

Talent defies boundaries of youth

SINCE WE began our venture with this newspaper a few months ago, I've lost count of the number of times I've been asked about the "great photos" which can be seen on these pages.

"Who takes those excellent pictures for you?" is a common inquiry.

"You sure have a talented person taking your photographs" is another comment I've heard on more than one occasion.

And of course, "Who is Jessica Brown that takes your photos?"

When I explain that Jessica is a student at Winder-Barrow High School, the admiration for her photography skills grow even more. It's meant as a compliment because, quite frankly, many people aren't too sure about today's youth.

When they see the talents of one on display week after week in the local newspaper like they do with Jessica, then their appreciation level is soars.

I remember the first time publisher Mike Buffington and myself met Jessica. She arrived at our office in downtown Winder with her father Steve, who is constant companion because, well, she isn't old enough to drive on her own yet. In a time when she many young people don't have the parental support they need, it's also a great thing to see Jessica receive such strong support in her ventures from both her mom and dad.

As we explained to her about shooting photos for the paper and what that would involve, the look in her eye said she was eager to take on the challenge.



**chris
bridges**

Jessica has handled her responsibilities better than many full-time professionals in the business. If you ask her to be at an event, she is there — nights, days, weekends. I have seen her at ballgames with it pouring down rain (with her father dutifully holding an umbrella for her) and going to events when she was sick. How many adults make that kind of effort?

From our debut issue back in late October, to the one you are holding in your hands, Jessica's work from behind the lenses continues to amaze both me and our readers. I always look forward to sorting through the numerous pictures she sends each week to see what Jessica has shot. From ballgames to grand openings, she has the skill to make her pictures stand out and tell a story.

I still remember, many years ago, one of my journalism teachers saying that it is just as important to be able to tell a story with a photo as it is to be able to write one with words. Jessica has that ability.

Perhaps what makes her stand apart, and in turn has helped us stand out, is her ability to take feature photos. Her photo spread of Winder at night in last week's issue and her early signs of spring in this edition show just how well she can handle a camera. It's a skill that I envy. You don't just pick up a camera, point and shoot and get the type of pictures that Jessica takes.

You've seen her name in the paper for several weeks now. With all the compliments we receive, however, I felt it was a good time to tell you a little about the person behind the camera. It's a team effort at this paper and Jessica is a big part of what we do each week.

Pictures are a vital part of a community newspaper because so often photos can tell the story and are as important to the readers as much as any part of the paper.

We hope to be able to use Jessica's talent with her camera for a long time to come.

Chris Bridges is editor of the Barrow Journal. He can be reached at cbridges@barrowjournal.com.

"Private opinion is weak, but public opinion is almost omnipotent."

~Henry Ward Beecher~