Cuthbert United Methodist Church. Rev. Michael McCord, executive director of the Georgia United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry delivered the address. He reminded graduates that they are now in the top 6.7 percent of people in the world who hold college degrees.

In conjunction with the awarding of the posthumous Honorary Doctor of Music degree to Fletcher Henderson, Jr., a jazz reception was held at the McDonald House on Friday evening. Henderson family members, community and college faculty and staff were in attendance. The mellow sounds of jazz drifted from the front parlor as regional musicians and guest artist, Alan Burroughs, great nephew of Fletcher Henderson, joined in the rhythmic beat.

Fletcher Henderson, Jr. was born in Cuthbert in 1897. He is considered one of the most influential arrangers and bandleaders in jazz history in America. His band garnered attention and acclaim during the 1920s, and later his arrangements for the bands of Benny Goodman in the 1930s and 40s, were acknowledged. Many giants of the jazz world either got their start with, or played with the Henderson bands of the 1920s. Henderson died on December 28, 1952 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Cuthbert, Georgia. His life's work is a source of pride for the City of Cuthbert, Andrew College and the great State of Georgia.

A private dinner was held later that evening for members of the Williams family who are in the process of restoring the Henderson family home in Cuthbert; the Henderson family; members of the Fletcher Henderson, Jr. Foundation who are responsible for the annual Fletcher Henderson, Jr. Jazz Festival; and other

honored guests. Commencement speaker, State Senator Freddie Powell Sims, and State Representative Gerald Greene presented the Henderson family with a commendation signed by Governor Nathan Deal, honoring Fletcher Henderson, Jr. and his life.

To top off the weekend, a special open house hosted by the Williams family, was held on Sunday, May 7 at the Henderson House on Andrew Street to showcase the renovation work that is being done to bring the House back to life. Community and College members were in attendance.

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Established in 1854, Andrew College is a two-year College related to The United Methodist Church and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Situated in the rural southwest Georgia community of Cuthbert, Andrew College offers the Associate of Art, Associate of Music, and Associate of Science degrees.

#### **Photos:**

**Baccalaureate:** Rev. Michael McCord, executive director of the Georgia United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry delivered the address at the Andrew College Baccalaureate.

**Band Jazz reception:** Alan Burroughs (far left), great nephew of Fletcher Henderson, Jr. sat in with other musicians at the jazz reception held at the McDonald House. Pictured are: Prof. Joël C. Johnson, coordinator of music industry and modern string studies at Albany State University; Dr. T. Marshall Jones, former chair of the Albany State University Department of Fine Arts; and Trelawny Frances, a junior music education major at Albany State.

**Commendation:** Alan Burroughs, great nephew of Fletcher Henderson, Jr. (second from right), accepts a commendation signed by Governor Nathan Deal, from President Linda R. Buchanan (left), State Senator Freddie Powell Sims and State Representative Gerald Greene (right).

**Freddie Powell Sims:** State Senator Freddie Powell Sims gave the Commencement address at Andrew College's May 6th ceremony.

**Henderson Family:** From left, Alan Burroughs, great nephew of Fletcher Henderson Jr.; Jessica Hansberry, great grandniece; and Karen Burroughs Hansberry, great niece, accept the Honorary Doctorate of Music and Fletcher Henderson, Jr. Citation from Dr. Linda R. Buchanan, president of Andrew College.

**Jazz Dinner:** Andrew College President Linda R. Buchanan addresses the attendees at the dinner held in honor of Fletcher Henderson, Jr.

**John Gabriel Echols:** President Linda R. Buchanan and Andrew student John Gabriel Echols, Jacksonville, FL, wave to John's family members after he accepts the Andy Award for Scholarship at Commencement.

**Philip Gille:** Associate Professor of Mathematics Philip Gille, was awarded the Phi United Methodist Church Exemplary Teacher Award at Commencement.