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show, and this year, there's a buy one, get one free coupon for Pigs Gone Amuk Mini Golf on the back of each raffle ticket.

Residents can park at either Meeks Park or across the street at North Georgia Technical College, which is working with the chamber to bring vendors and refreshments to the campus this year.

The show won't start until dark, though many fireworks enthusiasts show up hours in advance to stake out their spots and enjoy the community experience.

For obvious safety reasons, the chamber respectfully requests that spectators not cross over Georgia 515 leading up to the show.

First United Methodist Church, next door to North Georgia Tech, will be hosting free live music with \$5 barbecue baskets. Drinks



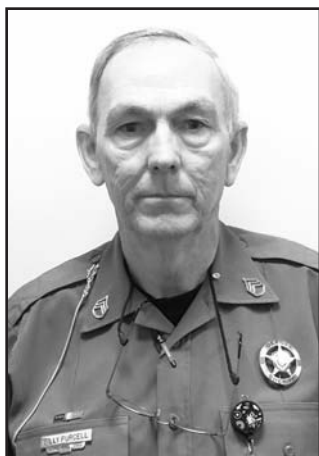
Hundreds of residents take over the front of North Georgia Technical College each year to watch the Fourth of July fireworks at Meeks Park. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

will be \$1, and residents are invited to attend to watch the Meeks Park fireworks from

the church.

Festivities at First United will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the

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UCSO Deputy Billy Purcell

County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

This event will be held at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center at 165 Wellborn St. in Blairsville.

In addition to the class,

"We have two ladies' groups that will represent 'The Well-Armed Woman' and 'Women on Target,'" Sheriff Mason said. "After the carry class is completed at 7:15 p.m., there will be a 15-minute intermission. At 7:30 p.m., those interested in organizing a gun club and developing a shooting range are encouraged to stay.

"The gun club/shooting range effort must be organized in order to get it underway," Sheriff Mason said. "This county has many thousands of acres of U.S. Forest Service land, and we would hope to acquire a tract such as the one in Cherokee County, North Carolina, and in Towns County utilized by gun clubs in those counties."

Sheriff Mason asks that those interested should attend the after-hours meeting.

"Let's do more than just talk about getting us a place to shoot," he said. "The Union County Sheriff's Office is required by law to qualify

shooting twice yearly, and we don't even have a place for the county sheriff's office to shoot. A shooting range will be of benefit to both law enforcement and civilians."

The concealed carry class is open to the public, and all active duty law enforcement officers are invited. There will be one hour of P.O.S.T. credit for all active duty law enforcement officers who attend. This will also be a great opportunity to meet and interact with your local law enforcement personnel.

The training will be conducted by Staff Sgt. Billy Purcell of the Union County Sheriff's office. Sgt. Purcell has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience, including as a Georgia P.O.S.T. certified instructor with Firearms and Defensive Tactics as his major course of instruction.

The sergeant was a senior instructor from 1986 to 2010 at Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College Police Academy, and he was the assistant director of the Academy from 2002 to 2010.

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Coupons include, for example, 25 percent off an iced cold press coffee from Cabin Coffee, 30 percent off specified brands at Alexander's Store, 20 percent off the entire store at Pam's Back to Nature Health, Wellness & Gift Store, and more.

All told, 33 businesses are participating in the event, and coupons can be picked up at the chamber office, printed off the visitblairsvillega.com website, in the *North Georgia News* and at participating businesses.

In order to encourage even more community involvement, the chamber has found a creative way to entice shoppers into a greater number of participating stores.

"For each business people go to, they're going to get a sticker for their coupon sheet," said Allison. "If they visit 16 businesses, they will write their name and their phone number on their coupon sheet, turn it in here to the chamber, and then they will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gift card at Impact Design and Creations."

The whole point of shopping locally is to boost the local economy, and to invite residents and visitors to find out what Blairsville has to offer in the way of goods and services people may not have been aware of otherwise.

"We've got great businesses here in our community, so we want shoppers to take advantage of the bargains," said Allison. "We've got some great deals. Impact Design and Creations, theirs is buy one, get one half off any in-store merchandise."

Continued Allison: "It's important - these are our neighbors, these are the people in our community that we're getting out and supporting their businesses and helping them. It's good to shop local, keep the money local, support our local economy."

Buy Local Week participants will certainly benefit from Independence Day crowds, as lake enthusiasts and tourists alike will be flooding the county, all of which will boost the county's tax collections alongside helping local businesses.

"This year, we're also changing it up and adding a Buy Local Marketplace," said Allison. "The Buy Local Marketplace is going to be here at the Union County Community Center, and we're having some businesses that, three of them are independent sellers with no storefronts, and one is from (Hayesville)."

"This will give these businesses an opportunity to be a part of the Buy Local Week, to get some exposure for them."

Businesses involved in Buy Local Week, all of which are included on the coupon sheet, are as follows:

church encourages everyone to bring a chair and a friend.

The chamber would like to thank all the sponsors who make the annual fireworks possible, including WoodmenLife, Budget Blinds, Jim's Smokin' Que and others.

Of course, the Suches Fire Department is back with another amazing show, as the annual Fourth of July Fireworks in Suches shoots off at nightfall behind Woody Gap School.

Activities in Suches begin around 5:30 p.m. when concessions go on sale, and continue with music throughout the evening and an 8 p.m. duck race fundraiser and handmade baby blanket raffle to benefit the fire department and students of Woody Gap School.

All Independence Day activities are free to attend, though Vogel State Park charges \$5 for parking.

Staff Sgt. Purcell has a degree in Criminal Justice and has graduated from the Professional Management Program, Command College and the prestigious Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy 159th Session.

In addition to his law enforcement service and education, he was one of the few officers selected to travel to Israel and serve as a Law Enforcement Exchange Officer.

This July 10 class is the same class that was taught last year on two occasions.

The invitation for this community event is open to the public. The training will cover dos and don'ts for concealed carry and provide you an overview of how you can legally defend yourself and your property as a citizen.

Sheriff Mason said feel free to come to one or both meetings, the class and the meeting afterward.

No firearm is required. The Sheriff's Office will be looking forward to seeing you there.

Humanity Towns/Union Counties ReStore; Bread & Bleu; Lucky Cat Thrift Store; The Sweet Spot Co.; Candles by Jean; Origami Owl by Sharon Penner; Sunflower Antiques and Interiors; G&G Bakery and Café; Monet's Italian Grille & Pizzeria; and America's Home Place.

The four Buy Local Marketplace businesses that will be available in the Union County Community Center between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. from July 1 through July 8 are: Premier Designs Jewelry with Alysia Hargus; Roberta Ford with Mary Kay; LegalShield; and A. Unique Boutique.