

The love New Hope High School (NHHS) seniors Jack Moore and Carson Willis have for baseball is in the pictures.

For Moore, a picture of him at 7 years old wearing a Possum Town Sluggers uniform signifies the initial steps of his baseball journey. There are other pictures, including one of Jack and his older brother, Landon, in which Jack is wearing catcher's gear ideally suited for someone a few years older.

For Willis, there is a picture of him, when he was 6 years old and in his second year playing baseball, and his father, Justin, wearing a business sponsor T-shirts for a team in the city of Columbus' recreational league. The rest of the memorabilia on display Friday morning takes you through each player's progression. In Willis' case, it includes an East Coast Sox hat, a Snopek Baseball Group (SBG) jersey and a Perfect Game MVP award – signs he, and Moore in his own way, have climbed to the highest levels in youth baseball.

On Friday, Moore and Willis celebrated earning opportunities to take the next steps in their careers at Itawamba Community College and

Pearl River C.C., respectively during a signing ceremony in the NHHS multi-purpose room.

“I always liked (baseball), but the second or third year playing baseball was probably the best thing I could do,” Willis said. “I grew up playing catch in the yard and I knew my dad played and I knew I had other family members who played, so it really just stuck with me. I had a bunch of fun doing it, and I looked forward to do it every year.”



NHHS baseball coach Lee Boyd said it is “bittersweet” seeing players who attended New Hope Baseball camps for years and then moved through the program for multiple years reach the tail end of their high school road. He credited both players for their hard work, great attitudes and desire to play baseball in college as driving forces behind their success.

“Jack is one of the best defensive catchers in the state,” Boyd said. “Willis is great on the mound. Both have put up really good numbers, and they are good kids, too. We have enjoyed having them, and we’re looking forward to keeping up with them in the future.”

In 2026, Willis had 20 hits (six doubles and two home runs) and was tied for third on the team with 18 RBI last season for the Trojans, who

went 18-13 and advanced to the second round of the Mississippi High School Activities Association Class 5A State tournament.

Willis made his biggest contribution on the mound, where he started a team-high 12 games and logged a team-high 62 2/3 innings. He went 6-3 with a 1.78 earned run average. He struck out 90 and walked 31 en route to earning First-Team Class 5A All-State honors.

As a sophomore, Willis appeared in two games as a position player and in 10 games as a pitcher. He was 2-1 with a 2.72 ERA in 25 2/3 innings. He walked 19 and struck out 31.

Willis said his love for the game has helped him persevere through the sport's ups and downs. He said that passion has never wavered and he never considered another sport, or focusing on a position other than pitcher.

"It is the best thing I have ever done," Willis said. "From the first year you could do it until now, it is all I have wanted to do and it is my favorite thing to do. It feels like (the game) is in my hands and I control what I can and it suits me the best."

Moore was a fixture behind the plate and on the mound last season. At the plate, Moore had a .408 on-base percentage and 19 hits (seven doubles, one home run). He tied for third on the team with 18 RBI and was third in walks (11) and second in hit by pitch (12).

Even though he only threw 13 2/3 innings, Moore appeared in 10 games, all out of the bullpen. He had one win and two saves (16 strikeouts).

As a sophomore, Moore appeared in nine games as a position player and 13 games as a pitcher. He went 2-0 with three saves and a 0.00 ERA in 18 2/3 innings. He allowed 12 hits, walked 13 and struck out 25.

Moore recalls being with his family at all of Landon's travel baseball games through the years and thinking he wanted to do the same thing. He said his brother has always been a role model for him and he takes pride in playing the game hard every pitch.

"I have always wanted to play college baseball, and I have always heard that if you play your butt off, coaches are going to look for that," Moore said. "The days you don't feel like working hard are the days you need to work the most. That has always stayed with me."

Moore said his ability to "keep pushing" has helped provided fuel for him to realize his dream. He credits his coaches and family members for pushing him and said he doesn't want to let them down.

"They have always told me I can be the best," Moore said. "The best is a big word, but I strive to be the best. I just try to work hard every day."

Boyd agrees Moore and Willis love baseball and that they express their joy for the sport in how they play the game.

"Jack is a hustler," Boyd said. "He just plays 100% all the time, which is what we preach and teach. He plays a tough spot (catcher), but a lack of energy is never his issue. He always plays hard and the effort is always there.

"Chico (Carson's nickname) is in the field house working on stuff all the time. It seems like he lives in the field house. When you have kids who have some talent and love it and put the work in that they do, it is a combination for a real good player."