

2017 Review...continued from Page 1A



Hurricane Irma was one of several significant weather events to blow through Union County in 2017. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

event, but still a natural phenomenon, the Aug. 21 Total Solar Eclipse brought a breathtaking experience to Union and neighboring counties.

Thousands of people flocked to the area to view the rare eclipse, as Union County was lucky enough to have one of the longest viewing times within the Path of Totality at nearly two minutes.

Meanwhile, almost from the moment 2017 arrived, the Blairsville-Union County community bade farewell to longstanding community icons.

On Jan. 5, retired U.S.

Army Maj. Leon Davenport, 90, died following a period of declining health. Maj. Davenport, the former longtime CEO at Union General Hospital, was the most decorated war veteran in Union County history. He also is the namesake of the Veterans Building off Georgia Highway 515 in Blairsville.

Maj. Davenport was interred in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, later in the year.

Dr. George D. Gowder Jr., 86, died peacefully at his home on Wednesday, Jan. 11, after an extended illness.

Affectionately called

"Dr. George" by all who knew him, he and Blairsville-Union County were synonymous.

From the moment he arrived in 1959, after U.S. Sen. Richard Russell (D-GA) secured an early release for him from the U.S. Air Force to allow him to practice medicine in the underserved area of Union County, Dr. George fell in love with his new home.

Brenda Abercrombie dedicated more than 22 years of her life to public service in Union County, earning a solid reputation along the way as a calming voice in the center of any emergency.

Abercrombie worked as a night shift dispatcher at Union County E-911 Communications Center, and her colleagues thought of her as the mother of dispatch services.

So. Appalachian Modern Quilt Guild meeting

Come join us on the second Thursday of each month, 6 p.m. at Bless My Stitches quilt shop in Murphy, NC. Our guild serves the tri-state area of Western North Carolina, North Georgia and Eastern Tennessee. Come explore new ways to create modern quilts! Questions call Pam Howard - 828-835-6025.

Her untimely death on March 14 took many by surprise, as she had been recovering nicely from a November 2016 double lung transplant surgery.

Blairsville City Councilwoman Martha Cone, 78, passed away at Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on Monday, May 1, following a brief illness.

Her memorial service took place inside the sanctuary of her home church, First United Methodist of Union County, where she directed the church's Child Enrichment Center for more than 20 years.

Cone's sister Mary Ruth Cook and Jonathan Love both qualified for the vacant Blairsville City Council post once held by Martha Cone. Cook won the seat in the November Special Election.

The Union County community was in mourning



Also in 2017, John Hill of Union County Schools was tapped to take over as system superintendent to start the 2018-2019 school year. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

in mid-November following the loss of Ruth Ann Miner of the Suches community. The 79-year-old retired chairperson

of the Union County Elections Board passed away on Saturday, Nov. 18, following a brief illness.

DAR's Community Classroom visits Woody Gap School

The Community Classroom Committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution was established by the National Society in 2016 to enhance daughters' service to America. Through Community work Blairsville's Old Unicoi Trail Chapter, NSDAR, seeks to encourage Daughters to volunteer to provide additional support to teachers and children in classrooms and schools in their own communities throughout the nation. Again this year, your local Chapter Community Classroom committee has adopted Woody Gap School to provide financial support.

The committee chaired by Cayce Davenport Friedly of Blairsville presented a check to Woody Gap Principal Carol Knight \$250 for the student activity fund for field trips and other school activities. Additionally, two \$100 gift cards were made available for students' families for Christmas shopping. The chapter presented wrist pedometers to the school for use as student incentives for perfect attendance, grades, or good behavior. Members' contributions fund Community Classroom activities.

Old Unicoi Trail is pleased to support Woody Gap School, a K-12 school in the Suches community of Union



Left to right in front of historical school pictures: Cayce Davenport Friedly, Carol Knight and Sandie Harbuck.

County. This is the second year the Chapter has supported Woody Gap School. Chapter Treasurer, Sandie Harbuck of Blairsville states, "It is Old Unicoi Trail's privilege and obligation to help our local classrooms achieve their goals." Recently the Georgia Society Community Classroom chair Suellen Dennis of Marietta praised Old Unicoi Trail for its involvement in its community schools. The Chapter's 2016 Community Classroom project was the first from Georgia to be reported to the National

Society. The DAR was founded in 1890 to promote historic preservation, education and patriotism. Its members are descended from the patriots who won American independence during the Revolutionary War. Members of Old Unicoi Trail come primarily from Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in GA and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina. For information on membership or to attend a meeting as a guest, email oldunicoi-trail@gmail.com. NTJan3.18JSH

Ledford wins Paul Green Award



Brenda Kay Ledford

Brenda Kay Ledford received the Paul Green Multimedia Award from North Carolina Society of Historians for her blog, "Clay County Yore." The seventy-sixth annual awards ceremony was held at the Stone Center in North Wilkesboro, NC on November 11, 2017. A native of Clay County, Ledford has received the Paul Green Award 10 times for her books, blogs, and collecting oral history on Southern Appalachia.

For information: www.ncsocietyofhistorians.org or claycountyyore.blogspot.com.

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