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est friend, Kalan Adams, who oversees the Glenda Gooch Foundation.

"This event was very important today, we're trying to help kids that need school supplies to go back to school," Adams said. "The foundation is a way for Glenda's family and friends to keep her name going now that she's gone.

We're going to try and help as many kids as we can."

Adams said Glenda was as kind-hearted a soul as one would ever meet.

"She'd give you the shirt off her back and she did," Adams said. "She had been through a whole lot in her young life, and the one thing that touched her heart so was

seeing someone do without. It's something that just broke her heart.

"Her goal in life was to help people who for one reason or another had fallen on hard times, especially children," Adams said.

Adams said for Glenda to think of herself before she thought of others was some-

thing she just couldn't do. It is the mission of the foundation to give the love and support that the community always gave Glenda and her family.

"She loved this community with all of her heart and in working through this organization to help those in need, she will live on," Adams said.

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cakes for Vera fans.

There were even bag-shaped cookies to be had.

Joan told each customer that she met just how much she enjoyed Blairsville, its people and the beautiful rolling hills that lead the way to Alexander's Store, which reminds her of a small country store in rural Indiana.

Joan is humbled each time she shares the story of the company's modest beginnings which started in the garage of her sister Barbara's best friend.

"This is incredible," said Abby Morton, of McCaysville. "That's Vera's daughter, it's just so hard to believe she's here in the Mountains. And she's so cordial and charming. It's exactly how we envision Vera Bradley was when she was alive."

It's hard to believe, but Vera Bradley actually didn't start the Vera Bradley line, Eva

Lawrence of Andrews, NC is quick to point out, although Vera's name was selected as the brand of the soon-to-be popular line of quilted cotton luggage and bags.

Lawrence explains that Vera's daughter Barbara and her friend Patricia Miller provided the inspirational idea that launched one of the most historic designer lines in U.S. History.

Barbara and Patricia were waiting for their luggage in the claim area of Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta in 1982 when they noticed that there was no line of luggage for women.

Most of the luggage that came through the turnstiles looked rather drab and depressing.

That thought translated into a small business using \$500 and Patricia's garage, and a line of beautiful, colorful, quilted, cotton luggage

and bags were soon born.

By 1985, the fledgling company had become a multi-million dollar family operation, with the bags popularly remembered as a girl's best friend.

Sandy Alexander and her daughter-in-law Kennetha Alexander hosted the event.

Both were amazed at the turnout of Vera fans that attended the social.

"This is an incredible turnout," a smiling Sandy Alexander said. "We had no idea this many people would come out for this event. It's a warm feeling."

A lot of Vera fans showed up, more than 250 to be exact, at what Vera Bradley representative Christi Burton calls, the most attended event that she has overseen.

"Young girls love these bags when they're young, and they continue to love them

as they grow older," Burton said. "There's no generation gap, mothers, daughters and grandmothers love Vera Bradley. Women have grown up with Vera Bradley; it's a feel good item.

"It's just a wonderful company and all women love the products," Burton said. "It's a family company, the products are very popular. They're very colorful, they're very functional and the company has such a unique story behind it. It started with friends. And friends have been the secret to its success.

"Vera actually worked for the company for several years as a sales representative," she said. "Vera's classic style and grace inspired Barbara and Patricia to name their company after her in 1982. Those who knew Vera agree that her life was always full, fun and colorful."



Kennetha Alexander, Joan Bradley-Reedy and Sandy Alexander pose during the Vera Bradley event. Photo/Charles Duncan



Joan Bradley-Reedy with two of Vera Bradley's biggest fans during the Vera Bradley event. Photo/Kennetha Alexander

School...continued from Page 1A

school, sporting events, and field trips.

"The most difficult work takes place in the summer time," Garrett said. "During the school year it's mostly upkeep and maintenance."

Garrett is proud of Union County's bus safety record and was quick to point out that there haven't been many issues with safety or malfunctions in quite a while.

"We've only lost two engines since 1990," said Garrett. "But the most important part of our job is keeping our kids safe and bringing awareness to drivers regarding safety."

The average bus route lasts 90 minutes, before and after school so Garrett urges motorists to obey the rules of the road.

"Many drivers are unaware of the rules regarding a loading or unloading school bus," said Garrett.

And according to the Georgia Department of Education, in most cases, all drivers are required to stop when meeting or overtaking a stopped school bus that has its red lights flashing and its stop arm extended when loading or unloading passengers.

The only exception to



Union County school buses are ready to roll. Photo/Todd Forrest

this rule is when highways are separated in the center by a dirt, grass or concrete medians. In this situation, only vehicles following or traveling alongside a school bus in the same direction must stop.

A warning that a bus stop is about to take place will always be given when amber

lights on the front and rear of the school bus start to flash.

Upon seeing these flashing amber lights, vehicles approaching the school bus from both the front and rear should immediately slow down and prepare to stop.

All drivers must pay special attention to children,

be focused and exercise caution when in the vicinity of a school bus stop, as student riders can sometimes be unpredictable.

Once the bus is fully stopped, the flashing red lights will activate and the stop arm will deploy.

Vehicles must stop and should remain stopped until all loading students are aboard in the morning or all unloading passengers have cleared 12 feet off the roadway in the afternoon.

Motorists should proceed with caution, only after passengers have cleared the roadway, the stop arm is canceled and the flashing red lights are deactivated.

Garrett stressed that all motorists must be alert and exercise patience and caution, especially around children as they wait at school bus stops and as they load and unload from the school buses.

Impatient, uninformed or apathetic drivers pose a great threat to students, Garrett said.

Al-Anon meetings/times

Blairsville: Mountain Presbyterian Church, 2945 Young Harris Hwy. 76, Wednesday 8 p.m. Al-Anon Family Group Discussion, open meeting. Saint Clare's Episcopal Church, Friday 12 noon Al-anon Group Discussion, open meeting.

Young Harris: Sharp Memorial Methodist Church, Tuesday 12 noon Al-Anon Family Group discussion, open meeting.

Hiawassee: Chatuge Regional Hospital, 110 South Main Street, Sunday 7 p.m. Al-Anon Family Group Discussion, open meeting. Christ the King Church, Monday 7 p.m. Al-Anon Family Group Discussion, open meeting.

Al-Anon is open to anyone who has been affected by another person's drinking. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or a friend.

Call 706-835-5827, 706-897-0628 or 828-389-8981. for more information. NT(Aug1.Z1)CA