

North Georgia News

2 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Historical Society honors impactful residents

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

County's Choestoe District, was first. With her own history marked by attending Mercer University and Kennesaw State College, along with employment by Hewlett Packard, Rich returned to her hometown after nearly 30 years away.

Upon her return, she began working with the Historical Society in 2008 as a finance manager, retiring in 2022 after a 14-year career. She remains well-known and loved by all who worked with her at the Old Courthouse.

This year would have been Glenn Gooch's 100th birthday. Born on June 15, 1924, Gooch hailed from Suches and was the oldest of 14 children. Gooch answered the call to defend his country in World War II, serving in the D-Day Invasion of Normandy

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Union County wouldn't be what it is today without influential residents like the ones honored in this photograph (see article for names and bios). Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Churches join forces for Thanksgiving ministry



Volunteers with the Thanksgiving Blessings Dinners ministry prepared more than 1,400 meals for people in 2024. Photo by Todd Forrest

By Shelly Knight
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Each year, House of Prayer Church hosts a collaborative Thanksgiving meal for anyone in the community who would like one. While the "Thanksgiving Blessings Dinners" serve an enormous financial need for

many, it also serves a spiritual and an emotional need for others. Like many truly fabulous ideas, this one started small, with civic-minded people sitting around a living room in a grassroots effort to reach out to others during the holidays.

"When we first started out 13 years ago, we served

about 140 meals," said Event Director Cal Wolcott, who was one of the original seven people to begin the Thanksgiving outreach. "It's grown about 40% every year since."

The idea to deliver meals germinated as the volunteers considered that some people might not have transportation

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Merry Christmas events coming to Blairsville

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Whether spending the holidays alone, with a significant other or with family, there's plenty for people to do in Union County to get into the Christmas spirit. Throughout December, local organizations and businesses are hosting a variety of events fit for kids and adults to attend.

The popular Tour of Trees has returned this year, representing many of Blairsville's businesses with wreaths and trees big and small. The trees are decorating the interior of the Chamber of Commerce now, with prize categories for Best Big Tree, Best Small Tree and Best Wreath.

Voting on favorites opens Dec. 2 to run through Dec. 13, with winners announced the week of Dec. 16. It's free to come check out the trees along with an entire gingerbread village featuring a sweet



People will once again be lining the streets of Downtown Blairsville Saturday night as the Christmas Parade rolls through town. Photo by Shawn Jarrard/2022

smorgasbord of styles. Southern Tree Plantation – beloved by many as "The Christmas Tree Farm" – is celebrating the holidays with train and wagon rides on Dec. 1, 7 and 8, and that's not even looking at the things being offered daily to visitors. Farm animals are available to meet, and guests are welcome to roast

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Mtn. Country Christmas opens to record crowd

By Shelly Knight
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

HIWASSEE – The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds glistened and sparkled as the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights opened on Thanksgiving Night. Hundreds of visitors flocked to see the beautiful display, partake of the

Christmas goodies and visit the 60-plus vendors selling unique wares. "It looks like a record crowd to me," said Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. "It's a beautiful night – a little chilly, but it makes it feel like Christmas. We have 64 vendors, and all the booths are full. Scott's Magical

Illusion Show and the train rides are new this year and are very popular.

"This is our 10th year to do this, and we add more lights every year. There must be 10 million lights. Last year we had over 30,000 people. We keep this event very reasonable for families.

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Come on out to the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights, which continues this weekend and throughout the month. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Sheriff's Office grateful for donation by Cruisers

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



The Union County Sheriff's Office was pleased to receive the annual Christmas program donation from the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

In service of its mission to give back to the community, the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club visited the Union County Sheriff's Office last week to deliver a \$2,500 check to

benefit the Give-A-Gift for Christmas Program. The nonprofit club works hard all year long to raise money for causes that serve local children and veterans, with most fundraising coming from raffle car ticket sales, plus proceeds from the cruise-

in season and generous club sponsors. On top of raising money for kids at Christmas – the Cruisers give to similar efforts throughout the area and even hold their own shopping experience – the

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Christmas Events...from Page 1A

marshmallows and hot dogs if they're not interested in candy and other concessions. Stronger arms can cut their own Canaan fir tree or pick from pre-cut Fraser firs.

Saturday, Dec. 7, is when a lot of the local Christmas magic happens.

The Holly Jolly Christmas Celebration, starting bright and early at the Union County Community Center at 8 a.m., promises a free breakfast with St. Nick himself, caroling, arts and crafts, reindeer games and even train rides. It all wraps up like a present bow around 11 a.m.

Around 10 a.m. on Dec. 7, the Union County Farmers Market will be holding its 14th Annual Kris Kringle Market. Late-harvest produce, honey, meats and cheeses, and of course Christmas crafts will feature heavily, allowing visitors to get some holiday shopping in for insightful gifts from local businesses and farmers.

Beginning at 2 p.m. on Dec. 7, kiddos can come to the Historic Courthouse on the Blairsville Square to get pictures with Santa and enjoy the sights of a decorated interior that, according to Historical Society President Mickey Cummings, just gets "prettier every year."

That said, the Christmas

tree on the square itself will be lit after sundown at 6 p.m., to be followed shortly by the annual Nighttime Christmas Parade.

"Incidentally, we had a gentleman just out of the blue call the other day and wanted to know if he could donate a sleigh to us," Cummings said, estimating the object may date back to the late 1800s. The child-sized sleigh is on runners and will be available for pictures before the parade.

The olden days will also be echoed at the Historic Butt-Mock House, which has been decorated in the spirit of Christmas and will be open that Saturday for tours before the parade.

Speaking of the Historical Society and the Old Courthouse, starting Dec. 6, the usual Friday concerts will feature Christmas music. Roy Perren, the North Georgia Chamber Symphony and John Cochran are all included in the lineup.

Dec. 6-7 is the 12th Annual Blairsville Holiday Stop & Shop, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. Admission is free at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center near downtown, so stop on by to shop for all things Christmas.

Eat, shop and be merry

at Downtown Blairsville's first Cookie Crawl Dec. 14. Tickets are required to participate and can be purchased for \$20 online at <https://www.eventeny.com/events/christmas-cookie-crawl-15420/>. Spots are limited, with only 200 tickets in total and 100 available at time of publication.

Those who buy a ticket can head down to Blairsville City Hall on Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. to receive an exclusive canvas tote bag, map and passport. The map and ticket lead to 12 gourmet cookies from 12 different merchants, and getting a passport totally filled with stamps could result in winning a \$100 gift card for a Downtown Blairsville business of choice.

Finally, enjoy a traditional mountain Christmas with the Vogel crowd on Dec. 14 at a new venue. Due to construction at the state park, the location has changed to the Conley Pavilion at Meeks Park. The fun starts at 4 p.m., and admission is free.

Guests are encouraged to bring an unwrapped gift for a child up to age 12, though no toy weapons are allowed. The gifts are part of the Union County Sheriff's Office Give-A-Gift for Christmas toy drive. Along with that, be sure to bring blankets and chairs for seating.

Cruisers Donation...from Page 1A

club also awards scholarships to graduating high school students interested in pursuing automotive or other technical training.

As for Give-A-Gift, it is a beloved Sheriff's Office tradition that goes back multiple administrations and serves to put presents under the Christmas trees of well-deserving local children.

The program is different from popular annual experiences like Shop With A Cop and Shop With A Cruiser in that, instead of taking children to buy gifts for themselves and loved ones, Give-A-Gift provides presents to be given by parents and guardians as they see fit Christmas morning.

And it's a program that Sheriff Mack Mason – now in his final month in office after three successful terms – has taken great care to support over the years.

Thanks to donations by individuals and groups from the community, such as the Blairsville Cruisers, Give-A-Gift manages to assist over 80

families with presents annually. And the need has only been growing in recent years, so the Sheriff's Office is grateful for continued support.

"We thank y'all for everything you do for us," Sheriff Mason said to the small gathering of Cruisers who delivered the donation. "We couldn't get our program accomplished without your help and many others.

"It's just a joy to know that you are going to be there for us every year – not just this, but anything else that we need, and we certainly appreciate it."

The Sheriff's Office collects Christmas program donations all throughout the year, which groups and individuals can drop off at the front office of 378 Beasley Street in Blairsville.

Monetary donations are most useful, as gifts are purchased based on children's wish lists – and sometimes their needs, like clothing – but people wanting to donate toys for kids aged 2-12 should make sure they are new and unwrapped, and no toy weapons, please.

Families looking to benefit from the program can apply directly at the Sheriff's Office the first full week after Thanksgiving. Parents should bring driver's licenses as proof of residency and kids' birth certificates.

"Anybody that sees a family that may get left out, if they'll call us, we'll make it happen," Sheriff-elect Shawn Dyer said.

For more information on Give-A-Gift or to apply for the program, call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

People looking to donate in support of the Cruisers' various charitable initiatives for children and veterans may call Club President Dick Couture at 706-400-1036. And be sure to follow the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club on Facebook.

"We really appreciate them making this donation to us," Dyer said of the Cruisers. "If it wasn't for them and a few more, then this program would be hard to do. And we look forward to them helping us in the future, and us helping them in whatever they do."

Ready-Set-Go: A Life Saver - Be Prepared and Be Safe

Welcome to December. Seems like it got here faster than it used to, but it is upon us and December is one of our months that has the most wildfire risk along with March, April, and November. We cannot let our guard down just because of the rains that we have had lately, but that can change quickly with the winds and dropping humidity. One day it is wet and the next it can be wildfire ready. In the last few weeks we have had wildfires all over north Georgia most caused by human debris burning. The low humidity and wind combination is prime for a disaster in your backyard.

I have always said that we can do all the Firewise preparations we can but if we cannot get you out of harm's way when a wildfire strikes then we have only done half of our job. We promote a program developed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs called Ready-Set-Go. This program prepares homeowners to be aware of changing conditions and get out when conditions start to increase the risk of wildfires.

Ready is Firewise, where you have prepared your property to reduce wildfire risk. Set is for you to prepare for a possible emergency by having a plan of what to take if an emergency strike. Go means go now and get out of the way of a fire, tornado, flood, or whatever nature throws at you and means get out of the way of first responders who are trying to get in to protect your home. If you are trying to get out when they are coming in, there is a big problem, especially on our steep narrow roads. Their response will be delayed when seconds count to protect your home and valuables if you cause gridlock on the road to the fire.

Check this link to 7 steps to make you home safer from wildfire: https://www.wildlandfirersg.org/s/are-you-wildfire-ready?language=en_

US. If this does not work, go to Wildlandfire.org and look for "Are you Wildfire Ready?" and check the resources there.

Here is a link to a Home Fire Escape Plan put out by the NFPA, the organization that sponsors Firewise nfa.org/Public-education and look for the home escape plan along with many other useful resources for home and life safety. An escape plan is very important if disaster strikes in the middle of the night so you and your family will know what to do and how to get out of the house and escape the danger when seconds can make the difference between life and death.

Leaving early gives you and your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire and helps keep the roads clear so firefighters can move strategically and lend more focus to suppression efforts in a safer environment. An important part of leaving early is preparing ahead of time. Take this time to put together an evacuation plan and pack go bags for your family. Identify at least two ways out of your neighborhood and a safe place for you to go. Mark your potential evacuation routes clearly on a map and then practice them with your family. Make sure everyone in the family knows your safe meeting place, then let your friends and family know your plans.

Complete your Personal Wildland Fire Action Plan, in the RSG! Program National Action Guide. This includes identifying important contact numbers for places your family might go during an evacuation and an out-of-town contact who can help keep track of your family members in the event of an emergency. You will also identify potential evacuation routes, where you will be evacuating to, the locations of emergency supply kits that you will need to take with you, and any notes for your family. Post the com-



Frank Riley
Executive Director of RC&D

pleted plan somewhere every member of your family can see it and become familiar with it.

An Emergency Supply List to pack go bags for your family is important so be sure to include water, food, any necessary medications, a change of clothes, spare chargers, and an extra set of credit cards, cash, or checks. If you have house pets, include them in your evacuation preparation. Practice evacuating with them, ensuring that your family can safely get them in the car and to your agreed upon meeting point. Pack food for your pet(s) in your go bags and include any medications they are taking. Ensure you have a plan in place for outdoor animals or livestock. Know what local procedures are during evacuation.

Should an evacuation occur during another event, such as COVID-19, understand your locale has considered many factors and is likely offering the best alternatives. Ensuring life safety takes precedence over social-distancing measures. It only takes a little time to prepare for what could be a life-changing event.

Remember when a disaster is headed your way or already upon you, the streets will not be cool, calm and collected, but will be hectic and frantic that leads to gridlock as people who are not organized will be trying to get out so planning to leave early is most important. Ready Set Go gives you a plan to get out of the way early so the professionals can do their job to protect you and your property.

Be prepared and be Safe and Be Firewise! Check us out at www.chestchatt.org

Thanksgiving...from Page 1A



Former House of Prayer Pastor Jerry Helton greeted guests of the Thanksgiving Blessings Dinners on Nov. 28. Photo by Todd Forrest

or the means to travel. Cal's wife Barb really wanted a place where people could sit and have a meal together, and it also became obvious that some recipients might simply come and pick up a meal.

And so, Thanksgiving Blessings Dinners evolved into the three-stage system it is today.

Deon Brown has been managing the kitchen for four years.

"I love the opportunity to chat people up. It's very easy for people to feel isolated. I enjoy cooking," Brown said. "My job is to organize the food, make sure we have it, get it cooked and prepped to go out the door. Our program is pretty simple.

"This year we cooked for 1,400 people, and 1,255 of those meals are going out the door. We do that in three stages. First is delivery. We had 476 meals go out to 149 different homes. Volunteers come and deliver to each house the number of meals someone has registered for.

"Adults get pumpkin pie and children get cookies and a meal, which is about 1 1/2 pounds of food. It includes turkey, ham, sweet potato souffle, cornbread dressing, green beans, mashed potatoes and gravy: four sides, two meats. It's really delicious food.

"This is a community thing, so we try to stay local as we purchase our food for this. We chat them up, so they know what they are doing and how they are giving back. When we buy 42 dozen eggs from Walmart, they want to know why, or 160 pounds of sweet potatoes from Ingles. "This is a community that cares. I love the community effect. I love the opportunity to chat people up. It is so easy to be isolated. This builds relationships. I enjoy feeding people. After this, I go home and feed my own family."

The effort recruited close to 50 drivers this year, with each driver delivering about four orders, according to Wolcott.

"We want people to connect with one another; this opens doors," Wolcott said. "It's a chance to sit and have a conversation. It is not just about people in need. Some people might just be alone. We want them to know you don't have to be alone. It's a chance to pray and minister if the people receiving the meals are open to it."

Stage two of the dinner event involves community members stopping in at local stations to pick up food they have ordered.

"We have pick-up stations at various churches around the community," Brown said. "We have 457 meals prepped and ready here at House of Prayer, which is our biggest pick-up station.

"Finally, we have a dine-in option, which is stage three. We invite the community to come and share a meal here with us and others."

House of Prayer is the hosting church, but Wolcott said the volunteers make it a community event "because we want other churches involved in it."

"Over the years, we've picked up 12 to 15 churches," Wolcott said. "House of Prayer has given the use of the industrial kitchen, the entire facility, volunteers and even a budget. Even though they've given us a budget for this, we've never touched it because this has always been self-funded by the community.

"This community is a very giving community and very willing to serve, even on Thanksgiving. We never have a problem getting volunteers."

Jason Champlain concurred, noting that he chose to volunteer on Thanksgiving simply because he was able to.

"I thought, why not bless the people that need blessings? This is a great opportunity to share God's word and just be a help to the community," Champlain said.

This year, the effort enjoyed over 100 volunteers just in the kitchen thanks to

church members throughout the area coming in to work. United Community even sent volunteers to help.

"We know there is more need in the community - our numbers could be twice what they are," Wolcott said. "There was one woman who ordered 28 meals, and I thought, that's crazy. I couldn't figure out who could possibly need 28 meals. But when I called and spoke to her, she said this was the only way she could get her whole family together.

"Then two years ago, a couple called to cancel the meals they had ordered. They shared that they had been at the hospital all night because their youngest child was on a breathing tube. They were too exhausted and distraught to pick up their meals, so they suggested we give them to someone else.

"I decided that wasn't going to happen, so we delivered their meals. The mother cried in appreciation. They would not have eaten at all otherwise. These are not isolated incidents. You've got to go where God is moving you."

And people partake of the meal for all sorts of reasons.

"My family isn't coming up this year, so I didn't want to cook," said dinner guest Joyce Knappenberger. "I have been cooking Thanksgiving dinner for about 63 years, and I thought I'd like to take a year off."

Marie Kerlin attended the dinner for the second year in a row.

"I lost my mother last year at this time," Kerlin said. "I was grieving and didn't want to have Thanksgiving dinner alone. I didn't want my friend to go without dinner, either, so I called him, and here we are."

The bottom line is that many of the things that people take for granted are being prayed over by others, and missions like Thanksgiving Blessings Dinners often serve as the answer to those prayers.



More than 100 people volunteered in the House of Prayer kitchen to put all those plates together on Thanksgiving Day. Photo by Todd Forrest

Gooch Christmas Lights ready for community viewing



The community is invited to come see the Gooch Family Christmas Lights after dark at 92 Wren Drive. Take 19/129 North to Mauney Road, which is the first road on the left past Gracie's Nursery. Then go to the third road on the right - that's Wren Drive. The lights will be up for local enjoyment from 5-11 p.m. each night through the New Year's holiday.

People can also visit the Tanner Christmas Lights at 447 Tanner Road, off Kiutuestia Creek Road near the red light at US 76/GA 515.

Country Christmas...from Page 1A

“We’re very excited to be featured in Fairs & Expos Magazine this month. People are coming from everywhere. It’s not just a tri-state event anymore. They’re coming from all over the Southeast.”

The magazine is distributed by the International Association of Fairs and Expositions and features information about trends, innovative ideas, and association activities. According to the magazine, the 12-acre display “mesmerizes and entertains thousands” and is not to be missed.

Jerry Larkins, owner of Scary Jerry’s Mountain Fire Hot Sauce, was excited to have his wares on display for the first time.

“We make a handcrafted, small-batch, all-natural hot sauce with peaches,” Larkins said. “This is our first year here at the Christmas in Lights. I love the atmosphere the fairgrounds create, this lovely little village that they’ve got with the stalls that vendors can rent.

“People can just stroll through, and there’s stuff to eat, there’s usually good music. It’s just a really good, family-oriented atmosphere.”



The Grinch promises to be nice to kids at the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Uptown Mirror Photo Booth Owner Terri McGee was ready to take unique photographs for visitors. People can dress up with lots of Christmas props and get a photo to take home.

“We were here for their beer fest one weekend and they invited us back for this event,” McGee said. “It’s great exposure for our business.”

Kiki’s Hat Co. features wool-blend hats burned with many specialized designs, and they come with a Bible verse

under every hat. Owner Kim Pardue said that events like the lights “make it much easier for me to sell product.”

“We’re camping over here,” said visitor Carey Gunter of Silva, North Carolina. “I love these festivals. There’s always lots of unique items from vendors here that I love looking at and buying stuff.”

Susan Croft and her family came out from Cumming to celebrate Thanksgiving locally, which prompted them to check out the lights for the

first time. And they’re glad they did, because “it’s very beautiful, and there is a lot to see here.”

The veritable winter wonderland runs 6-9 p.m. this Thursday, Friday and Saturday

and will continue every night Dec. 12-23 over the same hours, closing for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Tickets are \$9 per person each night, though children 12 and under get in

free. For more information on the annual Mountain Country Christmas in Lights, including special discount days and a full schedule, visit <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/localevents/christmas>.

Kiwanis Club of Blairsville Grocery Grab Winner Announced



On Wednesday, November 20, Bank OZK staff members conducted the drawing for Kiwanis Club of Blairsville’s Grocery Grab Shopping Spree. Kiwanis members met the lucky winner, Jane Krohn, on November 23 for her run through our local Foodland Grocery to collect \$750 worth of groceries in 10 minutes. When it was over Jane said, “Thank you so much. It was so much fun! I have many deserving people to share with.”

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year’s Grocery Grab and to Foodland, United Community, and Bank OZK for their assistance. 100% of the proceeds from Grocery Grab help fund Blairsville Kiwanis Club’s



Winner Jane Krohn, Kiwanian Charlie Krick, and Foodland’s Ricky Abercrombie

many projects supporting our youth and community.

Helping kids grow and succeed is at the heart of everything we do.

For more information

about Blairsville Kiwanis Club, Grocery Grab Shopping Spree, and a listing of local food distribution/pantries, go to our website at <https://www.blairvillekiwanis.club/>.

Historical Society ...from Page 1A

and the Battle of the Bulge.

After coming home, he served on the School Board for 12 years, spent another 12 years as Clerk of Court, and in 1984, ran and won the position of Sole Commissioner of Union County – which he held for 12 years.

Gooch is credited with bringing 911 emergency services to Union County and was a 60-year member of the Allegheny Masonic Lodge #114 F&AM. He passed away on March 20, 2010.

William Cecil Nelson Jr., known to most as “W.C.,” was born in 1943, less than 100 yards from the town square. Nelson grew up in the small but busy town of Blairsville, working and playing hard as he came to love his community.

Nelson’s legacy includes 40 years of service to the Union County Development Authority and Downtown Development Authority; acting as a board member, Vice Chair and Chair of the United Community Bank; and, of course, maintaining his father’s tractor business, Nelson Tractor, which celebrated 75 years in operation as of 2024.

Avis Shaw may have been born in Gwinnett County, but she is firmly a member of the Union County community. Inspired by a kind childhood memory to become a nurse, Shaw graduated from Georgia Baptist Nursing College in 1956.

In 1960, Shaw was invited to work at the Union County Hospital, which had just 14 beds. Shaw would go on to serve as the Public Health Nurse for Union County for over 30 years. She also spent 11 years working at the Union County Nursing Home, retiring in 2014 just shy of her 80th birthday.

Lilly Vee Adams was born in the Gum Log community on Oct. 15, 1938. Paul Gibson, her father, owned Gibson’s Restaurant, which is known today as the Hole in the Wall. It was there that Adams became known throughout town, serving up food and memories.

Adams also worked in the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office as the County Executive Director for Fannin, Towns and Union counties, and was one of the founders of the North Georgia School of Gospel Music. Adams passed away on June 9 of this year.

Tony Dyer is known by many as a long-standing member of the Blairsville City Council, but he boasts a storied history before his career in politics. Dyer was drafted into the U.S. Army and turned 21 while stationed in Duc Pho, Vietnam. When he returned home, he purchased 50% ownership of A&D Supermarket – known today as Foodland. That said, he no longer holds half ownership.

In 1995, Dyer earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Brenau University, and “spent much of his life being an entrepreneur in many small business ventures.” To that end, Dyer is credited with reopening the Brasstown Bald

Store.

Billy Joe “Bill” Parker was the sixth of eight children, born on March 22, 1940. He grew up in the Young Cane community and was guided by a family that valued education. It’s no surprise, then, that Parker earned a master’s degree in public school administration from Western Carolina University as well as an education specialist degree from the University of Georgia.

Parker wore many hats during his employment at Union County schools, becoming known as a teacher, coach, principal, curriculum director and federal programs coordinator. By the time of his retirement in 1993, he was the Assistant Superintendent.

Along with helping bring up Union County’s youngest generations, Parker worked extensively to better his community as a charter member of the Union County Lions Club. He was also a part of the Union County Industrial Authority, Lake Nottely Improvement Committee, Notla Water Authority, Union County Board of Elections and the Union County Jaycees.

Patsy Sue Patton was a prominent member of First Baptist Church, where she spent years serving as the leader of the Girl’s Auxiliary, keeping an eye on the nursery and covering transportation needs. In her professional life, Patton’s career began as a secretary to State Rep. Jack Tarpley, though she also worked part-time at the Union County Clerk’s Office.

Patton started working at the Rural Electric Association in 1955. The REA would come to be known as the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation, and Patton would work her way up to Manager of Member Accounts by the time of her retirement in 1995.

Danny Kendrick was born on June 18, 1947, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. In 1969, he graduated from the University of Arkansas and moved to Blairsville, where he worked at the poultry company, Arbor Acres.

Within just a few years, Kendrick was promoted to Branch Manager – a position he maintained for 25 years before becoming Vice President. Thanks to his guidance, Arbor Acres “became one of the largest employers in Union County,” providing jobs for more than 200 people and owning or leasing over 100 chicken houses in Union County.

Kendrick also served on the Union County Recreation Board and is credited as being an integral part of the installation of the Little League Baseball Fields at Meeks Park. During the construction of the Notla Water Treatment Plant, Kendrick served as the Chairman of the Notla Water Board, and he was a founding member of the Union County Rotary Club.

Jim McAfee served in the U.S. Navy for two years, touring Vietnam “and other locales” before returning home upon discharge. It was there that he worked with Georgia

Forestry and opened the Canal Lake Campground. Later in life, he went into real estate and opened the first local RE/MAX office.

While serving on the Advisory Board of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce in 2002, McAfee and others were brainstorming ways to bring more visitors to the community. Through this meeting, the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games came about, holding its first event in 2004.

Blairsville’s very own Mayor Jim Conley was also honored by the Historical Society. Though born and raised in Union County, Conley moved away and worked for Kroger in Atlanta, where he eventually retired early as an Assistant Manager. When he returned to Blairsville, he worked for Ingles as the Night Stock Clerk Leader.

As for his career in elective office, Conley served as a Blairsville City Councilman from January 1996 to August 2001, when he resigned and ran for mayoral office. Although initially unsuccessful, he



The Historical Society enjoys celebrating local heritage by serving as a placeholder for the past in ever-changing times. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

returned to his position in the City Council until he was elected mayor in 2006.

Frances Partin is remembered as “a beautiful lady, inside and out,” for the immense kindness she showed while working at the Hill-Lance Drug Store, which later became Rite Aid Pharmacy. Dedicating her life to helping others, Partin volunteered

with Meals on Wheels and the Historical Society following her retirement.

Earl Odom was named Union County’s Head Basketball Coach in 1971, leading the panthers to play for the state championship that same year. In 1973, he was elected Superintendent, having his certificate signed by then-Gov. Jimmy Carter.

After sharing the biographies, the honorees or representative family members gathered at the front of the Historic Courtroom for some photos with the recently completed holiday decorations, posing with their bricks beside glittering lights. Downstairs, they partook in cake and punch with guests, sharing memories and smiles.

Roy Perren in concert at the Old Courthouse on the Square Dec. 6

Come to the Old Courthouse on the Square in Blairsville, Friday, December 6th beginning at 7 PM to hear Roy Perren in concert.

This is a special “Elvis” Christmas concert for everyone to enjoy.

This is a free event and open to the public. The doors will open at 6 PM.

Donations are accepted and appreciated for the upkeep of the old courthouse.



Roy Perren

Old Courthouse on the Square Holiday Events

Come to the old courthouse on the square to see a transformation of the inside of the courtroom.

The Union County Historical Society schedule of events:

December 6: Roy Perren in concert in the courtroom beginning at 7 PM

December 7: Pictures with Santa in the courtroom beginning at 2 PM

December 7: Christmas parade beginning at 6 PM after the tree lighting on the square

December 7: Woody Gap Band of Steel on the lawn before the tree lighting and the parade

December 13: North Georgia Symphony in the courtroom beginning at 7 PM

December 14: Creative voices in the courtroom beginning at 5 PM

December 20: John Cochran and the Cowhands beginning at 7 PM

These are all free events, and open to the public. Hope to see everyone there.