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Chamber board members, past and present, with outgoing chamber president Cindy Williams.

and that includes me as well," said Williams on her decision to go to Cartersville. "It's a huge opportunity for me, and I said I would be so remiss if I didn't take this chance to do something and expand my horizons."

"But I will tell you, a big piece of me is going to stay here with you guys, and I'm going to take all of you with me to Cartersville. I could not have ever imagined the support group in this organization that I've had over the years, and you all have been so kind to give me credit for a lot of what's happened, but I tell you, it was not at all possible without all of you. The tremendous amount of support you've shown has just been phenomenal, and I can only hope that as I move into my new role, that I will find many people just the same in Cartersville."

Erik Brinke of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC read a statement written by board member Marcie Culpepper on behalf of the chamber board of directors.

"We are truly happy for you as you experience new endeavors in a new venue," read Brinke. "Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for pushing us forward and growing us into the present. You have nudged us forward, kept us focused, expanded our vision, and led us to grow our community while supporting businesses, and spent hundreds of hours behind the scenes nurturing, planning and executing events and programs to advance us, always keeping Blairsville's interests front and foremost."

"Cindy, you have represented us well - locally and statewide. Your enthusiasm is contagious. Your genuine concern for Blairsville and those around you is obvious. You are always on the upbeat and it is always a pleasure to listen when you speak with such clarity and precision. Yes, there will be a hole in our hearts as you depart, but just as a bird nudges its young one from the nest, we must give you your wings as you soar to new heights."

The Blairsville Scottish Festival Committee also presented Williams with ceremonial gifts, including a friendship cup, and Culpepper and fellow board member Rita Gunter prepared refreshments



Williams shares one of many hugs at her farewell party

and decorations for the occasion.

"Cindy is such a dear friend," said Gunter. "We've become real close in our relationship through the chamber board, and we've worked really well together, in events with the chamber and outside the chamber."

Mickey Cummings, manager of the Union County Farmers Market, said that Williams has been a tremendous asset to the community and to the Farmers Market.

"She's done a great job, she's helped us out at the Farmers Market and in my job as a County Agent," said Cummings. "She's just a great person, and I'm sorry to see her go. I think she'll do a great job, and I'm happy for her opportunity in Cartersville. We'll miss her."

Darren Harper, who is the program manager for the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority as well as a chamber board member, said whoever replaced Williams had big shoes to fill.

"Cindy has been like a mentor for me, in terms of, she sets the pace, she's the cheerleader," said Harper. "I'm on the board, and I've learned a lot from her in that respect. But also, Cindy never turns off - she's always on. And that's something I've tried to emulate in my job, because I know she's had us covered in terms of tourism, business retention, and all those things that are vital for me to keep Downtown going."

Larry and Jennie Williams, Cindy's mother and father, made sure to be there to celebrate her daughter's time of great change.

"This is heartwarming, it really is," said Larry Williams, looking out on all the people in attendance. "I feel like this is a testimony to what she's done over the years, how hard she's worked."

The Williams family hails from Fannin County, and Jennie Williams said that her daughter taking a job in Bartow County was bittersweet.

"I hate to see her move farther away, yet I think it is an opportunity, and we're very excited for her to have this opportunity," said Jennie Williams, and she thanked the people of Blairsville and Union County for taking her daughter in fresh out of college.

Williams was hired by the chamber board nearly a decade ago, and she in turn was responsible for hiring her own staff.

"As far as staff goes, we're grateful to have had her providing the vision for Blairsville-Union County, both the business aspect and the tourism aspect," said Tobie Chandler, tourism director for the chamber. "She's a great role model, and we're going to miss her a lot."

Those in attendance, the many friends of Williams, lined up to speak with her and hug her that day, for an occasion that will not be forgotten, much like Williams herself.

Seabees...from Page 1

four," said Richard Hoibraten, commander of Island X-3. "But for a Ball to be up here in the North Georgia Mountains, this is a huge deal, because most of them are in well-populated areas, like Central Missouri or Port Hueneme, California, on the coast, or Virginia, someplace like that."

"This being a small-town area, to have a Seabee Ball up here to bring the people out of the other towns like Atlanta, this will be a big event."

Georgia is home to three Navy Seabee Islands - Island X-1 is based out of Atlanta, Island X-2 is based out of Macon, and Island X-3, right here in the North Georgia Mountains.

The Seabee Ball on March 5 will serve all three Georgia Seabee Islands, and will be made available to Islands even outside of Georgia.

Tickets to the Seabee Ball will be \$45, with limited seating available at 150 tickets. Being a Ball, the event will be formal attire only, and Amazing Grace Catering will prepare the food for the Ball.

"This is a gala event for all military - it's the Seabee Ball, for all military to join in with us on March 5," said Hoibraten. "Further information will be disseminated at a later date."

Members of Island X-3 will release informational flyers by mid-February, and tickets will need to be purchased by February 20 in order to get an accurate count for catering.

Island X-3 was founded in April of last year, and the members first began talking about putting on a Seabee Ball in October.

"They hold a Ball every year, primarily on your bases where active duty Seabees are stationed," said Ed Crenshaw, secretary for Island X-3 and driving force behind organizing the March 5 Ball. "And there's nothing up here, so I said, maybe we can give it a shot, see if we can get any people up here. For us, a small Island, it's a pretty big deal, and we're going to try to draw a lot of people."

In the meeting, John Lemley brought in an antique steamer trunk from the World War II era, which would have been owned by a senior officer in a Seabee battalion - enlisted men made do with duffel bags or footlockers.

"The hangers in the steamer trunk are to hang up dress uniforms and basic uniforms," said Lemley. "When you're in a battalion out in an airstrip somewhere, that's your closet."

Lemley recently purchased the trunk at an estate sale, and he is donating the trunk to Island X-3 to be used in a silent auction at the Seabee Ball.

The Seabees came online in 1942, during World War II, so the antique steamer trunk is a real piece of history.

"You don't see these often," said Lemley, recalling the estate sale. "I knew it was a steamer trunk, and when I opened it up, it had the Seabee stickers all in it. It's a once in a lifetime - there are not that many around anymore, and if there are, they're in a museum

somewhere."

Any Navy Seabee veterans in the area are invited to attend the monthly meetings of Island X-3, which take place every second Friday at 1 p.m., in the Major Leon Davenport Veterans Center in Blairsville.

"Looking for all Seabees and anyone who served with the Seabees to join us in a newly established Island," reads the notice posted at the Veterans Center. "We are looking for Seabees from North Georgia, Western North Carolina and East Tennessee to join with us for fun and friendship."



John Lemley shows off a World War II-era antique steamer trunk to fellow Island X-3 members

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