

'Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D alive and well'



The Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council met with program partners for the quarterly council meeting at the Union County Farmers Market on March 22, 2016

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County played host to the quarterly council meeting of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D on Tuesday, March 22.

The meeting took place inside the Canning Plant at the Union County Farmers Market, and was followed by a lunch from Jim's Smokin' Que provided by Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, who welcomed council members and special guests before giving a brief history of the market and canning plant.

RC&D stands for Resource Conservation and Development, and is a program that was created "in the Agricultural Act of 1962 to assist local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment and improve the standard of living for all citizens," according to the program website, www.chestchattred.org.

Frank Riley, executive director of the Chest/Chatt RC&D, updated those present on the current state of the RC&D.

"I'm very happy to report that your Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council is alive and well, and is on the road to a great recovery in 2016," said Riley.

According to Riley, the National RC&D program was defunded several years ago by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and since then, times have been "lean and uncertain" for the Chest/Chatt RC&D, though the program is "now on the upswing to more financial stability."

Riley went over a report that highlighted the various programs that currently benefit each of the 13 counties that are involved in financially supporting the Chest/Chatt RC&D.

On top of the Chest/Chatt RC&D's great work as the Georgia Firewise Liaison in overseeing 20 Firewise communities in Towns County alone, the Chest/Chatt RC&D

was asked by the U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester "to try to spread the Fire Adapted Communities concept up the Appalachian Mountains from Towns County to Virginia to help reduce the risk of wildfires in and around U.S. Forest Service lands."

This venture has developed into a partnership known as the Appalachian RC&D Coalition, consisting of the Chest/Chatt RC&D, as well as three RC&Ds in North Carolina and one in Virginia. The coalition will work to spread FAC and Firewise programs from Georgia to Virginia.

Another program near and dear to Chest/Chatt RC&D comes through a grant from the state, which is allowing Riley to donate a 20 feet by 16 feet high tunnel to each of the member counties of the council.

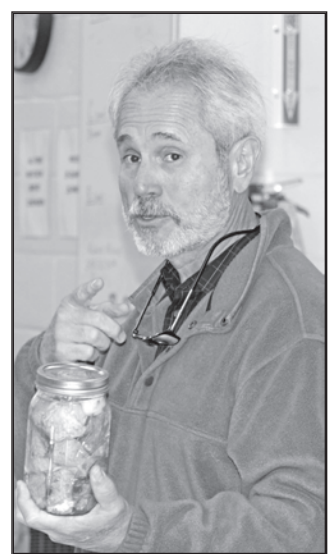
The Chest/Chatt RC&D currently serves 13 counties: Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Chest/Chatt RC&D, aside from its range of programs, is the number of partners involved in carrying out the mission of the RC&D.

Thanks to its many partners, the Chest/Chatt RC&D is capable of offering a wide variety of outreach programs, including but not limited to forestry, organic farming, Firewise initiatives, wildfire mitigation, alternative farming, seasonal tunnel houses, rural development (revolving loan program), soil and erosion projects, farm energy audits, soil health and much more.

In the March 22 quarterly meeting, council members entertained updates from the RC&D's partners. Representatives from U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson's office, from U.S. Sen. David Perdue's office, and from the office of U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, all gave updates from D.C.

Other important partners spoke in the meeting, including Blue Ridge District Ranger Andy Baker of the U.S. Forest Service, Coosa District



Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings holds up a jar of canned pork while explaining to special guests the ins and outs of the Union County Canning Plant

Manager Ken Masten of the Georgia Forestry Commission, Executive Director Brent Dykes of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Assistant State Conservationist Jack Lewis of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Planning Director Adam Hazell of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission.

The Chest/Chatt RC&D Council is made up of members from each county, with Commissioner Paris and Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings representing Union County, and Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and 911 Mapping Director Marty Roberts representing Towns County.

The remaining members of the council are from surrounding Soil and Water Conservation Districts, including the Blue Ridge Mountains SWCD, Broad River SWCD, Hall County SWCD, Stephens County SWCD and the Upper Chattahoochee River SWCD. The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission has representation on the council, and there is a Member Emeritus as well.

Just before the meeting adjourned, Cummings walked those in attendance through the processes and capabilities of the canning plant.

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defense and prosecution each took two of the six evaluator ballots.

"In the first round against Jonesboro High School, our evaluators in both courtrooms commented that our two teams were very evenly matched," said Mock Trial Coach April Krieger. "That's quite a compliment considering Jonesboro went on to the final round and won."

In the second round, Union met Lowndes County, one of the largest schools in

Georgia with an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students. Emma Crosby received the Outstanding Attorney Award versus Lowndes.

Canaan Dyer was named Outstanding Witness for his performance against Lowndes County. The Defense Team Award from Lowndes was given to Clay Pickelsimer. Lowndes also recognized Kat Capstick with the Prosecution Team Award.

Awards during the first round went to Sage Royston

for Outstanding Attorney, Matt Peney for Outstanding Witness and Defense Team Award from Jonesboro, and Capstick for Prosecution Team Award from Jonesboro.

"In both rounds, we were only edged out on the ballots by a handful of points, and in some cases, only one or two points," said Mock Trial Coach Amy Payne. "What these students have accomplished this season is amazing. Going up against teams from AAAAA and AAAAAA schools and staying poised and focused shows how driven our team was no matter who they faced."

Royston, a senior and Prosecution Team Lead Attorney, was also recognized for her four years of participation in Mock Trial.

Defense Team Lead Attorney senior Brooke Hamby was recognized for passing the Georgia Junior Bar Exam with honors. Hamby scored above a 90 percent on this challenging exam while participating in the 2015 Law Academy this past summer.

The team would like to thank the following businesses and community members for their support during this season: United Community Bank, Wesley Williams, Stephanie McConnell, Michael and Kimberly Hamby, Greg Owenby, F. Earl Wiggers, Kris-Ann Poe, Peggy Caldwell, Stephany Zaic, Martin Welch, David Barrett, Beth Martin and Paul Stanley.

Lions' White Cane Days are April 22 and 23

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

It's time to mark your calendars, Union County residents – the annual White Cane Days will be taking place on Friday, April 22, and Saturday, April 23.

To commemorate the days, which are set aside each year as a special time of fundraising for the Lions Club, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris met with Union County Lions Club President Gene Little to sign a proclamation on Thursday, March 24.

"Lion's International, with over 1.35 million members in the free world, has been dedicated to serving sight for over 60 years," according to the proclamation. "The Union County Lions Club has been outstanding in its community in helping the needy with sight problems through the use of its White Cane donations. The Union County Lions Club has invited its neighbors to share in saving vision by donating to its White Cane Days event."

Participating in White Cane Days is easy – just look for Lions Club members, with their gold vests and collection buckets, outside of popular restaurants and businesses that Friday and Saturday.

One-hundred percent of the money collected on White Cane Days goes specifically toward funding eye surgeries for those who can't afford them, including treatments for glaucoma and cataracts.

Once collected, donations are turned over to the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation, which started in 1949 with a single sight-saving surgery, and now funds more than 350



Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris with Union County Lions Club President Gene Little following the signing of the White Cane Days proclamation

surgeries a year across the state.

"We normally get somewhere around \$3,000 to \$3,500," said Little. "And for each dollar contributed, the people get \$5 worth of services. So if we get \$3,000, that's the same as \$15,000."

For those who normally give to charitable causes, a donation to the Union County Lions Club during White Cane Days is an excellent way to maximize charitable giving, taking into account the \$5 of services for every \$1 of donation.

Many are familiar with the little white canes handed out by Lions on White Cane Days, and the long history behind the Lions Club tradition of aiding those without sight, dating to when Helen Keller in 1925 challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."

"Throughout the world, the long white cane is used by people who are blind or visually impaired as a tool for

safe and reliable navigation," according to the Lions International website. "The white cane is a symbol of the user's skills and talents, mobility and independence. It also allows the sighted person to recognize that the user is visually impaired."

Outside of White Cane Days, Lions raise funds throughout the year to help local people to afford glasses. Partnering with ophthalmologists of Union County, Lions Club volunteers are able to secure a pair of glasses for \$110 – \$130 for bifocals – with the remainder of the cost being covered by the participating eye doctor's office.

Those looking to become more involved with the Union County Lions Club can attend the bimonthly meetings, which take place each month on the second and fourth Thursdays at 6 p.m., at Steve's Steakhouse Cookie Jar Restaurant in Blairsville.

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discussion. And even though the sisters were Pages for the speaker, that did not preclude them from delivering messages and running errands for a large number of different representatives.

"The first time I took a note, I was nervous that I'd give it to the wrong person," said Shae Carroll, who attends the fifth grade at Union County Elementary. "And I did that a few times, but I got the right person mostly."

Shae's favorite part of the process was delivering all those messages, which made for quite a long day considering that the Crossover Day session went to nearly 10 p.m.

As for Channa, she said she enjoys playing a role in the legislative process year after year.

"My favorite part is when there's that one representative and they're about to vote," said Channa. "They ask you if you'll wait just a minute, they'll tell you to click 'yes' or 'no' and they let you vote for them. You can just press the button for them, so that's pretty cool, being able to do that."

Following graduation next year, Channa said she plans to attend law school to become an attorney, and though Shae has a ways to go before she can qualify, she said she might one day run for president after getting a glimpse of government in action.

Highlights from their trip during the 2016 legislative session include meeting with Gov. Nathan Deal, seeing the gold dome of the State Capitol up close and personal, and of course, being Pages for Speaker Ralston.

Both Channa and Shae said that they look forward to being Pages again next year, which they've been able to do in large part thanks to their father, Shannon Carroll.

Carroll is a state trooper with the Georgia State Patrol's Executive Protection Unit. He has been Rep. Ralston's personal bodyguard since Ralston was elected Speaker of the House, and previously, Carroll worked the security details of both former governors Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue.

"I enjoy my daughters being there with me," said Carroll. "I love watching them work out there with the legislators. I see the legislators every day, and they'll come up to me and ask, 'Are these your daughters?' They really take them under their wing and take care of them."

"I just love them being there, getting to experience what I experience every day, some of the things I get to see and do, and them meeting



Channa Carroll on the floor of the Georgia House of Representatives



Shae Carroll paging for Rep. John Meadows, Chairman of the House Rules Committee, on Crossover Day

the people that I'm working with."

Carroll and his father, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll, hold the honor of

being the only father and son in the state to have attended and graduated police academy together.

Kappa Alpha news and events



(L-R): Kappa Alpha President Ceil Jordan, UC Commissioner Lamar Paris, Marilyn Cook and Barbara Delli-Veneri

The members of Kappa Alpha, a chapter of Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, met on March 22, 2016, at the home of Barbara Delli-Veneri. Hostess Marilyn Cook introduced our guest, Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris, who spoke about SPLOST. SPLOST started back in the 1980s in Georgia and is a useful tool in managing the affairs of the counties.

It is a part of the sales tax and has many regulations and guidelines. Mr. Paris noted some of the recent SPLOST projects such as the Farmers' Market, the library and Senior Center expansions and the Community Center. He urged that all Union County citizens support our community

by buying locally whenever possible; this not only helps our local businesses but helps keep our property taxes lower.

The chapter is looking forward to our annual Founder's Day celebration and Installation of Officers in late April. Also, sister chapter Iota Iota will be holding their annual Garage Sale at the Civic Center the first weekend of May.

Beta Sigma Phi is an international friendship organization of women of all ages and backgrounds. Our motto is "Life, Learning, Friendship" and we focus on the aspects of social, service and culture. Kappa Alpha has been an active member of our community for 25 years.