

## Press Releases

# JLF honors charter school founder with Pope Award

## Baker Mitchell cited for 'Advancement of Freedom'

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RALEIGH -- The John Locke Foundation has honored Baker Mitchell, founder of the 750-student Charter Day School in Brunswick County, for his efforts to promote the "advancement of freedom."

Mr. Mitchell collected the John William Pope Sr. Award for the Advancement of Freedom in North Carolina during the Locke Foundation's 19th anniversary dinner celebration Feb. 4.

Before a crowd of 475 people, JLF President John Hood touted Mitchell's work in starting Charter Day School in Leland, which now has 750 students in grades K-8, and Columbus Charter School, with 350 students in grades K-4 registered for the upcoming year.

"The astounding thing to note is that with nearly 30 percent less money, these public charter schools have 40 percent more of their economically disadvantaged students score proficient on the state tests than the state's average for all students," Hood said.

Mitchell started the Brunswick school in 2000 with 53 students in grades K-2. Its academic successes have attracted families from five surrounding counties, Hood said. "We try to work closely with the traditional public schools in the area and with UNC-Wilmington to share our instructional model so it can be more widely disseminated," Mitchell added.

Mitchell credited Superintendent Mark Cramer and the hundreds of dedicated teachers and staff for the schools' success. "Superintendent Cramer does much of the heavy lifting," Mitchell said. "I believe every staff member is keenly aware of the freedom that parents have to enroll or withdraw their children in these tuition-free public schools. Everyone knows their job depends upon being responsive to each student's needs and that every child can learn when properly taught."

The John William Pope Sr. Award is named after the late innovator in the retail industry who built his family business, Variety Wholesalers, into a Forbes Private 500 company. The work of the John William Pope Foundation in supporting education, the arts, civic causes, and public-policy organizations, in North Carolina and throughout the country, will forever stand as a legacy of responsibility, service, and commitment, Hood said.

"Along with the founders of our great country, John William Pope knew that education was the key to preserving our democratic freedoms," Hood said. "That is why our awards committee felt that Baker Mitchell deserved recognition for his efforts in improving the academic successes of many North Carolina children."

The Charter Day School Board of Trustees hopes to open a third charter school in Duplin County in 2010 if the State Board of Education approves their application this summer, Mitchell said. "Meanwhile, we accept the challenge laid down by President Bush that no child shall be left behind."

Mitchell also pointed out that President Obama has pledged to quadruple the number of charter schools in the country and has stated that he would increase federal assistance to start up new schools to more than \$750 million. "Unfortunately, because

North Carolina has a cap of 100 schools and the new schools are only replacements, our state will have to forfeit its share as we have for the last several years."

"In contrast, each new charter school in Louisiana will receive \$800,000 in federal start-up assistance," Mitchell mentioned while packing his bags for Baton Rouge. He's working to launch a charter school in that Gulf Coast state.

The John Locke Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute based in Raleigh. Its mission is to develop and promote solutions to North Carolina's most critical challenges. The Locke Foundation seeks to transform state and local government through the principles of competition, innovation, personal freedom, and personal responsibility in order to strike a better balance between the public sector and private institutions of family, faith, community, and enterprise.

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