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"We're expecting about 500 or 600 kids, so get out there early," he said. "It's a big time for the kids, and we expect them to have lots of fun."

Conley urges folks to get to the event early, as the helicopter will conduct its fly-over at precisely noon.

Oh, and don't come to this event empty-handed.

"The entire event is free, but, we're asking each family to bring at least two, non-perishable food items to donate to the local food bank," he said. "It's a big event, and we believe we can collect a lot of items to help those that are

less fortunate."

Conley also said to let folks know that it's okay to come to this event hungry.

There will be vendors on site who will be selling food and drinks at a reasonable price.

And best of all, prizes will be awarded, Conley said.

Those prizes include an Xbox, a Kindle Fire, iPod Shuffles, Furbys, Cash, Candy and more.

For more details, go to Union County Recreation's Website - unioncountyrecreation.com and peruse the site. Conley says "be there or be square."

Alumni return to Mountain Education Charter High School



Recently, two alumni returned to MECHS to visit with current students and share their college experiences at the annual Alumni Seminar. This event is supported by GACHE whose mission is to increase post-secondary enrollment. MECHS has received the GACHE grant for three years and uses the funds to hold events like this one to inform and encourage students about the benefits of attending

college after graduating from high school. Many students think that college is out of their reach financially and that they have to have a high GPA to consider that option after high school. However, with the availability of the HOPE Grant and possible funds from the Federal Pell Grant, all students should consider getting more education after earning a high school diploma. Students who don't want to go to a 2 or 4-year college, can attend a technical college and earn a certificate or diploma. In today's economy, they will increase their chances of making a better salary. Additionally, by 2020 over 60% of the jobs in Georgia are going to require more than a high school diploma. Therefore, there won't be many jobs available for those without additional training.

Kim Lanier, who has been attending NGTC, shared

her advice with her former classmates on Thursday night. Since she graduated last year, she remembers some questions she had and what concerned her about going to college. Now she is ready to transfer to Truett-McConnell to study nursing. She has made the transition from high school to college successfully and reassured those students who attended this seminar that they can also.

Jacob Chambliss, another 2012 MECHS graduate, also returned to share his experiences. Jacob's goal is to eventually join the military as an officer. To help him reach that goal, he is currently attending NGTC until he earns 30 credits to transfer to North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega where he will join the ROTC program. He shared some of his experiences as a first year college student trying to balance a job and studies and gave some helpful

advice about how to adjust to college.

Both alumni offered words of wisdom and inspiration to make it clear to students that they have opportunities as long as they set goals and ask for help when needed. MECHS is very proud of Kim and Jacob, and we wish them continued success. As part of the MEC family, we hope they will visit often.

Mountain Education Charter High School is an accredited night high school for students who want to earn their high school diplomas. It is a self-paced, mastery-based program, which allows students to attend between the hours of 4 and 9:30 PM on Monday through Thursday. Students can choose between two sites, Blairsville or Fannin. For information, please call (706) 745-9575 Blairsville campus or (706) 632-2081 Fannin campus. N(Mar20,21)S CA

Honoring District 51 at the State Capitol

One of the best parts about serving in the Georgia State Senate is the ability to honor groups and individuals in the Senate chamber. I am proud to represent District 51 at the State Capitol, and I am even more proud of the efforts that keep our district one of the best places to work and raise a family in Georgia. While the work we do in the Senate is great, it pales in comparison to the way each of you represents the pride and labors of our communities.

Those honored in the Senate chamber are presented with resolutions that commemorate the awards or work performed by the group or individuals being recognized. Some resolutions are co-sponsored by several senators, especially those recognizing the efforts of a statewide program or initiative. Each group or individual is given a few minutes at the podium to tell the chamber more about their work or to thank the Senate for the acknowledgement before taking an official photo with the Lieutenant Governor and the sponsoring senator(s)—which you can view on the Georgia State Senate website (www.legis.ga.gov) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/GeorgiaStateSenate).

This past week, I was honored to recognize two groups from District 51 with Senate resolutions. The Dahlonega Women's Club was honored with SR 437 for their 100th anniversary and their dedication to individual and community improvement. Neil McBrayer, a Forsyth County school bus driver, was honored with SR 120 for being ranked as the fourth safest driver during the National School Transportation Association's School Bus Driver International Safety Competition.

Of course, one of the most important tasks performed by the Georgia State Senate is analyzing and passing legislation that benefits the

livelihood of all Georgians. Now that we are past Day 30 of the 40-day legislative session, the Senate is only reviewing and voting on House bills. All Senate bills that did not pass the chamber before Day 30 will not be considered again until the 2014 legislative session.

The following House bills passed the Senate last week:

HB 154 changes provisions relating to awards and benefits of workers' compensation by providing a limitation period on medical benefits, changing reimbursement structures for mileage charges, and increasing the compensation benefits for total disability and temporary partial disability.

HB 198 sets the framework for the licensing of navigators who will provide insurance advice and guidance to uninsured individuals and groups seeking health insurance coverage under a health insurance exchange. HB 198 lists the requirements for a navigator's license and prohibits a navigator from soliciting a person or business currently insured under an existing health benefit plan.

HB 202 increases the cost limit for value engineering studies performed by the Department of Transportation. Value engineering studies are important because the results assist in improving project efficiency, safety and functionality. This bill excludes interstates and freight corridors from Congressional balances.

HB 234 requires clear notifications for automatic renewals of service contracts. This bill applies to any seller that sells, leases, or offers to sell or lease any service to a consumer under a service contract.

HB 254 would allow drivers to produce proof of required minimum motor vehicle liability insurance coverage in either paper or electronic format. Under HB 254, drivers would be able to provide proof of coverage by pulling records up on their smart phones or tablets.

HB 487 would transfer video poker machines into an operator-run, computer-networked video lottery program regulated by the Georgia Lottery. HB 487 is intended to be a crack-down on illegal gambling and to provide funds for HOPE scholarship. The bill would increase enforcement and penalties for illegal coin gambling but does not legalize any additional gambling.

It's hard to believe we are already looking towards the end of the 2013 legislative session. There is only one more week until Day 40 on March 28, and it is very rare that we Sine Die before Easter. There are still lots of good bills left to be heard, meaning it will be very busy in the upcoming days. Please contact my office at any time if I can help with information about a bill, district concerns or even a visit to the State Capitol.

Sen. Steve Gooch serves as Chairman of the Transportation Committee. He represents the 51st Senate District which includes Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Lumpkin, Union and White counties and portions of Forsyth and Pickens counties. He may be reached at 404.656.9221 or via email at steve.gooch@senate.ga.gov. N(Mar20,22)gg



Steve Gooch, State Senator

Woody Gap Student Council yard sale



The Woody Gap School Student Council is planning their annual yard sale and bake sale on March 22nd and 23rd. We need your help! If you have any household items, toys, tools, furniture (no clothes please) or anything that you wish to donate for the yard sale, please contact Althea Cantrell at 747-2401 Ext 1619. All proceeds go to help WG Student Council sponsor school and community projects. N(Mar20,A)CA

UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Every Monday:		
Garden Tours	GMREC	9 am - 1 pm
Boy Scouts #101	United Methodist Ch	7 pm
Children's Story Time	Union County Library	11 am
Kiwanis Club	Steve's Steakhouse	Noon
Civil Air Patrol	Blairsville Airport	6:30 pm
Every Tuesday:		
Sweet Adelines	United Methodist Ch	6:30 pm
Get Fit	First UMC	5:15 pm
Every Thursday:		
Masonic Luncheon	Cooks Restaurant	11:30 am
Rotary Club	Cadence Bank	Noon
Get Fit	First UMC	5:15 pm
Fourth Tuesday of each month:		
Misty Mtn Quilt Guild	Blairsville UMC	12:30
Cub Scouts Trp. #101	UC Elementary School	7 pm
Eastern Star #304	Location not listed	7:30 pm
VFW Post #7394	78 Old Blue Ridge Hwy.	11:30 am
Compassionate Friends	Grinds & Glazes	Noon
Mtn. Sounds Dulcimer	Sr. Citizens Center	1:30-3:30 pm
Fourth Wednesday of each month:		
No activities listed		
Fourth Thursday of each month:		
UT Homebuilders	YH College	7 pm
Lions Club	Steve's Cookie Jar	6 pm
Cruisers Club Meeting	Sr. Center pavilion	6 pm
Fourth Friday of each month		
Eastern Star #471	Location not listed	7:30 pm
Fourth Saturday of each month:		
Youngcane Lodge #597	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm