CUTLINE STORY

GRADUATE SPARKS INSPIRES NEW RIVER COMMENCEMENT AUDIENCE

When Carl Eugene Sparks rose from his wheelchair, climbed the stairs and walked across the stage during New River Community and Technical College’s commencement, it was an electrifying moment. Sparks not only received his college degree—for which he had been striving
since 1984--but also a standing ovation from the nearly 1,500 people in attendance at the May 15 ceremonies in Beckley.

Sparks is a 21-year veteran of the armed services, including two stints in Vietnam. He graduated from the former McComas High School in Mercer County. He began his college career in 1984 on what is now the Mercer County Campus of New River Community and Technical College. 25 years later, he completed his Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree as a member of the New River Class of 2009. He now lives in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Granddaughter, Marissa Sparks (shown with him), was one of several friends and family members in the audience to cheer him on. She is a candidate for graduation in the Class of 2009 from Hidden Valley High School in Roanoke County, Va.

-end-