

Christmas...from Page 1A

Bonnie Herman made three dresses by hand; TATA on Main donated jewelry for girls; several people donated bicycles for youngsters craving two-wheeled adventures; and the Foster Children's Christmas Program was able to raise

enough money to purchase a number of laptops to expand the horizons of children away from home.

"I think of foster kids as children who got caught in a bad situation, and that's not their fault," said one donor, who

preferred to give anonymously. "If the community can help a foster child or foster children become who they were meant to be, that is something that we should always want to strive to do. They didn't have a choice, and we can help them have a better choice."

The Towns & Union Foster Children's Enrichment Program is made up primarily



Guy and Rosemarie Novembre with Pam Curley and Lorena Johnson. The Novembre's were dropping off a bunch of gifts in the name of the Nam Knights of America Motorcycle Club.

of former and current CASAs who understand that there will always be a need.

Monetary donations are accepted year-round for the Christmas program, and those interested in contributing or becoming sponsors for next Christmas can contact Pat Elliott at (706) 896-3749, or Richard Paolillo at (706) 745-1190.

For convenience, donors can make checks payable to "The Foster Children's

Christmas Program," and the checks can be dropped off at Park Sterling Bank for deposit.

Donations can also be made toward the program's Back to School initiative, which is the other area of concentration for the Enrichment Program aimed at normalizing the experiences of children in foster care.

The Back to School part of the program takes place before the start of each school

year. Foster children are given the ability to go shopping for new school supplies and a new school outfit, just like all the other kids who start school each year with new clothes and materials.

Those involved with the program would like to thank the multitude of generous supporters who for years have made Christmas mornings special for the foster children of Towns and Union.

Task Force...from Page 1A

and chief law enforcement officers, examined the importance of attracting and retaining experienced officers throughout Georgia, and looked at needed reforms in officer compensation.

"The service and dedication of our law enforcement officials is nothing short of heroic," said Lt. Gov. Cagle. "We must make every effort to ensure local compensation packages are both competitive and fair to those who protect and serve. COPS will help local governments identify ways to maximize their support for the men and women who bravely protect our communities and neighborhoods."

State Sens. Tyler Harper, Jack Hill, John Wilkinson, Steve Gooch and Tonya Anderson served on the task force chaired by Lt. Gov. Cagle and co-chaired by Sen. Kirk.

Local officials selected by the Georgia Sheriffs' Association (GSA), the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP), the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) joined them.

The task force recommended proposing new legislation to amend the Department of Community Affairs requirements for Qualified Local Government Status to require local governments to perform wage and compensation evaluations of their own and surrounding counties at least every five years.

It also recommended adopting and maintaining a compensation pay scale for their local law enforcement officers consisting of pay grades and pay steps with appropriate ranges of salaries for each category based on merit, training, longevity and local demographics. Reporting of this information to DCA will be required of local governments.

The task force recommended that if a government or agency refuses or fails to implement pay scales or perform compensation studies, they would lose Qualified Local Government status and therefore no longer be eligible to receive state or federal grants, loans, or reimbursement for training, education and travel.

The group also recommended the appropriation of a minimum of \$7 million in state funds (to be increased if greater need is established) to be available for grants to assist local governments and sheriffs' offices with increased officer compensation.

In doing so, procedures shall be put in place to ensure that grant funding shall be used solely for compensation and shall not be supplanted.

Also, DCA shall establish grant regulations to ensure that funds are prioritized for full service law enforcement agencies that demonstrate financial need due to a lack of local government revenue or tax base, and demonstrate an effort to maximize the effectiveness of available resources.

The group also recommended the study of the fiscal impact of potential

tax exemptions or credits for local law enforcement officers in the state in order to increase compensation, as well as calling for the Georgia Municipal Association and the Association County Commissioners of Georgia to study the impact of allowing local governments to channel a percentage of revenue received from local option sales taxes to law enforcement agencies, or provide more flexibility with existing insurance premium revenue collected by local governments.

"Every day, officers across our state accept each call they receive with humility and a selfless commitment to the communities they serve," said Peach County Sheriff Terry Deese. "Lt. Gov. Cagle should be applauded for his leadership on this issue – and I look forward to the continued work of the COPS Task Force as we unite behind these recommendations and remain engaged until we fully compensate the individuals who put their lives on the

line defending their fellow Georgians."

"When you start each morning putting on a badge, you recommit yourself in service to your fellow Georgians," said Lt. Gov. Cagle. "There are no exceptions – every single community depends on our law enforcement to keep them safe, and in our most vulnerable moments we rely on these men and women.

"Simply put, these individuals deserve our support. By acting on the recommendations from the COPS Task Force, we will be better positioned to compensate the officers who keep our communities safe."

Sen. Kirk echoed those sentiments.

"Our state is blessed with the best law enforcement officers in the nation," said Sen. Kirk. "We must do everything within our power to make sure they are properly compensated for their dedication to the citizens of Georgia.

"This task force is a great asset for our local communities as we examine compensation and benefits for the individuals who proudly protect Georgia."

To the Veterans of Union County



From the Commander and staff of Ira Weaver Post 121 of the American Legion, wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year are conveyed to you and yours. Thank you for your

service to our great country. May God bless you and keep you and yours safe during the holidays.

The Commander and staff would also like to take this opportunity to invite you to join the American Legion in the upcoming year. Help us to provide for veterans and the community.

Visit our web site at legionpost121.org and check out the event calendar for upcoming meeting dates and events.

AARP Smart Driver course hosted by the UC Senior Center

The AARP Smart Driver classroom course on Thursday, January 4th, will be hosted by the Union County Senior Center located at 95 Senior Center Drive, Blairsville GA. Sign in time is 8:30 a.m. The classroom course starts promptly at 9 a.m. ending at 4 p.m. Course fee is \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for non members. Registration is recommended to secure your place in the classroom.

Telephone the instructor, Rosemary Kerr, at 706-745-7046. Please speak clearly when leaving your name and telephone number for call back confirmation.

You will learn defensive driving techniques, proven

safety strategies, new traffic laws, rules of the road and new vehicle technology innovations. No test to pass or writing required.

The AARP Smart Driver Course is opened to licensed drivers of all ages. AARP is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all as we age. At the end of the course you will receive your AARP Smart Driving Certificate. You may also qualify for a multi-year discount on your automobile insurance as well as a reduction of points on your drivers license. All those who attend this course will receive a free gift from AARP.