

# Wreaths...from Page 1A

Air Force Academy Cadet Evelyn McBride and Kendall McBride of the Civil Air Patrol; J.W. Preston of the U.S. Coast Guard; Pam Green with the Daughters of the American Revolution; and David Peterson in honor of Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action.

Pam Matthews of the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter DAR offered thanks and appreciation for veterans, past and present.

"It is a privilege to honor the American patriots, but more importantly, honor all of the veterans that came after them to this present day," Matthews said. "That is what is important, not only the veterans, but their families and the sacrifices that they make."

The North Georgia Honor Guard called the ceremony to attention, fired a volley and played Taps for those gathered, and Post 121 Chaplain Richard Hoibraten led the ceremonial prayer before everyone departed to lay their wreaths.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Wickersham concluded, "as you journey to your respective cemetery and grave site, we encourage every volunteer here today who places a wreath on a veteran's grave to say that veteran's name aloud, take a step back and salute, and take a moment to thank them for their service to our country."

"It's a small act that goes a long way toward keeping the memory of our veterans alive."

Remember, we are not here today to 'decorate graves.' We are here to remember not their deaths, but their lives. Each wreath is a gift of appreciation from a grateful America.

"These live balsam fir wreaths symbolize our honor to those who have served and those serving in the Armed



Volunteers placed wreaths on veterans' headstones at Holly Hill Veterans Park Cemetery in honor of the sacrifices they made for their country.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Forces of our great nation and their family. We must understand that the costs of freedom we enjoy is priceless.

"As a nation standing together, we can defeat terrorism, hatred, injustice, and thanks to our veterans and all frontline personnel, we will do just that."

At ceremony close, those gathered joined police-escorted convoys to take memorial wreaths to Holly Hill Veterans Park Cemetery and Union Memory Gardens Cemetery to mark the headstones of local

veterans and remember all they did for their country.

The Wreaths Across America project runs year-round, and interested families can sponsor a wreath for a veteran for the next ceremony.

Wreaths donated throughout North Georgia were also placed at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton over the weekend.

For more information on the local program and American Legion, visit LegionPost121.org.

## Christmas is not a day off for Volunteer Firefighters and EMTs ensuring those within their community are protected

Christmas is a day long associated with family gatherings, a day of rest and a day of relaxation, but like all holidays, it is not a day off for those who serve and protect.

No matter what day of the week, no matter what time of day, no matter what holiday, Volunteer Firefighters are giving of themselves to their community, in their stations. Today as you were awaking to open gifts, Volunteer Firefighters were running calls somewhere, responding to a fire alarm. As you relax and enjoyed your day of rest; Volunteer Firefighter-EMTs were racing to help someone experiencing a medical crisis. In the evening as you and your loved ones sit down to a Christmas Dinner, Volunteer Firefighters were getting back into their daily routine running equipment checks on Fire Trucks.

Your local Volunteer Firefighters, no matter what community they may serve you in, be it in Hiwassee, Blairsville, or any other town, have families just like you. Your Volunteer Firefighters spend Christmas with their families like the vast majority of others in the United States, but they are also called to be with their "other family," the people they serve in the community who are in distress all across the United States.

Volunteer Firefighters and EMTs can take the day off, but no one is forcing them to show up at their Station, many instead turn up at the Fire Station ensuring those within their community are protected, following established routines to ensure those they serve with are safe and protected on calls.

Your Volunteer Firefighters do this willingly because it is what they are drawn to do, and what they have personally been called to do. As you take the day, pondering the spirit of 'goodwill to all mankind' during the holiday season, look inside yourself and find how you can give back, volunteer and help your community.

If you feel you want to

explore serving your local Fire Department or Ambulance Service, there is no better time than the present to discover the personal satisfaction and rewarding feeling of giving of yourself through your local Volunteer Fire Department.

When you live in a metropolitan area and an emergency arises, you call 911 and a fire truck or ambulance will come screaming to your door in a few minutes to help with your emergency. Many people who move away from urban areas to the serenity of the mountains are in for a rude awakening when an emergency happens because most small departments are primarily made up of volunteers.

Volunteer Firefighters are well trained and dedicated but will not arrive in force for minutes or more because they are not waiting for a call at the station so when the alarm goes off, they must drive to the station, get their equipment, and then drive to your emergency. Our Volunteers respond to all emergencies whether fighting fire or assisting emergency responders to protect you and your family.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 70 percent of firefighters in the United States are volunteers. Most volunteer firefighters have the same training as career personnel, but varies between jurisdictions. Volunteers often sign up for firefighting classes and other certifications that teach them what they need to know to become a certified firefighter. It takes a commitment to be a volunteer firefighter because these classes meet 2 or 3 times a week for 3 or 4 months.

A VFD may be financially supported by taxes raised in a city, town, county, fire district, or other governmental entity, as well as corporate and other private donations, federal grants, and other assistance from auxiliary members, or firefighters' associations. With these funds the VFD may acquire and operate firefighting apparatus, equip, and train the



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Executive Director of RC&D

firefighters, maintain the firehouse, and possibly cover insurance, and other post-injury or retirement benefits. Depending upon the location and availability of other services, a VFD may be responsible for controlling structure fires as well as forest fires.

Rural VFD's, many times, are fortunate to include full time first responders on their off days from large departments. Law enforcement officers may also be trained in these related duties and overlap with the VFD.

A volunteer fire department is reached the same way as other emergency services by calling 9-1-1 where a dispatcher calls out the VFD. Average response times are longer than with full-time services because the members must come from different distances to the station or to the incident. Such departments often have a fixed number of firefighters on staff at times.

Do not ever hesitate to call 911 if you think there is something wrong, but do not expect to see the red lights as soon as you hang up the phone either. We will be there as soon as we can and when we get there, we know what to do to protect you and your things.

Up here in the mountain's citizens must take care of themselves until the calvary arrives by preparing ourselves for the emergency that we hope will never come.

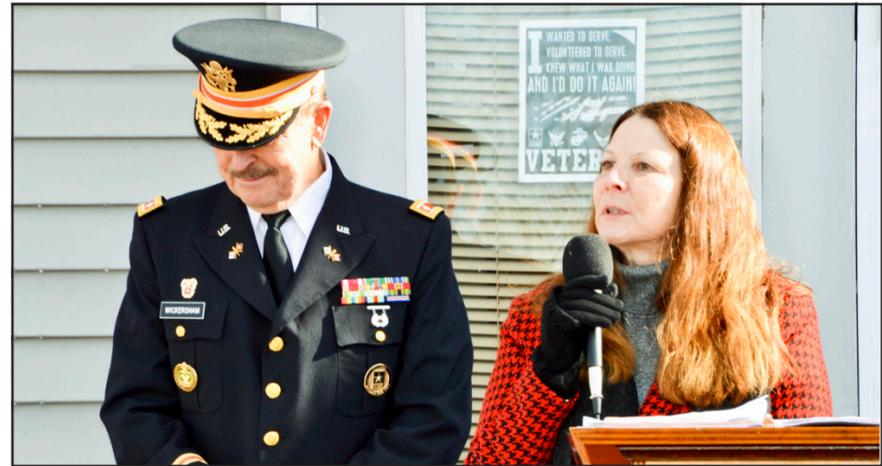
Firewise and Ready Set Go are the programs that we use to prepare residents for that emergency that we think will happen to someone else and not us, but someone else thought the same thing.

Be Firewise and be prepared, your life may depend on it! For more information check out ChestateeChattahoochee RC&D on Facebook or email us at [www.info.ccred@gmail.com](mailto:www.info.ccred@gmail.com).



North Georgia Civil Air Patrol Cadet Kendall McBride, Air Force Academy Cadet Evelyn McBride, and Air Force Sr. Master Sgt. Ken McBride placed a memorial wreath for a family member at the Maj. Leon Davenport Veterans Building Dec. 19.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener



Pam Matthews of the Daughters of the American Revolution spoke at the memorial wreath-laying ceremony Saturday, as did American Legion Post 121 Cmdr. Dan Wickersham.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Castoff Pet Rescue thanks community



So here we are... another year has gone by so quickly we didn't have time to blink! We have accomplished so much in spite of the pandemic and only because of your dedication and determination.

Our benefactors, Castoff Thrift Store, all of our volunteers, our employees (Jack and David), our bingo volunteers and supporters, donors, the staff at Colwell Detention Center for allowing us to par-

ticipate in their RESCUED Program (Cold Nose College). All of these volunteers are so compassionate to these abandoned, surrendered cats and dogs. They pay it forward every day.

Your kindness has saved countless lives of our cats and dogs. You have provided much needed surgeries, medication, food, supplies, toys, new beds and so much more. Your love and donations have been endless. You are all appreciated.

So with that being said... we want to wish you Merry Christmas and the happiest, healthiest New Year!

Castoff Pet Rescue, it takes a community... NTDec23,29)CA