

# Tribal Nations...from Page 1A

Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, Victoria Vazquez of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and both Richard French and Beloved Man Jerry Wolfe of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

These individuals attended the event as leaders and representatives of their respective nations, and they were joined by tribal officials of the Seminole, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations of Oklahoma.

"We Are Still Here" began as a community outreach

program more than three years ago through Leadership Union and the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, and those involved in the initiative are proud of the outcome and community support that led to the Sept. 21 gathering of nations.

Tribal leaders and representatives met with local leaders that Thursday to exchange words of thanks and welcome, and each delivered specially prepared remarks in front of a captive audience in commemoration of the

homecoming.

Sharing the stage with the honored Native American guests were Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, District 8 State Rep. Matt Gurtler and District Director Joel Katz from the Office of U.S. Rep. Doug Collins.

John Chitwood of the *We Are Still Here* committee acted as emcee for the event, and *We Are Still Here* Chairman Jim Brown reminded everyone present that this community had not forgotten its original settlers, adding that he hoped the nations would return again and again to North Georgia.

## 2017 Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade October 14th



The 2017 Sorghum Festival Parade will be held Saturday, October 14, 2017 at 11 AM. This year's parade will be honoring our local farmers. The theme for this year's parade is "Thank A Farmer". This is a good opportunity for churches, organizations, businesses to show their appreciation to all our local farmers.

No application is needed to enter parade!

We will be giving cash prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd

place float winners. This is a great way for non-profit organizations, local charities and churches to raise funds. Business and personal floats are welcome to participate and will be given the choice of what local charity or organization they would like to donate prize money to, should they be chosen as a winner. (We will no longer be doing categories such as civic, church and commercial.)

Prize money is for pa-

rade floats only. (Floats will be judged on their creativity, amount of work involved, and how well it represents the parade theme.)

Prizes are as follows: 1st Place Float - \$300; 2nd Place Float - \$200; and 3rd Place Float - \$100.

Meeting place for the parade is still at the "Old Middle School Gym". Floats must be registered at entry of the ballfield and complete by 9 AM. Judging will begin at 9:30 AM.

We appreciate your continued support of The Blairsville Sorghum Festival. Please help us get the word out in the community about the chance to win prize money for local organizations, churches and charities. This is one way we are able to help the community and at the same time have a great parade for all those dedicated to the tradition of coming out to enjoy the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade.



PLEASE NOTE NEW PARADE ROUTE.

## Meeting...from Page 1A

so rightfully deserves.

With Union County Sheriff's Office deputies and Blairsville City Police officers filling the courtroom, McGregor received this honor humbly, thanking everyone for the recognition and for allowing him to continue to serve the community.

"It's been a great career, but it's not quite over yet," said a smiling McGregor. "As long as I can be useful, I plan on staying with it."

McGregor first began his life-long career as a public servant when he enlisted in the United States Navy in 1965 at the age of 17, where he was assigned to the artillery on the USS England DLD-22.

During his time in the U.S. Military, McGregor's assignment on the USS England was to assist in the control of all air operations into and out of Vietnam, including carrier based aircraft and bombers from Guam and Clark Air Bases in the Philippines.

Instead of reenlisting in the Navy and attending officer candidate school, McGregor came to Atlanta in March 1968. On Sept. 1 of that same year, McGregor was sworn in as an Atlanta police officer and his 50 years of work in law enforcement began.

McGregor spent his time as an Atlanta police officer working diligently against crime, ridding the streets of hard convicts, such as Dixie Mafia leader Kirksy McCord Nix. Nix, a suspect in the 1967 assassination attempt on McNairy County, Tennessee Sheriff Buford Pusser, and in the death of his wife, was charged with a contract murder hit on Frank Corso, a New Orleans grocery executive, in a break-in at Corso's home. He was sentenced to life without parole.

In 1987, while in prison, Nix was convicted of ordering a contract hit on a Federal judge and his wife, in Biloxi, Mississippi. He was convicted and spent an additional 22 years for his crime.

In 1972, McGregor left the big city life of Atlanta and moved his family to DeKalb County where he worked as a DeKalb County police officer for the next 27 years.

After nearly three decades of service, McGregor finally hung up his hat and retired - or so he thought - in



Allyson McGraw received recognition in the county meeting for her contributions to the community over the years. Photo/Lily Avery

1998. During that time, while visiting his mother in Union County, McGregor learned that Blairsville was looking to start its own police department.

A few months later that year, McGregor moved to the North Georgia Mountains and before long he and another retired DeKalb police officer, Steve Davis, founded the Blairsville Police Department, which McGregor ran for a brief period of time.

In 2011, the life of leisure called again and McGregor retired from the Blairsville Police Department, though it did not last long. That same year, McGregor became a Union County deputy sheriff and has worked for the department ever since.

According to the proclamation, "serving more than 50 years in public service is a reflection of the passion that David (McGregor) brought to his career and the communities he has served, and for that we honor him."

In conjunction with the proclamation, McGregor received another honor that night in the form of a plaque on behalf of the Union County Sheriff's Office and the county. It read:

"In appreciation for over 50 years of service, as a police officer and for service in the United States Navy from the Union County Sheriff's Office and all of Union County."

McGregor was not the only one honored last Thursday night. Long-time civil servant, Allyson McGraw also received

recognition during the meeting for her long-time service to the county extension service, her work with Relay for Life and countless other community activities and organizations.

Until her retirement in 1996, McGraw was employed by the University of Georgia Extension as a Family and Consumer Science Agent in Union County.

"She (McGraw) has had a profound impact on many lives, both young and old," said Commissioner Paris. "She has been an instrumental volunteer in many professional and civic organizations, some of these organizations include Pilot International, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Habitat for Humanity and Enotah CASA. "Allyson (McGraw) is known for her smile, her contagious enthusiasm, her can-do attitude, her compassion and kindness toward people and animals and her comfort, support and encouragement for anyone who needs it."

In honor of all that McGraw has done and continues to do for the county, Commissioner Paris proclaimed Saturday, Sept. 23, 2017 as Allyson McGraw Day in Union County.

"I ask all citizens to join me in recognizing McGraw's service to the community with the thousands of volunteer hours she has donated and her unselfish dedication, unending compassion and her willingness to help others in any situation," said Commissioner Paris.



L-R: Chief Joe Bunch, Victoria Vazquez, Richard French, Second Chief Louis Hicks, Beloved Man Jerry Wolfe, John Chitwood and Jim Brown. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Second Chief Hicks presented Kathie Tiger Garrett, herself a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and *We Are Still Here* organizer, with a special gift, a jewelry box, for her continued outreach to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Following the speaking portion of the day's gathering, the Big Cove Community stickball team of the Eastern Band of Cherokee demonstrated how the game was played, which acted as a perfect segue to the big event of the day - the unveiling of the 10-foot bronze statue recently installed in Meeks Park.

Renowned Pawnee Cherokee artist Daniel Horsechief introduced his sculpture, named "Transcendent," before tribal leaders and representatives pulled free the statue's covering to reveal a Native American stickball player captured mid-air as he jumps.

Horsechief described the subject of his statue as if he were leaping straight over the mountains to the foothills of Oklahoma, all the while rising above the negativity and harmful labels of the world.

Thursday's activities continued after the unveiling, with free meals from Full Throttle Ministries, followed by more stickball and a spiritual Stomp Dance demonstration led by representatives of the Chickasaw Nation.

Praise and worship church services were also big parts of the two-day affair in Meeks Park, and children of Union County Schools were treated to both stickball and stomp dance demonstrations on Friday, Sept. 22.

The majority of the *We Are Still Here* events occurred at the lower Recreation Field in Meeks Park, next to Butternut Creek, and the unveiling took place at the location of the statue, located on the hill above the parking lot across the street from the Recreation Field parking area.

For several years now, the *We Are Still Here* initiative has helped to raise local awareness of the lasting cultural contributions of the area's native inhabitants, and looking ahead, members of the group are hopeful that they can establish an annual event to bring home the tribal nations in perpetuity.

Those who missed the statue unveiling and many events organized around the historic gathering of nations in Georgia can watch the documentary being made by Choctaw filmmaker Mark Williams, which will likely debut later this year.

Stay tuned to the Blood Mountain - *We Are Still Here* Facebook page for more details.



The Big Cove stickball team demonstrating the game for the many area residents who attended the big event Thursday. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Pawnee Cherokee sculptor Daniel Horsechief, right, with his 10-foot bronze statue, as a Big Cove stickball player looks on. Photo/Shawn Jarrard