

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

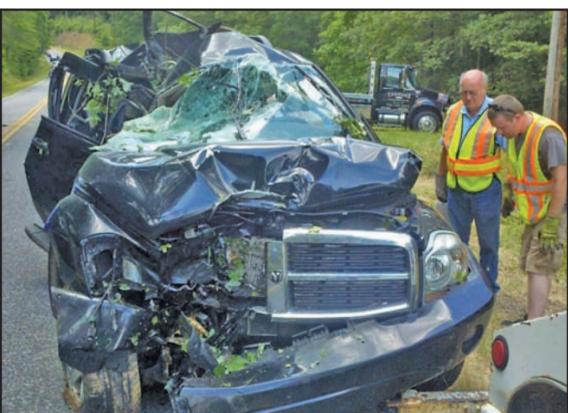
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Two lifeflighted in separate Union wrecks



Left, a black Dodge SUV involved in a one-vehicle crash on Georgia 180; right, emergency workers rescue a woman trapped in a crash at Pat Colwell and U.S. 129. Photos/UCSO Sgt. Josh Berry and Lowell Nicholson

By Charles Duncan
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The Fourth of July Week is off to a bad start on Union County roads.

The Georgia State Patrol is investigating serious crashes that happened on Sunday and Monday in Union County, the patrol's spokesman said. The first crash happened about 1:30 p.m. Sunday on Georgia 180, patrol spokes-

man Gordy Wright said. Sean Michael Bartholomew, age 27 from Blairsville, fell asleep at the wheel while driving a black Dodge SUV, ran off the road and struck two poplar trees. Bartholomew

refused medical treatment. His passenger, Amber Nichole Spence, age 20 from Marble, NC, was lifeflighted to Erlanger, Wright said. The accident happened just

See *Crashes*, 3A

Rain threatens Union Fourth of July celebrations

By Charles Duncan
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Only one thing could spoil the fun as Union County celebrates Independence Day – the elements.

The National Weather Service is calling for a 60 percent chance of rain as the community celebrates the Fourth of July on Thursday from Vogel State Park to Lake Nottely Marina to Suches and later, Meeks Parks.

Weather permitting, the fun begins on the Fourth at 8:30 a.m. at Vogel State Park.

The second oldest state park in Georgia celebrates our independence with a flag-raising ceremony, bicycle parade, pedal boat races, sandcastle building competition, watermelon eating, sack races, egg



tosses and greased pole climbing. Parking is \$5.

At 11 a.m., again, weather permitting, the annual Independence Day Boat Parade is scheduled at Lake Nottely Marina.

Anyone with a boat is welcome to line up at the

See *Fourth*, 2A

Jordan brings his class and smile to Union County

By Joe Collins
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Atlanta Braves All Star outfielder and Atlanta Falcons All Pro Safety Brian Jordan was in town last Thursday to promote his kids books series to help raise awareness for the Brian Jordan Foundation.

The dual sports star designed books, baseballs and pictures with fans of all ages as he answered questions and talked to folks about the goals and operation of the foundation and the benefits it provides for underprivileged children.

Jordan was drafted in the first round of the 1988 MLB draft by the St. Louis Cardinals and worked his way through their farm system until he got his first start in the "Show" in April of 1992.

He was also drafted in 1989 as a NFL seventh round draft pick by the Buffalo Bills, but was cut during training camp. He was picked up by the Falcons that same year to play free safety and finished his NFL career with the Dirty Birds in 1991, as the Cardinals demanded that he forego football for a career in baseball.



Former Brave and Falcon star Brian Jordan signs autographs at the Union County Community Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

His best year for the Cardinals came in 1998 hitting .316 with 25 homeruns and a .534 slugging percentage.

He played major league baseball for 15 seasons starting with the Cardinals and then moving to the Braves in 1999, receiving an All-Star nod that same year.

He was traded in 2002

to the Los Angeles Dodgers and then again to the Texas Rangers in 2004 and finished his last season as a professional baseball player back in Atlanta in 2006.

He now sponsors the Brian Jordan Foundation and works hard to help kids in need.

See *Jordan*, 3A

Mayor Conley moves up GMA ladder

By Charles Duncan
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Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley continues to advance in leadership responsibilities with the Georgia Municipal Association.

Mayor Conley was elected last year to the Board of Directors for GMA during the association's annual meeting in Savannah.

Conley will serve as president of GMA's 2nd District. He has served the past year as first vice pres-



Mayor Jim Conley, president of the Association's Second District.

The district includes cities in Towns, Rabun, Union, Lumpkin, White, Habersham, Stephens,

Franklin, Banks, Hart, Dawson, Hall and Forsyth counties.

"Being selected to serve by your peers is always a very humbling experience," Mayor Conley said. "It's an honor, a privilege and I'm looking forward to representing the Second District."

"I'm just proud of the Association, the relationship that the city of Blairsville has with the Georgia Municipal Association, and to represent our town and

See *Mayor*, 2A

Clouds scholarship awards handed out

By Charles Duncan
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Suches – The Run Above The Clouds Committee has handed out their 2013 scholarship awards to two very deserving Woody Gap graduates.

Haley Aponte, the school's STAR Student and Class of 2013 Salutatorian, and Alex Roberts, are this year's recipients, Jim Miner said.

"Haley Aponte will use her scholarship to help con-



Wynn Mott makes Alex Roberts and Haley Aponte's Day, at the Run Above The Clouds awards last week.

Fire Station 1 Open House July 23rd

By Charles Duncan
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Union County firefighters at Station 1 on Shoe Factory Road have been living in sub-standard conditions for more than two years.

Their home-away-from-home has been a Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer. They've used this facility to sleep in during their 24-hour work shift.

Obviously, the four on-duty paid firefighters (three shifts 24 on 48 off) couldn't keep living in cramped quarters.

"We just ran out of room," Union County Fire Chief/EMA Director Charles Worden said. "We were elbow-to-elbow; we needed more space as soon as we could get it. These people come in at 8 in the morning, they go home at 8 in the morning the next day. They're here 24 hours straight. It's kind of like a home-away-from-home."



The new Fire Station 1 is open for business on Shoe Factory Road.

Thanks to Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, that all has changed.

A 6,000 square-foot addition and new construction at Fire Station 1 was recently completed using SPLOST dollars. The addition includes firefighter living quarters, a day room, a kitchen and a

See *Station 1*, 2A

Cannery showcased at GMRC meeting

By Joe Collins
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The monthly meeting of representatives making up the Georgia Mountain Regional Council met at the Union County Farmers Market last week.

Representatives of the 13-county council were treated to a tour of the Market and the new Union County Cannery located on the Market grounds.

Former Atlanta Brave and Atlanta Falcon Brian Jordan was on hand as the guest speaker and he gave a brief

See *GMRC*, 2A



Patrick Fix shows Danny Lewis how to can peaches at the Union County Cannery. Photo/Joe Collins

Mountain Fling enjoys much success

By Charles Duncan
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Mike Wilson has been hand-crafting knives for more than three decades.

What began as a hobby more than 30 years ago is now a passion.

The Hayesville, NC resident said his introduction into his craft began with a neighbor.

"He was getting into it, and I was in his shop every time he was in there," Wilson said. "The next thing I knew, I was into making knives. I was hooked and I bought some equipment and got involved with it."

Wilson was one of the

See *Fling*, 6A



Patrons visited Mountain Fling early and often on Saturday and Sunday at North Georgia Technical College. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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our community," Mayor Conley said. "It's a truly humbling experience and to me, it's a very high honor to get to this level."

GMA Executive Director Lamar Norton

praised Mayor Conley for his leadership abilities.

"We are pleased to have Mayor Conley taking on this leadership position," said GMA Executive Director Lamar Norton.

"He's well respected by his colleagues, and I'm sure he'll provide great leadership to the cities in his district."

Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-

profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and technical assistance services to its 519 member cities.

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Marina beginning at 11 a.m. At 11:30 a.m., boats will pass in review.

There is no charge and boats can be decorated in any theme. Visitors can view the parade from areas around the Marina.

At Meeks Park, this year's fireworks display is scheduled for Thursday evening, at approximately 9:30 p.m. weather permitting, Chamber President Cindy Williams said.

Fireworks are promoted by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Woodmen of the World, Williams said.

In Suches, on Thursday evening, the Suches Fire Department will present their annual Independence Day fireworks celebration on the field behind the Woody Gap School.

The Suches tradition will begin at dark, but, the festivities begin earlier, as the Suches community and visitors will gather around 7 p.m. for hot dogs, soft drinks and snacks.

It's also a chance to greet friends, old and new, Jim Miner said.

Back again this year is the rubber duck race in the creek that runs behind the school with the winning duck receiving a prize.

This is part of the event sponsored by the Gaddistown Homemakers. Proceeds from the duck race go toward support for the Homemakers' local civic activities, Miner said.

The fun keeps going on Friday.

The Blairsville Cruisers are offering not one, but two more opportunities for celebration with their Friday night "Block Party" and a "Cruise-In" on Saturday.

The "Block Party" will be held Friday, July 5th, from 4 p.m. to dusk in the Blairsville Wal-Mart parking lot.

Patrons will have the

opportunity to view cool rides of all years, makes and models, as well as partake in family fun with music, lots of food, and a 50/50 drawing.

Raffle tickets also will be for sale for a beautiful 2001 Chevrolet Camaro Convertible. All proceeds will be used to benefit local children's charities.

If you are not in need of a car, but still want to help the kids by purchasing a raffle ticket, you will have the unique option of taking a \$2,500 cash prize instead, should you hold the winning ticket.

But wait, there's more. In addition, this particular Blairsville Cruisers Friday night Block Party features a silent Chinese auction for your pleasure.

Whether you are participating with your classic vehicle or simply attending as a spectator, the Blairsville Cruisers, their two corporate sponsors, Wal-Mart and O'Reilly's Auto Parts, and many other treasured car club sponsors, look forward to seeing you as you continue your Independence Day celebration at Wal-Mart on Friday.

On Saturday, the Blairsville Cruisers also will host their "Cruise-In to the Blairsville Restaurant" just off the Courthouse Square on Earnest Street.

Beginning at 4 p.m., the fun begins complete with music, food from amazing restaurants on Earnest Street, a 50/50 drawing and raffle ticket sales for the Chevy Camaro.

Station 1...continued from Page 1A

A decision will be made on the future of the existing facility when that time comes, Chief Worden said.

"It's been a real important project for us, especially where the living and sleeping quarters are concerned," Chief Worden said.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris agreed.

"Our firemen have been living in sub-standard conditions for well over a couple of years," Paris said. "They are always out there helping the public and they do a great job. They've been forced to sleep in a FEMA trailer and that has changed."

Change indeed.

On July 23rd, firefighters, Chief Worden and Commissioner Paris will welcome the public to the inaugural Open House for Fire Station 1 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The new Fire Station 1 that is.

The inaugural Fire Station 1 was born in 1990 when Union County was clearing land of homes to make room for the Union County Industrial Park.

A small 1,200 square foot home was moved to the property just beyond the old Georgia Boot Plant.

The building would become the headquarters for the county's ever growing Fire

Department for more than 20 years. Until just recently, it housed fire operations and also served as Union's Emergency Management Agency operations headquarters.

The only thing that had changed over the years, a mold situation in the basement of the building, where firefighters used to sleep during their 24-hour work shift.

That prompted the county to purchase a FEMA trailer to house its rotating shifts of on duty paid firefighters.

The new facilities at Station 1 were seamlessly attached at the far side of the fire truck bays by Winkler & Winkler Construction.

A portion of the facility is two stories, the front portion is one story.

"I, along with all the firefighters of Station 1 are already very excited about the upcoming Open House," Paris said. "When you have lived, as the firemen have, with the same old building for more than 20 years, that was an older home when it was moved to its current location from the right of way of Highway 515 when it was built, it is pretty exciting to be able to show off your new home."

"We added onto the existing building that houses our fire engines, and now, we not

only have decent rooms for our firemen to sleep in, but we have a training center that can also serve as an emergency operations center in the event of emergencies," Paris said.

"This is another example of what is made possible by your support of our SPLOST sales tax. This facility would have never been a possibility without it. By now having a training center, this will be a huge benefit also for our volunteer firemen," Paris said.

"When you see the new facility, you will be proud of what Union County has to offer. Our emergency services facilities and firemen are second to none and that should be very comforting to you when your life could some day hang in the balance," Paris said.

"Union County is very fortunate to have the high caliber of employees that we have in every department, and we are very lucky to have so much support from our citizens," he said. "We are humbled by your support."

In addition to the Fire Department being funded by SPLOST sales tax dollars, the Fire Department, which includes Emergency Management (search and rescue), also is funded predominately by tax on life insurance premiums, Paris said.

Clouds

...continued from 1A

tinue her education at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega," Miner said. "Alex Roberts will pursue career opportunities at North Georgia Technical College."

The scholarships are made possible by the many businesses and individuals who sponsor the Annual Run Above The Clouds race that benefits Woody Gap students, Miner said.

He adds that the Run Above The Clouds Committee has recently added several new members and the group is reenergized.

"We're ready to continue our ongoing successful programs and tackle the new challenge of expanding the scholarship programs," Miner said. "We're also ready to tackle the new challenge of expanding the scholarship program to enable us to provide continuing help to students during their college careers."

"Plans already are underway to grow the race participation and enhance sponsor visibility to attract more and bigger sponsors," Miner said. "Businesses and individuals are encouraged to join us in the effort to aid Woody Gap students with their education."

All proceeds from the races go to support students at the Woody Gap School, the smallest public school in Georgia, Miner said.

The Annual Run Above The Clouds race is held in October, part of the two-day Indian Summer Festival, a craft fair featuring traditional and contemporary crafts, all day Country Music, good food and an old-fashioned square dance on Saturday night.

This year, the Run Above The Clouds will be Oct. 5th at 9 a.m. The event consists of a 10K road race, and, a 1-mile Fun Run. All 10K runners receive a high quality long sleeve T-shirt; Fun Run participants receive a similar short sleeve T-shirt.

For more details, visit the Web at www.suches.com.

Crashes...continued from Page 1A

past the cement bridge on Georgia 180, Union County Sheriff's Sgt. Josh Berry said.

"It was a one-vehicle crash," Sgt. Berry said. "The driver refused transport; his female passenger was seriously injured."

According to Union County Fire & Rescue's Jonathan Fortenberry, emergency workers had to use the Jaws of Life to take the front driver's door and passenger door on the driver's side to free the victim.

"The passenger side of the vehicle was up against popular trees," Fortenberry said. "It took us 25 minutes to get her out of the vehicle. We had to stabilize her as best we could. It took seven (five paid, two volunteers) firefighters to make the extrication possible."

Sgt. Berry said Spence was lifeflighted to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga at 2:07 p.m. on Sunday. Her condition was unavailable at press time.

In a separate crash on Monday morning, a black Chevy Silverado collided with a burgundy Jeep Grand Cherokee, UCFD's Fortenberry said.

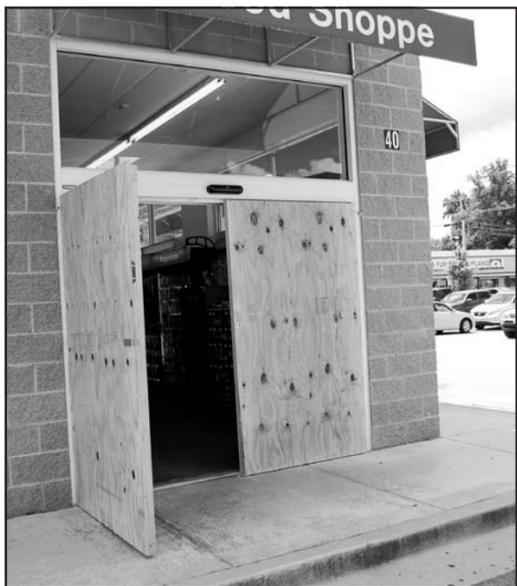
The Silverado collided with the driver's side of the Jeep Cherokee at U.S. 129 (Murphy Highway) and Pat Colwell Road, authorities said.

The female driver of the Jeep Cherokee was transported Code 3 to Erlanger Hospital by Union County Ambulance, Fortenberry said.

An attempt to lifelight her was hampered because weather conditions in Sweetwater, Tenn. were not conducive to flying on Monday morning, authorities said.

No additional crash details, including the names of the drivers, were available at press time.

Both accidents remained under investigation by the Georgia State Patrol at press time.



Above left, temporary doors at CVS; above right, a heavily damaged Chevy Silverado on Pat Colwell Road; bottom, Lt. Damon Hood and Firefighter Pat Schmidt look over the damaged Cherokee on Pat Colwell Road. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

In an unrelated accident, a motorist drove her vehicle into the front doors at CVS Pharmacy in Blairsville on Saturday. The store's front doors were shattered,

Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Michael Baxter said. "It was more of a mess to clean up than anything else," Baxter said. "Fortunately, to my knowledge, no one was injured, but I know one

lady that is a bit embarrassed. "I think it was a case of confusion," Baxter said. "Getting the gas pedal confused with the brake pedal."

GMRC...continued from Page 1A

description of his Brian Jordan Foundation.

He also thanked Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and county representatives for the opportunity to spread the word about the work the organization does for needy children related to education and athletics.

"I want to thank Commissioner Paris for this opportunity to come and share a few thoughts about the Brian Jordan Foundation," Jordan said. "My mother was an educator and worked with special needs kids and she taught me the value of a good education and proper literacy."

"When I signed with St. Louis, one of the things I was concerned about was making sure I finished school because you never know how things will go in sports. One play can end a career for a professional athlete so I needed something to fall back on and that was my education at the University of Richmond," Jordan said.

"This is what we focus on at the foundation, making

sure kids put their education first and sports second. That is why I write children's books, I wanted to do something to address the literacy problems we see in the kids that come to us for help," he said. "I also have a deep Faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, so we talk to the kids about that when we work with them as well."

The GMRC meets once a month to discuss the development trends of the mountain counties and to promote and guide proper development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region.

Before the group got down to business they were given a guided tour through the Market and Cannery by County Director Larry Garrett followed by dinner and the monthly council meeting.

Union County Extension Agent Mickey Cummings and Cannery Expert Patrick Fix were on hand canning peaches while the group made the tour so everyone could see the actual operation of the plant

while 10 unique weekly Market vendors were invited in to give the attendees the proper feel as to how the market works on operation days.

Local goods were on display and many in the GMRC group were seen purchasing Market items.

Logan Turnpike Mill added a touch of mountain hospitality by giving representatives a 1-pound sample of their delicious, unbolted buttermilk cornbread mix as the representatives made the Market tour.

"This was our month to hold the meeting and as a county, we like to showcase our facilities as much as possible," Commissioner Paris said. "The last time we met in Union County we were in the new Community Center located at Butternut Creek Golf Course and this time we wanted everyone to see the Market and the county's new canning plant."

"Union County has much to be thankful for in the way of facilities and we want these representatives to see what

we are doing," Commissioner Paris said. "Hopefully it will benefit them when they start to make plans to add a new facility like a Farmers Market or canning plant."

The next GMRC meeting is scheduled for July 25th in White County at the White County Senior Center.

Jordan...continued from Page 1A

It is hard to imagine that a professional sports star such as Jordan would be interested in writing children's books but he is quick to explain his motive.

"I wanted to do something to give back because I was so blessed in my career. I actually woke up one night and had this story in my head and I started writing it down the following day," he said.

My mother was an educator who worked with special needs children and she edited my writing into something good," he said. "My kids read it and said they really enjoyed it so I talked to a friend of mine who introduced me to a publisher and the rest is history."

"These books are based on my real life experiences because I want kids to know that they are not alone in their problems," he said. "The same things they deal with everyday were the same things I dealt with in my growing up years. I hate bullying and I actually helped bullied kids when I was in school, which gave me inspiration later in life."

"I also want to help get kids off the couch and outside playing," he said. "They have too many distractions these days with all the electronics and they are missing out on some good times by not getting involved in athletics."

"The books help with this and they support a lot of the literacy programs we provide at the Foundation,"



Two legends finally meet. Former Brave and Falcon star Brian Jordan and the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald's Lowell Nicholson. Photo/Joe Collins

Jordan said. Jordan's heart is as big as the footballs he used to intercept while playing for the Falcons.

His passion for children is evident in all he does and his desire to encourage kids is what makes him get out of bed these days.

"My dad really encouraged me to get out there and be the best I could be in my early years," Jordan said. "I got hit in the face by a pitch as a 9-year-old little leaguer and I was scared to play after that. He was very patient with me and helped me work through the fear and I will never forget that. It is his guidance that inspires me to help kids now."

Union County's own Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris summed it up best when

he introduced Jordan to the Georgia Mountain Regional Committee meeting where Jordan talked about the foundation and his love of kids.

"He is one of the nicest people you will ever meet and I am not just saying that," Paris said. "He is a stand up guy and his love of children and his desire to help them is inspiring."

"I had the opportunity to play golf with him this morning and we had a great time because of who he is inside, and not because of his fame as a professional athlete," he said. "He is a wonderful person and we are honored that he made time in his busy schedule to come here and meet with folks in order to bring awareness to the needs of kids today."

Fling... continued from 1A

45 vendors taking part in the Sixth Annual Mountain Fling, an arts and crafts show sponsored by Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild at North Georgia Technical College's Blairsville Campus.

Wilson said knife-making isn't for everyone. For those that want to get started for hobby or craft, he says you start with a good piece of steel.

"You just grind away everything that doesn't look like a knife," Wilson said. "I make a lot of different patterns. I work with 300 different patterns that I've developed over the years.

"My knives are mostly geared toward hunting and fishing. I do a lot of collectibles and I also make kitchen cutlery," he said.

Wilson says all-in-all, he derives a lot of pleasure from his hobby-turned-craft.

"It's a lot of self-satisfaction," he said. "It's a pleasure to create something from raw material. A lot of people don't have the talent to do that, so, it's a self-rewarding venture to be able to do it."

Wilson has been featured in *Blade Magazine*, and that's also a measure of self-satisfaction.

"It's nice to be noticed for doing something that you love to do," he said.

Wilson's kitchen cutlery starts at \$30 for a paring knife and goes up to \$150 for a chef's knife.

His outdoorsman knives range from \$135 to \$300, he said.

"I've sold almost 8,000 knives in my day," he said. "That's counting everything that I've put my name on. I've replaced two knives in 30 years. I've got a pretty good track record. My knives come with a lifetime guarantee."

The two-day event was a popular one. Folks venturing into town for the weekend were visitors. For the most part, many were paying customers for the crafters.



Mike Wilson, founder of Wilson's Custom Knives displays his work at Mountain Fling, held at North Georgia Technical College's Blairsville Campus. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

"We've had a lot of traffic this weekend," said event organizer Carolyn Barton. "And the people that are coming in are spending money, which is always nice."

Blairsville's Paul Grossman, founder of Willie's Wooden Wonders, was selling his wooden bowls left and right.

"It's been a good weekend," Grossmann said. "We had a great day on Saturday, and (Sunday) has been slower. This is a great show. We do three shows a year with the Guild and this is our third year."

Grossman got into the wood-turning craft five years ago.

"I always liked to work with wood," he said. "I retired about five years ago and I decided to do it full-time. I concentrate just on the bowl work. We collected so many around the house, and gave away a bunch to friends and relatives.

"Finally, I decided to try my hand at the craft shows," he said. "We've been blessed.

We make some money, but we have fun doing this and meet a lot of interesting people. We've made a lot of friends as well. It's been a good retirement project."

Paul, and his wife Helena, have a saying: "please enjoy your bowl."

Barton said the Fling was a great success.

"We had a great buying crowd this weekend," she said. "They were getting some really quality crafts. All of our crafters are high quality.

"I think everyone was really pleased, patrons and crafters," she said.

"Everybody has been really supportive of Mountain Fling. It's a time of year when things can get iffy," she said. "People are on vacation, everyone's out of town and that sort of thing.

"We had a lot of people from out of town this weekend," she said. "It was a great crowd this year."

The Guild will add a third show that will debut in September, *Celebrate Autumn*,

Barton said.

"We're hope that show will do as well as this one," Barton said. "And of course, in November, we have the 15th year of Mistletoe Market and that's always a big event. We have crowds come up that have been coming to the Market for years."

The Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild supports artwork and children's summer art programs.

"So many people in the area have lots their jobs, they can't afford to go on vacations and the kids sometimes have nothing to do," Barton said.

"The arts are seemingly disappearing in the schools, so we started a program where the children pay \$5 for their class, and the merchants, the Guild and these craft shows pay for the rest of the summer art classes for the children."

The Guild usually has 200 children come through the Summer Arts Program each summer, Barton said.

"It's been a very rewarding program," she said.