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opportunity. The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a major tourist attraction and is vital to our local economy."

That much was evident in December as folks came from near and far, and many didn't want to leave during the Christmas Open House at the Farm and Heritage Center.

Several hundred Byron Herbert Reece fans turned out for the last event at the center until April.

It also was the inaugural Christmas event for the center and one that proved to be a success beyond expectations.

"There was an excellent crowd," Dr. Kay said. "To be honest, it took our breath away. We didn't expect this kind of turnout. It was incredible."

Noted Georgia author Terry Kay was on hand signing autographs and copies of his books.

Terry Kay has won four Georgia Author of the Year awards, most recently this year in the Short Story category for his book, *The Greats of Cuttercane*. Three of Kay's novels have

been made into Hallmark Hall of Fame movies, including *To Dance with the White Dog*, starring Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy.

His books were available for purchase, some brought their own copies of Terry Kay's books for him to sign.

The Gift Shop was swamped, as anything Reece flew off the shelves. Many visitors saw the event as an opportunity to purchase a unique Christmas gift for someone special in their lives.

The Gift and Craft Shop featured books by and about Reece and others on subjects pertinent to Appalachia; note cards; homemade and hand-crafted items including jewelry, baskets, soap, scarves, wooden bowls, pottery, ornaments, quilts, and Reece Farm embroidered towels and pillows.

The president of the Union County Historical Society, Bud Akins, paid a visit to the center as well.

"This center is a big part of Union County's heritage, as

was Reece and his works," Akins said.

Dr. Kay was literally blown away by the event turnout. The Reece Society was conservative in their expectations of the Christmas event.

"We're well aware that we're in need of additional volunteers," Dr. Kay said.

A Union County native, Hub Reece, who died at the age of 40, farmed, worked and cultivated the land in the Wolf Creek bottoms.

"The Mountain Poet" spent his free time reading the works of literary greats, and writing prose about the Mountain way of life.

During his short-lived career, Hub Reece, who attended, but did not graduate from Young Harris College, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, earned two Guggenheim awards, and served as writer-in-residence at UCLA, Atlanta's Emory University, and Young Harris College in Towns County.

In his lifetime, Reece had his works published in the local newspaper, and lat-

er went on to compose four books of poetry and two fiction novels. His work, which included *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*, was highly acclaimed, earning esteemed literary praise and national attention.

Other works included novels, *Better a Dinner of Herbs*, and *The Hawk and the Sun*.

Hundreds of unpublished Hub Reece poems still exist today, John Kay said.

Atlanta Constitution Executive Editor and later Publisher Ralph McGill once said that Reece was "one of the really great poets of our time, and one to stand with those of any other time."

Hub Reece was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his 1950 work entitled *Boys Down in Jericho*.

The Reece Farm and Heritage Center opened in June 2012 and became part of the Southern Literary Trail map in September 2012.

To volunteer to work at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center, call (706) 439-6000.

Protecting the Second Amendment

By: Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega)

Last December, after a long day of meetings, I could think of nothing more important than going home and hugging my kids tightly. The Sandy Hook Elementary tragedy was everywhere that day—TV, newspaper, social media and general conversation. When a parent sends a child to school or when a teacher goes to work, it is assumed both will return home safe and sound at the end of the day. That day, 26 families in Connecticut tragically lost their son, daughter or spouse.

I spent the next few days afterwards thinking about the



Senator Steve Gooch

motives of this deranged man and how this shooting could have been prevented, but what I never considered was limiting or completely taking away the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. Many gun control advocates argue that citizens no longer possess bayonets and there is no longer a need for a militia—and therefore, the Second Amendment is no longer logical. However, as a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, I firmly believe we need to protect this Constitutional right.

What makes a "gun free zone" truly free of any sort of weapon? A sign is posted on the entrances of schools, restaurants, shopping centers and many other public places, but unless each entrance has a metal detector and the manpower to enforce the rule, it is just that—a sign. These signs are not going to cause any individual compelled to harm to stop at the door and turn around. People who break the law don't care about state or federal code or school rules.

In what can only be called a knee-jerk reaction to "do something", President Obama released a list of executive actions and proposed Congressional actions in January. While some may be reasonable (expanding mental health programs and developing model emergency response plans for schools, churches and colleges) the majority are overreaching and a blatant violation of other Constitutional rights.

Gun control legislation isn't about guns—it's about control. The right to bear and keep arms is one of the most fundamental rights of our nation, and new restrictive legislation will only impact responsible and law-abiding gun owners. These proposed laws will have unintended consequences, such as strip searches or frisking to determine weapons possession, or a responsible gun owner with a concealed carry permit being unfairly penalized for accidentally being within a restricted area. Furthermore, with distance restrictions, who has the burden of enforcement? Is it the gun owner or building security?

Gun bills are not new to the Georgia General Assembly, but it is safe to assume that more bills have been filed in 2013 as a result of recent tragedies across the nation. Both pro-gun and gun control legislation has been introduced in both the Georgia House and Senate, including:

HB 26: The Georgia Constitutional Carry Act would allow anyone to carry a weapon without a license as long as the individual is not prohibited by law.

HB 27: The Restoring Gun Rights During State of Emergency Act of 2013 removes the governor's ability to restrict firearm carry during declared emergencies.

HB 28: Under this bill, places of worship would be removed from the list of unauthorized locations for weapons carry.

HB 29: This bill would allow guns to be carried on public and private college campuses, vocational school campuses and other institutes of postsecondary education.

HB 35: This bill allows local boards of education to designate one or more administrators in each school in the school system to possess and carry firearms, if the appointed

administrators have a carry license and attend a weapons safety course.

SB 33: This Senate bill is a complete ban on assault weapons, including firearms that are traditionally not considered "automatic" or "semi-automatic".

SB 34: Anyone who has a past drug or alcohol conviction would be banned from owning a firearm under this bill, although the broad message of the bill is to make it illegal for a "mentally incompetent" person to own a gun.

SB 74: Military personnel between the ages of 18 - 21 with proof of basic training would be able to apply for a weapons carry license under this bill. I am a co-sponsor of this bill because I believe that if you are adult enough to fight for our country and are trained in firearm safety, you should be able to possess a firearm.

SB 93: I am also a co-sponsor of SB 93, which would allow silencers to be used when hunting wildlife. This bill is a product of the wild hog issue that Georgia farmers have on their property. The silencer must be registered and anyone found in violation of any provision would have hunting privileges suspended for three

years. **SB 101:** This bill would allow the weapons carry licenses of law-abiding, out-of-state individuals, to be recognized in Georgia.

At this time, it is not known which, if any, of these bills will be heard in committee or placed on the calendar for a vote. We should have the opportunity to protect ourselves and our families without destroying the core principles on which our nation was founded.

This week, I was pleased to welcome several groups at the State Capitol, including Pastor Michael Rogers and members of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Leadership Forsyth, the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Association of Realtors. I was also incredibly honored to have one special individual in the Senate chamber with me one day—my dear mother.

I will be continuing to meet with my constituents throughout District 47 in the forthcoming weeks. Please come on out to Blairsville Restaurant in Union County on Saturday, February 16 at 8 a.m. All are welcome!

Please feel free to contact my office at any time to talk about pending legislation or to address other concerns in our district—my door and phone lines are always open!^[NFeb13,4.COLL]

Chamber of Commerce events

For details and future events see events calendar at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com

Wednesday, February 13	
2 pm	Tour Misty Mountain Model Railroad
6 pm	Puppy Love Special - The Copperhead Lodge
Thursday, February 14	
8 am	Mountain Networking Referral Group Meeting-Cooks Country Kitchen
12 pm	Rotary Club of Union County - Cadence Bank
5 pm	Valentines Dinner - Brasstown Valley Resort
6 pm	Puppy Love Special - The Copperhead Lodge
6 pm	Union County Lions Club - Steve's Steakhouse
6:30 pm	Shape Note Singing - Old Historic Courthouse
Friday, February 15	
2 pm	Tour Misty Mountain Model Railroad
2 pm	Annual Sweetheart Arts & Crafts Show-Brasstown Valley Resort
Saturday, February 16	
2 pm	Tour Misty Mountain Model Railroad-16 Misty Mountain Lane
Monday, February 18	
12 pm	Blairsville Kiwanis Club Monthly Meeting-Steve's Steakhouse
6 pm	Presidents Day Special - Copperhead Lodge
Tuesday, February 19	
8 am	Tri-State Business Women's Meeting - Cooks Restaurant
11:45 am	Annual Membership Meeting & STAR Presentation-Union County Community Center
Wednesday, February 20	
2 pm	Tour Misty Mountain Model Railroad
2 pm	Friends of Union County Library Meeting-NGTC Boardroom