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healthcare, INCubator, metals and work-based learning.

Within those distinct areas are disciplines such as coding, welding and service, so that students, with help from community leaders, can focus on the varying aspects within specific industries.

After much discussion

within their particular program areas, all the stakeholders in the meeting came together at the end to give a report on their conversations.

One of the overarching takeaways of the CTAE Advisory Board group sessions was that every avenue of study, or "pathway," as the schools call them, needs more Work-Based

Learning opportunities.

Another takeaway from the October meeting was the need to continue stressing the importance of employability skills to current and future generations of students.

At the end of the meeting, it was clear that the movers and shakers of this community care about the future of both the students and the area.

Moving forward,



Business leaders, students, parents, teachers and administrators all gathered for the purpose of strengthening the relationships between all parties involved. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

students will surely have more chances to learn from the industries based right here

in Union County, and the community can look forward to greater growth from within.

Chick-fil-A Blairsville provided breakfast for the Oct. 5 advisory board meetings.

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dozens of craft vendors and enjoy some good, homemade Appalachian Sorghum syrup.

"As far as the games, we had tons of people come out the first weekend to participate," said Bridges. "And this second weekend, I'd say it's about the same. The biscuit eating and the horseshoe throwing are the two favorites of everyone that comes out to the festival.

"Normally, by the second weekend, we have to coax people to come and participate but this year it wasn't hard at all."

And while the festival may have turned off the lights and closed the gates by 5:30 p.m. each Saturday, the fun had only just begun. Each weekend of the festival, square dancing is held at the Old Middle School Gym on Saturday night for patrons to enjoy just a little bit more of what old-timey Appalachia had to offer.

"We had tons of people come out for the square dancing," said Bridges. "That gym was absolutely packed. The square dancing is always a big deal for the festival each year. People come together and laugh and have a good time, even if they don't know how to do the dance. That's what's so much fun about it. No one knows what they're doing but everyone has a blast. It's a lot of fun."

At the root of it, that is what the Sorghum Festival is all about, coming together as a group with people who might be your next door neighbor or someone you may never see again to smile, laugh and have a great time.

"Coming to the Sorghum Festival is like coming home again," said Bridges. "There are people that have come for years that don't even live here anymore. You can bring your kids and everyone can have a good time. It's one of those things that never gets old and you never stop enjoying yourself."

While this year's festival may be over, those in the



Stone Throwin' is an activity enjoyed by people of all ages. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Log Sawin' is never easy, though some people make it look so. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club have already started preparing for next year's festivities, booking bands, taking vendor applications and gearing up for the 49th year of the festival in 2018.

"We've already started planning," said Bridges. "We already have the applications out for the vendors for next year. As soon as the festival is over, I'll go to the website and start changing the dates for next year's event. We've already had to reserve tents and stuff like that for next year. It's really a never ending process."

Although putting together a festival of such a large size requires countless hours of work and effort and can oftentimes be difficult and taxing, Bridges, as well as all those who volunteer during the Sorghum Festival, say that it is worth every second.

"Doing this means a lot to, not only me, but to the people who come to this festival," said Bridges. "The Sorghum Festival keeps our heritage alive and it really does bring smiles to people's faces. It gives them something to look forward to and I think that's worth a whole lot."

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year because we had such a great time last time we came," said Josh Nix of Habersham County. "It was just me and my wife last year, but we decided to bring the kids since my boys are getting old enough to get into racing, dirt bikes, and all that stuff. Anything to get them outside is better than computers and video games is what I say. We're going to visit the (Sorghum Festival) later and just make a day out of it."

While the older generation relives its youth with muscle cars from the 50s, 60s, and 70s, a new generation of gearheads was coming of age by falling in love with six speeds, V-8s, and the shiny new paint jobs featured by the diverse selection of automobiles on display.

Some in attendance were members of local car clubs that brought multiple vehicles and have been doing so for years. One such club was "Classic American Rides" out



Who doesn't love a classic car? Photo/Todd Forrest

of Ranger in Gordon County that returned for the fifth year with eight vehicles and nine attendees. For others it's all about the fellowship and getting the opportunity to spend a beautiful day with fellow car lovers and other

like-minded individuals. "We've been coming over here for years," said Ed Ashe of Hayesville, North Carolina. "We always enjoy coming over here to visit with old friends and look at all of the cars."

Cancer Support Group

The Union County Cancer Support Group will host a monthly community cancer support group on the first Wednesday of each month beginning at 12:30-1:30 p.m. The sessions, which will be held at Coosa United Methodist Church, will focus on support and the sharing of experiences of life after diagnosis. All cancer diagnoses are welcome, active and in remission. Caregivers are also encouraged to attend. Pre-registration is preferred but not necessary.

For more information or to register, please call Pat Cook at 706-781-1908 or xp-cook@windstream.net.