

Military Ball...from Page 1A

Bruce B. Geibel of the Civil Engineering Corps served as the keynote speaker, and he was accompanied by his wife Sandy.

Geibel has over 40 years of experience as a Seabee, including two tours

in Vietnam and one tour in Thailand between 1966 and 1968, and he's been all over the world with the Navy, including Scotland, Japan, Puerto Rico, Spain, Diego Garcia, Saudi Arabia and Guam.

"In the Seabees, we

always practice what I call the four Bs: Be prepared; Be on time; Be brief; and Be gone," said Geibel, to chuckles from the audience. "We must tell our story. Otherwise, nobody in the future is going to really know what it was we did during our time in the service.

"We need to share our stories with our families,

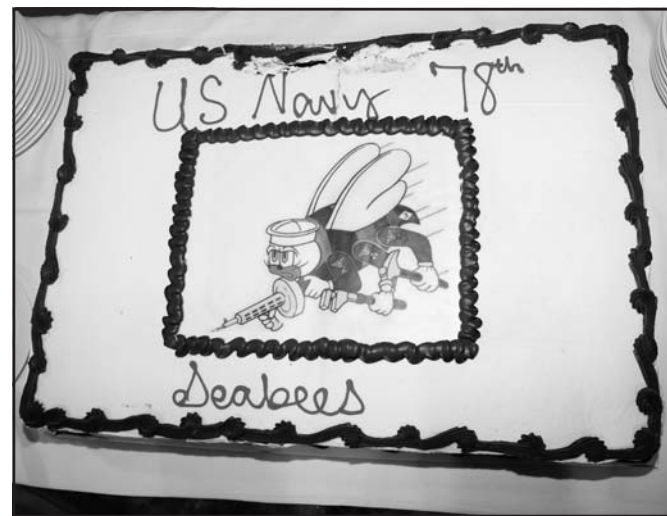
our children, our friends and neighbors. I can't tell you how many times I wish I could have told my kids what it was I did in Vietnam. But I didn't feel comfortable doing it, and believe it or not, nobody ever asked.

"I'm sure it's that way with a lot of you out there. They can't relate to what it was we did. And many of them didn't serve themselves. So, we've got to tell our story. Let's tell it to our kids first, and then our grandkids.

Quoting Winston Churchill, Geibel said, "It's not a choice to fight evil. We must fight it. Because it will either kill you or me, now or later. But it will surely kill you one way or the other."

"How do we tell a new generation of teenagers about the Vietnam War, or any war for that matter?" Geibel said. "We somehow have to tell them, for they won't hear it echoed from the media."

Geibel recommended a book titled "I'm Ready To Talk," a compilation of 160 stories told by members of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association. Copies of the book can be ordered through www.deedspublishing.com/store/irtt.



The Navy Seabees turned 78 on March 5, and local veterans celebrated the occasion with cake and dancing on March 14.

Photo by Mark Smith

com/store/irtt.

"Let's all of us tell our stories while we still can, because once we're gone, those stories are lost forever," Geibel said.

Retired Navy Master Chief Ernie Nelson said the motto of his Seabee battalion was, "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little bit longer."

"There's nothing that we can't do," Nelson said. "I've never run into anything that

the Seabee community couldn't handle."

The Seabees were decommissioned after World War II, then recommissioned during Korea and Vietnam. In addition to their military contributions, the Seabees have conducted many 'people to people' projects internationally, building goodwill and cementing friendships for America.

School District...from Page 1A

schools were prepared for the dive into online instruction thanks to the hard work and dedication put in by his teachers and staff in setting up virtual classrooms at a moment's notice, even in the younger grades.

"The primary school and our technology department worked hand-in-hand, and they did a great job," Hill said. "It was all hands on deck. They got computers and devices in the hands of children down to first grade. So, all of our students, first grade to 12th grade, have a one-to-one setup."

Assistant Superintendent David Murphy said the technology department was working to get Chromebooks to kindergarteners as well, and Hill added that primary school administrators had readied approximately 100 Chromebooks to be picked up by kindergarten parents.

Woody Gap School is already set up for online learning for sixth through 12th grades.

"This is really big that our school district was able to pull this off," Hill said, adding that other school districts were reportedly not as prepared and, therefore, struggling to implement online learning.

In other big school news, the Georgia Department of Education has suspended all state educational assessments for the year, including Pathway, Course and Milestone testing, Hill said.

Additionally, the Union County School District applied for and was granted a school nutrition waiver, so the schools were able to deliver thousands of meals to students and other children via centrally located Union County polling places for pickup, as well as to Woody Gap.

Hill said the waiver



Union County School Assistant Superintendent David Murphy took this selfie with custodial staff members on a recent cleaning day, as students learned from home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Photo/Facebook

allows the schools to distribute meals to children ages birth to 18, and that another good thing about the waiver is that kids do not have to be students of Union County Schools.

The schools have been doing two days' worth of meals at a time, with plans to continue that at least on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week.

For more information on food assistance for children, go to http://www.ucschools.org/for_students/online_learning_days and scroll down to "Food Assistance."

In addition to being a teacher work day, March 16 was also a workday for the school custodial department. While Hill was working with the school nutrition department, Murphy worked with custodial staff, paraprofessionals and other employees to begin deep cleaning school buildings.

"We're just going to keep

working around the campus," he said, noting that the deep clean will also include all school buses.

Bioesque Botanical Disinfectant Solution is the product the school district is using to disinfect, and it has been pre-approved by the EPA for use against COVID-19.

Murphy and Hill both said the product is a mist and it's electrostatic, meaning that it adheres to tops, bottoms and sides of surfaces. More information on Bioesque products can be found at <https://bioesquesolutions.com/>.

Also last week, the

district's technology department and Police Department delivered 100 internet hotspots to students without internet service to facilitate online learning days.

"Union United" and

"Success for All" are a lot more than just logos at Union County Schools, Hill said.

Virus Impact...from Page 1A

many business owners and, in turn, their employees.

The bottom line is, many restaurants have closed or are offering take-out only, and likewise, retailers are hurting, as are businesses in the hospitality and travel industries. And much of it is connected to tourism, which is "a huge part of our local economy," Development Authority Executive Director Mitch Griggs said.

"It's a major concern here," Griggs said. "Folks aren't traveling. Hotels are seeing a massive decrease in business.

"Obviously, anything associated with transportation, and certainly, restaurants are tremendously hard hit. Many of our restaurants are privately owned businesses. Thus, we're seeing closures of all kinds of businesses."

In hopes of helping employees of impacted businesses continue to put food on their tables, and for the businesses themselves to remain solvent, "there are three things I want our small businesses to do," Griggs said.

First, they should get in touch with the Georgia Department of Labor.

The Department of Labor has streamlined the unemployment application process in response to the virus, now requiring employers to apply for partial benefits on behalf of their employees on a weekly basis. The in-person application requirement has been suspended for employees.

This will allow small businesses to retain their employees, Griggs said. For more information, visit www.dol.georgia.gov.

"No. 2, I encourage

any business that needs working capital ... to contact the U.S. Small Business Administration," Griggs said.

The Small Business Administration is offering "Economic Injury Disaster Loans" to replace working capital lost during the pandemic. At press time, loan terms were 3.75 percent for profit businesses and 2.75 percent for nonprofits for up to \$2 million at up to 30 years.

Griggs said that application process has been streamlined as well. For more information, visit sba.gov.

Lastly, Griggs strongly encourages small business owners to contact their accountants or their insurance carriers to find out what benefits their policies might have to offer them.

For a list of restaurants with altered operations in Blairsville-Union County, check out www.visitdowntownblairsville.com/eat. For a list of retail businesses with altered operations, go to www.visitdowntownblairsville.com/shop.

The Union County Government website is another valuable resource for regularly updated information on county services at www.unioncountygva.gov.

Hope House

Hope House is a faith-based, non-profit benevolence center to help Union County residents and homeless in times of critical need. Hours of operation: Monday 9 a.m.-12 p.m. & Thursday 1 p.m.-4 p.m., located at 215 East Blue Ridge Street, Suite E, Blairsville, (706)781-3090. (NMar25Z1)CA