

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Local firefighters appreciated at awards ceremony

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Friends and family members of Union County firefighters gathered at the First United Methodist Church for a celebratory dinner and awards ceremony on Saturday, Aug. 11.

The Union County Fire Department hosted the event and treated its honored guests to a meal that included either chicken or pork and concluded with a cheesecake dessert.

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris began the ceremony with an appreciation speech, and he complimented the firefighters on their achievements in the community.

"These ladies and gentlemen work hard as a family to take care of our county," said Paris. "I believe we have one of the best rural fire departments in the state of

Georgia." Paris praised the department for its diligent protection, and for always being on call to make Union County a safer and healthier community in which people feel comfortable living.

The goal of the ceremony was to recognize the firefighters and volunteers who work hard around the clock to keep the fire department operating to help people in need.

Fire Chief David Dyer also made it a point to appreciate the families of the firefighters, and he applauded them for their support of the department and its members.

"These firefighters must be prepared for anything we get called out to, because the department will get called for every situation where there are families in need," said Dyer. "They must be ready to solve and work through any situation,

and that takes a lot of stress and effort."

Dyer expressed the need to take a rest for a moment and enjoy the presence of each other and their families, and the dinner afforded them the opportunity to do just that.

The dinner was a way to show the members of the fire department that their work is appreciated, and it strove to ensure that every member felt as if they were responsible for making a positive difference in the community.

Firefighters often respond to situations that turn out to be the worst days of people's lives, but no matter what, they always make a difference in helping families get out of bad situations.

Members of the fire department take pride in their motto "Our Family Helping

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Union County Fire Chief David Dyer, right, leading an awards presentation for his firefighters on Saturday, Aug. 11. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Speedling Nurseries turns 50, celebrates with employees

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

It's become a rarity these days to hear of a company that lasts more than a decade, but Speedling Nurseries has been in business for 50 years.

The national company celebrated the big anniversary with a dinner for its Blairsville site employees at the Union County Community Center on Friday, Aug. 10.

Speedling CEO and President Greg Davis said the company was incorporated in 1968 in Sun City, Florida, and since then, Speedling has grown to the point of processing over two billion transplants a year at present.

Transplants are very young plants that have germinated and sprouted and are then transported to a buyer like a big-box retailer, a large landscaper or a vegetable farming business that finishes



Speedling CEO Greg Davis with Blairsville Site Nursery Manager Morris Graves at Speedling's 50th anniversary celebration on Friday, Aug. 10. Photo by Mark Smith

growing the plants and sells them retail.

Today, Speedling operates the nursery here in Blairsville, two in Florida, one in south Texas, and four out in California. The company

grows ornamental plants and vegetables, and it also manufactures high-density polystyrene specialty shipping trays and containers.

Speedling bought the

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Local veterans honored as Quilts of Valor recipients



Local veterans who received Quilts of Valor at the Historic Union County Courthouse on Saturday, Aug. 11. Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Ten local veterans received Quilts of Valor made by volunteers with the Misty Mountains Quilters' Guild on Saturday, Aug. 11, at the Historic Union County Courthouse.

The 10 honorees served locally and abroad, in war and in peacetime, from the Korean War until as recently as the Global War on Terror.

These Quilt of Valor recipients are as follows:

Blairsville's David McGregor joined the Navy in 1965, where he served aboard the USS England during two tours of Vietnam, rescuing 168 pilots who were shot down,

as well as directing all air operations into and out of Vietnam.

His third tour was spent aboard the T.E. Chandler DD-717 Destroyer. The Chandler was tasked with shore bombardments in support of Army and Marine ground troops. McGregor's third tour also coincided with the Tet Offensive.

He was separated from the Navy as a GMG-3 in March of 1968.

Since leaving the Navy, McGregor has worked in law enforcement in DeKalb County, Henry County, the City of Blairsville, and is currently employed with the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Kermit "Hugh" Lee

of Blairsville served in the Army and spent nine months in Korea.

His most significant assignment was as an ordnance maintenance man with the 703 ORD Maintenance Co., 3rd Infantry Division, APO 468, Small Arms Repair.

Lee would marry Elinor Welborn of Blairsville.

Blairsville's James McTureous served in the Navy during the Global War on Terror as a submariner, earning his Dolphins in August 2002.

In January 2002, McTureous was assigned to the USS Alaska ported in Bangor, Washington, where he made numerous patrols in the Pacific Ocean over the span of four

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Byron Herbert Reece legacy celebrated with 'Maters and Music'



Volunteers with the Byron Herbert Reece Society making 'mater sandwiches for guests of the Fifth Annual 'Maters and Music Festival. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

CHOESTOE – For lovers of bluegrass music, fresh tomatoes and the poetry of Byron Herbert Reece, the Fifth Annual 'Maters and Music Festival merged the three delights into one event.

The festival was sponsored by the Byron Herbert Reece Society and took place on Saturday, Aug. 11, at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

Attendees of the event had the opportunity to enjoy free tomato sandwiches while listening to live musical entertainment provided by the Shady Grove United Methodist Church Bluegrass Band, native

country music icon John Nix, and longtime champion of local music Sam Wensley.

"We wanted to host an event for this time of the year," said Debra March, treasurer of the Reece Society. "The weather and tomatoes are perfect to enjoy with the entertainment."

With over 250 attendees – the most ever for 'Maters and Music – the festival acted as a reunion of sorts for old friends and family members to catch up and have fun on the farm.

People came from all over the Southeast to take part in the Southern hospitality and entertainment, and the event brought the community together around the remembrance of Reece and his literary and

cultural legacy.

"We exist to make sure that Byron Herbert Reece's name stays out there," said March. "We are centered on the farm because it was his homeplace, and the ability to read his poetry where he grew up makes it more special."

The society also strives to enhance the public knowledge and appreciation of Reece's way of life, writings, love of nature, contributions to academia and his devotion to farming.

For those unfamiliar with Reece, he was a mid-20th century farmer and author recognized by the state legislature as Georgia's Appalachian Poet

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TVA President Bill Johnson to attend EMC annual meeting



BRMEMC Directors Danny Henson, Ray Cook and Mickey Cummings in the Aug. 7 Town Hall Meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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YOUNG HARRIS – Tennessee Valley Authority President and CEO Bill Johnson will be attending the Sept. 8 annual meeting of the Blue

Ridge Mountain EMC.

BRMEMC Board President Mickey Cummings made the announcement in the Aug. 7 Town Hall Meeting at EMC headquarters in Young Harris.

The town hall served as

a springboard for discussion with the two dozen or so EMC members who showed up for the event.

Topics covered that evening included ongoing concerns regarding annual TVA rate increases, a potential bylaw

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