Community members share thoughts on COVID, economy

By Jarrett Whitener North Georgia News Staff Writer

The trend in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths around the state and nation has many community members hopeful that the ongoing coronavirus saga will come to an end sooner rather than

While shopping at Dollar General on Thursday, Sept. 10, Chris Paxton of Ellijay said he felt confident people have been doing their parts to stay safe while in public.

"I'd like to think that things have gotten better in these last few months," Paxton said. "For COVID, it seems that our numbers have gone down, and there is less to hear about it lately. I know it is still here for a while longer, but I think we have a grasp on it.

"I never minded the

whatnot. I don't wear them as much around here. I think if outside all that much, but if there are crowded areas or a store recommends them, then I to be fine. I think this is a safe think it is a good idea to wear them. Maybe by Christmastime we can get this out of the way and move on."

Julie Reinhart of Murphy, North Carolina, expressed gratitude to be living in an area where large crowds are not part of the day to day routine for efforts.

Charleston, South Carolina, pandemic and reactions to and thankfully he hasn't really been exposed to the virus or anything there," Reinhart said at Save-A-Lot on Saturday, Sept. 12. "I was afraid when all that partying was going on at the beaches in Florida that they would do that where he lives.

"Around here, people don't really group up too much because we have more older folks that don't get out. I think mask-wearing in stores and that has helped us not spread it

we keep doing what we have been, then we will continue area, and we have done our

While everyone holds out hope for a conclusion to the pandemic, the focus for some community members remains on the impacts of the shutdowns and other mitigation

most people.

"My son lives in Avery Dallas fears that the Union County resident it have affected the housing market in a negative way and that some locals may be out of a home if the job market doesn't pick back up. "I worry about the

economy," Dallas said while shopping at Walmart Saturday. "I've been seeing a lot of houses around the area being sold, and it worries me. I wonder if people are losing their homes because they don't have jobs.



The people that are buying these places will be those that are moving from the big

moving in wouldn't be that up.

great for the economy right now. If people don't have jobs is a good time for the housing and they can't go back to work, market, and I'm afraid that it I don't see how it will balance will lead to problems down "For our area, people out when the homes get bought the road."

"I just don't think this

Appreciation Breakfast...from Page 1A

at the lower pavilion in Meeks

Park, where they enlisted six

other freemasons to serve the

first responders and make the

fellow mason and The View

Grill Manager Matt Leonard,

event a success.

the breakfast.



serving as the Grand Master of Masons in Georgia, called for moments of silence Friday in honor of those who died on 9/11/01. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

to be there but were on the pancakes and bacon to serve

Ivy Smith is the Worshipful Master of Allegheny Lodge for 2020, and to prepare the breakfast, he enlisted the primary help of his son and Junior Deacon Peyton Smith, as well as friend and Senior Warden Murl Tackett.

Together, they made sausage, eggs, biscuits, gravy, "I was a medic for over 10 years," Worshipful Master Smith said. "So, to be able to give back to the community and to the first responders, especially right now with everything going on and how underappreciated they feel, I think it's even more important than ever. "We were worried we

weren't going to get to have (the breakfast), but I'm glad that we figured out a way to hold it. And it turned out to be one of the best ones that I've been involved with since I've been a part of Allegheny Masonic Lodge."

The lodge has had to cancel dozens of events and activities due to COVID-19 this year, which has impacted fundraising for the two big initiatives supported by Allegheny, namely the Masonic Youth Home and scholarships for local graduating seniors, though the lodge supports many other endeavors.

Fortunately, Smith said Allegheny Lodge will be Also assisting was able to keep supporting these initiatives, even in the face of the financial squeeze applied by who helped the lodge procure COVID-19 and the responses many supplies necessary for to it.

In terms of the first



Allegheny Lodge Senior Warden Murl Tackett serving up some delicious breakfast in the Sept. Photo by Shawn Jarrard 11 First Responder Breakfast in Meeks Park.

responders themselves, those who could attend were definitely feeling the love Friday.

It's an honor – it means a lot," Fire Batt. Chief Richard Jones said. "The masons have always stepped up and been very good to us, and we enjoy it. It brings us together, and it's good to be honored."

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Mack Mason said he, too, appreciated the masons and their honoring of the victims of 9/11, many of whom were first responders also.

"It's good to have their support, and it's good that people still remember what happened 19 years ago," Mason said. "It can't happen again.

"If we don't have a

strong military and aggressively pursue these Taliban members and other terrorist groups we've even got some here within the United States - we need to stay abreast of them, and when we can, either arrest them or kill them.



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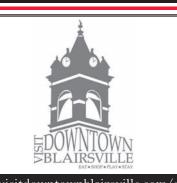
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