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has been named "Transcendent" by its creator, Horsechief, and will face Butternut Creek in Meeks Park, as water is an important feature of Native American heritage.

All residents from around the region have been invited to attend the event, set to start at 10 a.m. on Sept. 21 in Meeks Park, and more public festivities are scheduled for Friday, Sept. 22.

Several local leaders will speak at the Thursday event, including Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, and guests from the visiting Native American nations will speak as well.

The statue will be unveiled following the speakers, and barbecue lunches will be provided free by Clayton Reeves' Full Throttle Ministries, though donations will be accepted and appreciated.

After lunch, running between about 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., the Eastern Band's Big Cove stickball team will play a game of stickball right in Meeks Park.

Then, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., dancers from the Chickasaw Nation will perform a stomp dance, and Full Throttle Ministries will provide another

meal to the public – again, donations welcome – at 5 p.m.

The Native Praise Choir will also be in attendance, singing traditional native hymns for the enjoyment and reflection of all, and the event will feature an outdoor church service starting at 6 p.m.

"To tell the story and how this all has come about from beginning to end, there's just no doubt that the Lord is all over it," said Kathie Tiger Garrett, a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and longtime We Are Still Here organizer.

Already, the occasion is being hailed as a once-in-a-lifetime event, as this year marks the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Turkeytown in Georgia, an historical marker that foreshadowed the Trail of Tears and the removal of all Native American tribes from the state.

"Not only was Daniel Horsechief the artist, but he has very significant ties to Georgia," said Jim Brown, a We Are Still Here founder. "His fourth great-grandfather signed the treaty that this is the bicentennial anniversary of."

"The artist Mark Williams, a Choctaw film

producer, has recognized the significance of what we're doing. You've got Beloved Man Jerry Wolfe coming down from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

"On top of that, you've got the heads of sovereign states who will be here in Georgia and in an official capacity, and I think that's significant. Yes, we've had one or two at a time, but we have never had a conglomeration like this."

As Brown stated, renowned Choctaw filmmaker Mark Williams has been following the story of We Are Still Here, and a piece of the documentary can be viewed on the Blood Mountain – We Are Still Here Facebook page.

The chiefs and representatives of the visiting tribal nations will reconvene with local officials on Friday, Sept. 22, for a round of golf to talk about the future of We Are Still Here, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. that same day, Meeks Park will host another public stickball game and stomp dance.

Also on Friday, Full Throttle Ministries will provide yet another free meal to visitors at Meeks Park from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., and the We Are Still Here organizers will hold another church service starting at 6 p.m.

Irma...from Page 1A

Irma.

Previously, the governor had declared a statewide emergency on Sunday, Sept. 10, ahead of Irma's Georgia landfall, and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris declared a local state of emergency in the morning hours of Sept. 12, during the early cleanup efforts from the storm.

Initially, the Union County EOC worked to coordinate emergency efforts before and during the storm, and then transitioned to checking on residents and organizing the cleanup of downed trees in the aftermath of Irma.

Many Union County first responders worked extra hours to address all the problems caused by Tropical Storm Irma, which had been downgraded from hurricane status before hitting Union County the evening of Monday, Sept. 11.

"When the storm first hit, we had all this emergency work that we needed to do," said Dyer, who is also fire chief and 911 director for the county. "We had to gain access to roads, get to people. We had several houses that were damaged.

"So, we had to make sure everybody was safe and that we could get to them all Monday night and all day Tuesday."

Much of the county was spared, but the western and southern quadrants sustained heavy winds that blew dozens of trees over, blocking roads and collapsing powerlines around Suches and western Union County.

As of Friday last week, the EOC had accounted for close to 200 downed trees and counting around the county, and for a good portion of Tuesday, Sept. 12, the Suches area was out of power with no cell service and had telephone landlines that were down.

Crews out of the Union County Road Department and Colwell Probation Detention Center responded right away to clear roads and debris, and the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC worked quickly to repair lines and poles as soon as they could safely do so.

The county fire department, sheriff's office, other public safety employees and community volunteers spent many sleepless hours in the service of keeping the county safe, both during the tropical storm and after it moved through the county, trying to make sure that no one was hurt or needed medical assistance due to or in the midst of the storm.

Schools were closed systemwide on Sept. 11 and Sept. 12, as Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield joined area superintendents in keeping kids home out of an abundance of caution during a statewide emergency.

More than 13,000 EMC customers were without power on Monday evening due to strong winds that toppled large trees into powerlines and poles, and most Union County damage was sustained in the Suches and Trackrock areas.

"In total, we had roughly 50 broken poles on our system," said BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms. "Despite all that, after 48 hours we had the number of meters without power down to 300.

"The effort displayed by our EMC employees was astounding. From the personnel in the call center to the operations personnel in the field, all pulled together to get the lights back on for our members.

"We had crews and staff working around the clock for three full days to get everyone restored. Our members can surely be proud of their workforce and its dedication to service."

Again, Union County was fortunate – Irma was at one point a Category 5 hurricane and claimed dozens of American lives, left millions without electricity and caused billions of dollars in damages.

Dangerous storms continue to form in the Atlantic Ocean, and readers should



Wayne and Judy Brinton in their driveway, which was blocked off to the road by a huge tree blown over by Irma's winds. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Union County Firefighter Doug Pruitt and Battalion Chief Richard Jones look over a Suches map while Ernie and Melissa Pruitt handle communications for the Suches Fire Department on Tuesday, Sept. 12. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



A downed power pole in Suches, being worked on by employees of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. Photo/Byron McCombs

stay tuned to the National Weather Service and National Hurricane Center for more up-to-date information on hurricanes, as the season lasts through November.



The Cruisers Car Club meeting will be September 28 at the Farmers Market at 6 p.m. Everyone bring a covered dish. Please plan on attending as we have some important issues to discuss. For info call 706-994-2500.