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Local veterans and family in attendance during the 2016 Veterans Day Ceremony by Union County High School. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Sgt. Adam Kish, a recruiter with the Georgia Army National Guard, has been invited by the school to address those in attendance, and the Georgia Army National Guard Honors Platoon will provide a firing party for the occasion.

Another big part of the ceremony will be the Georgia Civil Air Patrol DeKalb County Cadet Squadron from Chamblee, which will post and retire the colors.

Prior to the ceremony, local veterans and their spouses are invited to partake in a free breakfast at the high school from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

A shuttle will be available for guests making

their way between the cafeteria and ceremony, and in the event of inclement weather, the Veterans Day Ceremony will be held in the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center, with parking adjacent to the Fine Arts building.

The point of contact for the ceremony is high school administrator Art McCann, himself a veteran, who can be reached at (706) 745-2216, ext. 1112, or at amccann@ucschools.org.

For weather information the morning of the ceremony, call the high school office at (706) 745-2216.

Also Nov. 10, the Ira Weaver Unit 121 of the American Legion Auxiliary

will be hosting a Veterans Day Luncheon at 11 a.m. inside the Methodist Activity Center of First United Methodist Church of Union County.

The luncheon will serve as a nice counterpoint to the veterans' breakfast at the high school, and folks can get a heaping helping of delicious lunch for only \$7 a plate, with tickets available the day of the event at the church.

To acquire tickets in advance, check out First Place Trophies of Blairsville or Cabin Coffee on the Downtown Blairsville Square, or call the Auxiliary directly at (678) 378-5979.

This year's guest speaker will be Linda Gorman of Quilts

of Valor, and three Vietnam Veterans will receive quilts during the program.

As usual, Army veteran and crowd favorite Chuck Honaker will serve as emcee for the event, and the Woody Gap Band of Steel will be on hand to perform patriotic music during the luncheon.

The North Georgia Honor Guard will also be present for the program at the church, and they will conduct the Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony and other patriotic functions.

Once again, the veterans service organizations of Union County team up to impart a Commanders Award to an MVP of the veteran community.

Firefighters...continued from Page 1A

volunteers who have a passion for the work from an earlier age. Because they're younger - 15 to 18 years old - Junior Firefighters can't fight fires directly. This means they must be vigilant in their lessons to learn everything they can before they are old enough to sign up as volunteer firefighters.

As such, they meet twice a month with volunteer Union County firefighters to perform real life training in all areas of firefighting to be able to perform their duties as Junior Firefighters.

These duties include: Assisting at fire scenes; continuing education in Junior Firefighter and countywide training sessions; assisting with search and rescue; fire safety/prevention education and activities; post-scene equipment cleanup; helping with parking duties at festivals, football games and at the Union County Farmers Market; and maintaining a firefighting presence during fundraising events and volunteer fire station open houses.

The Junior Firefighters is also a great way to pass along the many values of Union County Fire & Rescue, according to the chief, namely faith, family, honesty, integrity, professionalism and compassion.

"We want them to know how to work as a team, care about each other and their community, and serve," said Chief Dyer.

The mission statement of the Union County Fire Department Junior Firefighter Program says it all: "To provide an opportunity to



Junior Firefighters learning how to throw firehose and roll it back up again.

introduce young men and women in Union County to the various aspects of firefighting and rescue work, and to develop leadership skills, encourage community involvement, and support the mission of the Union County Fire & Rescue."

Other skills Junior Firefighters can look forward to picking up include general and specific fire safety, medical training and teambuilding, and each member gets firefighting gear, including T-shirts and uniforms.

And while becoming a Junior Firefighter definitely puts kids on a career path toward firefighting, it's also a terrific avenue for giving back to one's community, and looks great on a college resume or a job application.

Tyre Mackey, 17, of Blairsville, said he's been enjoying his time with the Junior Firefighters, which started up in August.

Mackey's favorite activity so far has been throwing the firehoses out and rolling them back up with his fellow Junior Firefighters, and he looks forward to continuing his training in the program, with an eye toward eventually entering law enforcement with the Georgia State Patrol or Department of Natural Resources.

"Just come out and do it, and if you like it, stay with it," said Mackey, who recommends the Junior Firefighters to other kids his age. "It's good experience for you."

The Junior Firefighters meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of every month, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Union County Fire Station No. 1.

Parents and students interested in the program can call the fire department at (706) 439-6091, and for more information and videos of the kids in action, visit the program's Facebook page at Union County Jr. Firefighters.

Firewise...continued from Page 1A

volunteers with skin in the game - has a membership of 21 officially designated Firewise communities, with more in the works.

Union County is in on Firewise, too, as Firewise in Union just welcomed its second official community, with several more on the way.

As Riley and other fire safety officials like to say, Firewise is spreading like wildfire through the mountains, and that means more communities are safer from wildfire than ever before.

In celebration of these victories, and in recognition of the good work that's going on here, Riley and Towns County Firewise last month welcomed two Firewise professionals from the National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA.

The NFPA is a global nonprofit established 121 years ago, with stated goals of "eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards."

Tom Welle and Cathy Prudhomme of the NFPA joined Riley, members of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition, local elected officials and guests from neighboring municipalities, as well as federal, state and local fire professionals in a meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 17.

Together, the group discussed the successes and merits of the Firewise efforts in North Georgia, especially in Towns County, where the



Chief Ranger Tony Harkins of the Georgia Forestry Commission. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

number of fires has dropped dramatically in recent years.

And together, they reached a consensus about the most important aspect of any Firewise program - community involvement.

Prudhomme, who manages the Firewise Communities program nationally, said she was impressed with how many layers of community involvement existed in Towns and Union counties, from the sole commissioners down to the individual homeowners and everywhere in between.

"It's everybody coming together and really being a whole community, and everybody identifying their roles and doing something about it," said Prudhomme in the meeting. "Truly, it's our pleasure to be here, and to be able to listen to what you're doing and take those stories back on the national level and

share that."

Welle, who oversees the NFPA's Denver field office, was equally impressed with the level of community representation in the meeting, and with Firewise here generally.

"I've only been with NFPA coming up on three years, but in that time, I've gotten around the country quite a bit," said Welle. "I get to places like this and I wish I could bottle it because of what you guys do that we could give to the rest of them."

Firewise is all about protecting against fire by creating defensible spaces in neighborhoods and communities via the reduction of fuels around homes and other fire control practices.

The program also prepares people for what to do in the event of a wildfire, and above all, Firewise saves lives and property.

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