

Union County Retired Educators Association June meeting

On a blustery June 12th, the Union County Retired Educators Association held its annual picnic at Meek's Park. After welcoming all those in attendance, President Sheila Garrison asked Dolly Adams to offer a prayer of blessing before the tasty potluck meal, fellowship, award's ceremony, and installation of new officers.

President Garrison presented the following awards: Local Unit Emeritus Membership Awards - O'Nell Brown and Wilonell Dyer; Local

Scholarship Award - Marena Brown; Outstanding Educator - Tammy Aaron; Community Service Award - Presley Rich; Certificate of Appreciation - Judy Carpenter; Scrapbook Dedication - Jack Parker in memorium.

President Garrison gave a report about the recent State Convention held in May where our Association once again received the Unit of Distinction Award! This is the highest state award a local unit can achieve, and it requires meeting high standards set by the state association. In all, UCREA received a total of 14 state awards and certificates. This is quite an accomplishment! Thanks to each member for the work and dedication that enabled our local unit to meet the standards required for obtaining these recognitions.

New officers for the 2019-21 term were installed by past president Judy Carpenter: Rick Maddox, President; Pat Everett, Secretary;

Sheila Garrison, Treasurer. If you would like to help in any capacity, please contact one of the officers.

Please reserve September 11th on your calendar, as it will be our next meeting. More details will follow later; however, we would like to extend a special invitation to all new retirees and prospective members to join us, find out about our association, and consider membership at the state and local levels. We seek to provide support, fellowship, and service to each other and our community. It is imperative that all retired educators, affiliates, and their family members join because: GREA advocates for its retired members at state agencies, councils, and committees and advises them on how they can advocate as members; GREA issues Legislative Alerts on pending legislative matters as necessary; GREA Governmental Services provides research and testimony to maintain and improve post-retirement benefits; GREA strives to improve the economic well-being of its retired members; GREA Represents you as a Retired Educator. It Advocates for your welfare and it is your association. It will only be as good as you make it!



State Convention attendees: Pat Everett, Cathy Jarrett, Rick Maddox, Judy Carpenter, and Sheila Garrison, who received our local Unit of Distinction award.



Presley Rich, Community Service Award



New Officers: Pat Everett, Rick Maddox, Shelia Garrison



Marena Brown, Scholarship Recipient



Tammy Aaron, Outstanding Educator

Join Georgia Retirees to help make your association larger, your voice stronger, and your representation more effective; Together we can make a difference - for Retirees. Simply print and complete a membership form and mail to the address listed on it to become a member: <http://www.gare-tirededucators.org>.

Our local dues of \$15 yearly provide monies for a Scholarship for a graduating senior each year, for our local project - Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy of Union County, for the state humanitarian project each year, for a contribution to the State Educator's Museum, and for any supplies needed for maintaining our unit. Dues are tax deductible, and they or any other contribution you may want to make, may be mailed to Sheila Garrison, 71 Ran Mar Vista, Blairsville, GA 30512.

The Union County Retired Educators Association is an affiliate of the Georgia Retired Educators Association and all retired educators, affiliates, and their family members are invited to join this local unit.



O'Nell Brown, Emeritus Membership Award



Judy Carpenter, Certificate of Appreciation

Union General Hospital Auxiliary presents Christmas in July sale



Union General Hospital Auxiliary presents "Christmas in July" as we welcome back Collective Goods (formerly

Books Are Fun).

Mark your calendar for Thursday, July 25 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday, July 26 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., in the Union General Hospital's Old Lobby. Proceeds to benefit the UGH Auxiliary Scholarship Fund and the Union County Nursing Home.

Cash, Credit/Debit Cards accepted and employees payroll deduction.

Please tell your friends about this sale and as always we appreciate your support.

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Brothers...from Page 1A

Langley said.

"I certainly believe prison time was warranted," Langley said. "Under the circumstances, where our victim had such severe health problems and testifying would have been very detrimental to her, and in a circumstance where the defense had delayed this case for many years, it makes such a case very difficult to try.

"Therefore, this was the wisest result that we could obtain, rather than to risk acquittal or risk our victim's health. This was the best decision possible in this case."

For her, it was but a limited version of justice and closure, as her accused rapist, who had maintained his innocence for years, admitted in open court only to groping her private parts over her clothes.

And while his admission fell far short of what his victim said happened that evening, it did definitively show that Brothers committed an illegal

and immoral act upon an innocent child.

"That was very important for this victim and her family that the truth be known," Langley said. "That this man, who had portrayed himself as a man of God, who this family had extended hospitality to stay in their home, had abused their trust and hospitality by committing sexual battery on their daughter, on a child.

"Many people in the community respected this man and trusted him, and it was very important to me and important to this victim's family that this truth be known that he did sexually assault this young girl.

"He's been denying it all these years, and many people remained supportive of him, not knowing who to believe. Now, we know the truth, that this man was a sexual predator who committed a sexual battery on a young girl in her parents' home."

Despite the risks to her health, the girl-turned-young woman did courageously testify in the case, including during Brothers' July 17 plea hearing at the courthouse.

"It is not only physically but emotionally hard to be here today," she said. "I always dread to think about what happened on that night all those years ago.

"It has not only tormented my mind but also my body. Someone I knew and trusted invaded my body and soul, and in the process, tearing me apart. I refuse to let this person torment me anymore with the flashbacks, restless nights and panic attacks.

"I never want to try and take my own life again as a result of what this person did to me. Somedays, I don't even recognize myself or the person I have become, as this trauma has shaped me into someone else. Somedays, I feel as though I am more of a victim than I am a survivor.

"Despite all the trauma I have endured, I am still here, I am still fighting and surviving, with every painful trigger that creeps its way inside my head. I don't have to forgive the person

that caused all this pain, but I choose to.

"I choose to be the bigger person in this situation and say no to ever being hurt like this again. I am not defeated by this experience, but I have suffered long enough.

"I know in my heart that the charges on the paper will never compare to what he did to me that night, but I hope, after all this time, I will finally be able to get some peace and move on with my life as a stronger person than I was before."

And thanks to her tenacity and willingness to hold on over the years as both a sexual assault and suicide attempt survivor, she has helped to change the state law that very likely kept the man who assaulted her from going to prison.

Brothers was initially charged in 2013, though he avoided trial for years due to multiple case delays by Ralston, who, as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives, used his authority to postpone the case repeatedly by implementing the now-infamous legislative leave law.

Following intense media scrutiny stemming from a joint Atlanta Journal-Constitution/Channel 2 Action News investigative report earlier this year, Ralston bowed to public pressure and vowed to wrap up his most notoriously delayed cases, including that of Brothers.

Mounting public pressure surrounding the Brothers case and several of his other cases led Ralston as House speaker to organize a special panel to re-examine the leave law, which resulted in the law being changed to allow judges to use discretion instead of being compelled to delay cases involving lawyer-legislators.

Unfortunately, this change happened only recently, and therefore could not prevent Brothers from benefiting from many years' worth of delays in his rape case.

For his crimes, Brothers has been sentenced to 10 years of probation, though he will receive credit for the six years he served under house arrest after bonding out on the initial 2013 rape charge, Langley

said.

He is responsible for paying a \$1,000 fine, which is a reflection of his restricted income while under house arrest.

For the remaining four years of his probation, he will also be banished from the Enotah Judicial Circuit of Towns, Union, White and Lumpkin counties, will be prohibited from making contact with the victim and her family, and will not be allowed contact with any female under the age of 16.

Brothers will also have to register as a sex offender wherever he lives, though since he pleaded guilty to sexual battery and not the more serious charges of rape and child molestation, he will only have to register as a sex offender for the remainder of his probation and not for life.

"Because this case got the publicity it has, anybody doing any kind of due diligence on him, forever, you'll be able to Google his name and find out that he was convicted of this," Langley said. "It's going to be out there and public knowledge. So, even though he won't be on the registry after four years, anyone checking his background will be able to find this."

Sad Case. Langley, "It's a very sad case. I wish that this case could have gone to trial years ago, and I wish it had resulted in imprisonment for this defendant. But under all circumstances, this was the wisest decision possible."

The Brothers case was the last of Ralston's big criminal cases that he had pledged to wrap up before accepting new criminal clients, though he does have one more local case that has been delayed in recent years by his use of the legislative leave law.

As previously reported, Gwendalynn Smith was indicted in April 2017 on five felony counts of making false statements, in which she is alleged to have lied about an October 2016 rape at Young Harris College.

"We expect that one to be resolved by a plea at some point," Langley said.