

BOE approves high tunnel for agriculture center

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In the March meeting of the Union County Board of Education, the board accepted the donation of a seasonal high tunnel, valued at \$3,200.

Presenting the donation was Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Executive Director Frank Riley, with support from Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings.

“A hoop house or a high tunnel is just a greenhouse that the sides roll up on,” said Riley. “It’s unheated – it’s just a covered garden, is what it is. You plant on the ground, but you can roll the sides down

when it’s cold, and it keeps (crops) warmer.”

Cummings spoke that evening on behalf of the Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District, which, along with the nonprofit Chest/Chatt RC&D, was responsible for the high tunnel donation.

“(Riley) approached me probably a year ago about donating a hoop house to the Farmers Market that we could use to demonstrate and extend our agricultural season at the Farmers Market,” said Cummings. “We’ve got the land, but we don’t have the labor, we don’t have water hookup and that sort of thing. So our idea was, and I

suggested to Frank, that we put this at the new facility, out at the Ag Center.

“The Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District has put money with this, \$1,000, and Frank is donating the rest of it from the (Chest/Chatt RC&D) Council. And it’s kind of selfish on my part, because what we’re trying to do at the Farmers Market – as you know, we’re basically open from June until the end of October.

“If we had these hoop houses out in the county, they’re so technologically advanced – it’s a really simple thing, but they’re so advanced that it would allow us to open

up the Farmers Market a month earlier, and keep it open a month later during the year, if our farmers would use it.”

The goal, according to Cummings, would be to have FFA and agriculture students work in the high tunnel, which will be installed at the new Union County Schools Agricultural Science Center.

“Our idea is to put it in the hands of the kids in the school system, let them use it, and let them then take whatever they grow, bring it to our Farmers Market, and we would allow the FFA kids to sell it, and we wouldn’t charge them because it’s like a class project,” said Cummings.

Riley also went over a program where students can earn money for helping the Chest/Chatt RC&D sell the high tunnels, with a dual goal of spreading the use of high tunnels throughout the North Georgia Mountains, as well as getting kids “back in the dirt.”

Also in the meeting, Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe presented a proclamation from Gov. Nathan Deal proclaiming March 14 through March 18 as School Board Appreciation Week.

“Educating our youth is the key to our state’s continued prosperity and to opening



Frank Riley presents a donation of a seasonal high tunnel to the Union County Board of Education on March 15, 2016

the doors of opportunity for every citizen,” read the proclamation. “Georgia’s continued growth requires dedication to excellence in our education system, as well as a commitment to providing trained teachers and vital resources to all schools.

“Georgia’s boards of education work together with school systems, parents and community leaders to set a vision for their district in which students have the best chance to learn and become productive contributors of our society.

“The men and women

serving on school boards in communities across our state have demonstrated a strong commitment to quality public education by securing adequate resources, promoting academic standards and fostering partnerships within the community.

“Therefore I, Nathan Deal, governor of the state of Georgia, do hereby proclaim March 14-18, 2016, as School Board Appreciation Week in Georgia, and do further commend all school board members for their dedication to the wellbeing of our youth and the future of this great state.”

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one genre or audience.

“I always kind of tell people we’re American Rock ‘n’ Roll, and if you think about it, that brings to mind a lot of different styles and sounds,” said Whipkey. “Like singer/songwriter, maybe Alternative Country, Country Rock, and we also do more straight ahead Rock.”

Yoakam and Whipkey are both promoting recently released albums on this tour – Yoakam with “Second Hand Heart” and Whipkey with “Underwater.”

This will be Whipkey and his band’s 18th or 19th performance with Yoakam since last year, and they have been more than happy warming crowds up for the man who pioneered “hillbilly music.”

“When you’re an opening band, you can go two routes,” said Whipkey. “You can go the route of being just like the person you’re working with, or being something kind of different. And I wouldn’t say we’re totally different.

“I know on this tour, on these shows we’ve been doing with Dwight, a lot of his newer stuff is more in line with some of the things that we do, more kind of like the Pop Rock driven, Byrds-y, kind of Big Star almost sounding stuff. That’s more up our alley, and his newer records have that harder edge, Rock feel to them.”

Whipkey has recorded numerous albums since kicking his music into gear in 2000, and also last year, his band opened up for iconic Rock group Heart, which proved to be yet another milestone in his and his bandmates careers.

“It’s the kind of level of performing that you dream of when you start out,” said Whipkey on touring with Yoakam and playing with Heart. “It’s inspiring, and it’s awesome to work with them, because they’re great people to work with, but also, once you step foot in that world and you see it firsthand, you don’t want to leave, so you work harder to get there yourself. You want to



Dwight Yoakam

be the boss in that situation.”

Refreshingly, 16 years in and Whipkey is still concerned with the integrity of his art, his music, and he’s cultivated an aesthetic he likens to “Midwestern Rock.”

“Coming from Omaha, we’re in the middle, and we don’t have to please The Suits anywhere,” said Whipkey. “When we were getting started, it wasn’t about trying to get on this big label or impress this big magazine. We just made this music because we were compelled to, and we wanted to make it and play it for our friends and our other friends that made music.

“It was winter, it was cold, it was in the middle of

the country, and we drew from all the sounds around us, and it kind of comes together as our own sound. There’s definitely that aesthetic, and there’s a hard work ethic here. We’ve put out nine or 10 albums at this point. Some people might give up after not hitting it after the second one, but that was never our intention, never my intention – it was always to keep writing the best songs that I could write, and challenging myself to make a better album the next time.”

Tickets for the April 2, 7 p.m. show are \$46, and can be purchased online at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds website, or at the show as supplies last.

Windstream...

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team is dedicated to getting it right for the people who trust us to provide critical communications services,” Berkshire said in the statement. “We know our communities because we live and work there, and we take a great deal of pride in serving our friends and neighbors.”

While Congressman Collins wasn’t pleased with Windstream’s response to his initial public inquiry from Feb. 11, calling it “more of the same,” Thomas doubled down on his previous letter, making the following statement in the March 21 release:

“Berkshire’s appointment is further evidence of Windstream’s strong commitment to Georgia. Since 2014, Windstream has invested more than \$80 million in its broadband infrastructure throughout Georgia and expects to invest an additional \$38 million in 2016 to provide faster speeds, improve reliability and ‘future-proof’ the core network.”