

Reece ...continued from Page 1A

should provide a needed economic boost for the North Georgia Mountain region and for the Farm and Heritage Center.

The Southern Literary Trail celebrates writers of poetry and fiction in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. The Trail Map's intent is to direct enthusiasts to the places most important to classic Southern fiction writers in the tri-state region.

"Of course, this farm certainly qualifies for that," said William Gantt, director of the Southern Literary Trail group. "Reece was so unique. William Faulkner had a so-called farm, but he didn't work it. Flannery O'Connor lived on a farm, but she really didn't work it.

"Reece worked the land, that's apart from the quality of his work," Gantt said. "His work was about the land, the people and the labors they endured in their mountain way of life."

Reece long has been known as The Mountain Poet. He's also known as the Prince of Appalachia, the teller of stories of rural farm life in the Southern Appalachia.

Reece, who died by his own hand at the age of 40, after years of suffering with tuberculosis, farmed, worked and cultivated the land in the Wolf Creek bottoms.

He spent his free time reading the works of literary greats, and writing prose about the Mountain way of life.

During his short-lived career, Hub Reece, who attended, but did not graduate from Young Harris College, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, earned two Guggenheim awards, and served as writer-in-residence at UCLA, Atlanta's Emory University, and Young Harris College in Towns County.

In his lifetime, Reece had his work published in the local newspaper, and later went on to compose four books of poetry and two fiction novels. His work, which included *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*, was highly acclaimed, earning esteemed literary praise and national attention.

Other works included novels, *Better a Dinner of Herbs*, and *The Hawk and the Sun*.

Hundreds of unpublished Reece poems still exist today, Reece Society Chair John Kay said.

In other good news on the anniversary of Reece's 95th birthday, the Farm and Heritage Center also received a \$25,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission for final touches and improvements at the historic facility, said Reece Society member Fleming Weaver.

"It will be used to add graphics, signage, a full-size milking cow and we're going to add some additional items to the Reece Gallery," Weaver said. "We're also going to add some copies of Reece's manuscripts of



Byron Herbert Reece

poetry. Folks can actually come here and do research here."

As for the honor of becoming a part of the Southern Literary Trail, Reece joins other famous Georgia poets and fiction writers in forming the Georgia Trail Map that consists of homes of authors such as Lillian Smith, Margaret Mitchell, Erskine Caldwell, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Joel Chandler Harris, Alice Walker.

The map now includes Union County's own "Hub" Reece.

Counterparts in Mississippi include Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner and Borden Deal; those celebrated from Alabama include Truman Capote, Harper Lee, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William March.

Ensley...continued from Page 1A

between songs to speak about the first time he met Ensley.

"I was playing one night at the old Historic Courthouse and at the end of the concert Sam walked up to me and asked, 'young man, do you play the fiddle,' and told him that I do," Alex Tomlinson said. "He told me about a Fiddle Fest that was coming up in two weeks and he wanted me to play, so I went and played and that one performance led to so many more. I would really like to thank Sam for giving me that opportunity because it has opened so many doors for me."

"This guy was only 9 years old at the time," Ensley added.

Next up, was Ensley's group, Roots and Branches

and before *the Man of the Hour*, took the stage, he spoke about how he never dreamed of having an entire day dedicated to him back when Zip Silvey gave him his first guitar lessons as a young man.

"This is the last thing in the world that I expected," Ensley said. "Two or three weeks ago this would have been the last thing in the world that I would've ever expected. But I can't think of a greater honor or anything that could have made me happier than to have a day here with all my friends and family.

"A lot of them I grew up with, and some I have just met," he said. "I feel like the luckiest man alive to have lived here. Just bumping into old students, and getting to be

with my grandkids. I feel for people who live hundreds of miles away from their friends, children, or grandchildren."

Ensley has worked off-and-on with the Historical Society since 1976 and for the last 11 years has been responsible for the Friday night concerts at the Historic Courthouse.

Back in the 1980s Ensley's classes at Union County Middle School began making local history quilts. "Back in 1980 we raffled one of the quilts to raise money for the old Courthouse," Ensley said. "I've enjoyed everything about living here. I'm as happy as a dead pig in the sunshine. I'd rather be here than anywhere else." Sam, we're mighty proud that you're here to stay.

Whittle: Badge 221 celebrated

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The parking lot at the Recreation Pavilion at Meeks Park was full and overflowing on Saturday.

People came to remember one of Union County's finest on the one year anniversary of the accident that eventually claimed his life.

Deputy Derrick Whittle was the only child of Jim and Sharon Whittle.

More than 400 people gathered at Meeks Park to celebrate the life of this dedicated officer who was critically injured in a crash as he responded to a domestic call knowing that shots had been fired.

Each lit a candle in his honor.

Deputy Whittle's family was on hand as he was remembered by Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens, the Rev. Marty Duncan, a retired officer, fellow county employee Pam Worden and Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley, who read letters from Deputy Whittle's friends that could not attend.

Duncan told the crowd that Deputy Whittle loved his God, and that Jesus Christ was his Lord and



Sharon Whittle encourages her grand daughter Leah on this night to remember. Photo/Charles Duncan

Savior.

"He loved his God, his family and ladies and gentlemen, he loved this community," Duncan said.

Deputy Whittle was described as a man who wasn't afraid to get involved. He was a community coach, who enjoyed watching his son evolve into a talented athlete. He was a loving father, who couldn't help but adore his children. He was a loving husband, and a devout Christian with a deep sense of

community.

He wrote a list of promises to himself in 2009.

"I will paint my daughter's fingernails without question, I will cry when my son scores a touchdown in football, I'll love the Buccaneers even when they lose and I'll be an Alabama fan even if I'm the only one in North Georgia," Duncan said, as he read the list to the crowd.

The weekend rain could only be attributed to Deputy Whittle's tears falling from heaven. His son Nick, a freshman on the Panthers football team, did score a touchdown this week.

Sheriff Stephens remembered Deputy Whittle as a dedicated officer, who was just getting a real feel for law enforcement. "He approached his job each day with determination to be better than he was the day before," the sheriff said.

Worden, whose husband is a sheriff's investigator, said she saw Deputy Whittle the day he became a deputy and was dressed in full uniform at the Union County Courthouse.

"I don't think I've ever seen anyone more happy to wear a uniform," she said.

District Attorney Langley said Deputy Whittle was a rare breed.

"He loved his job," Langley said, adding that Deputy Whittle believed in the creed to protect and to serve.

Deputy Whittle succumbed to injuries sustained Sept. 18, 2011, three days after a crash while responding to a domestic dispute with weapons involved on Sept. 15, 2011. He died at Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tenn.

He died in the line of duty, Langley said.

"Deputy Whittle was responding to a domestic disturbance involving weapons when his patrol car left the roadway and struck a tree," he said. "Deputy Whittle was responding to a threat in his community, a community that he loved dearly."

In May, Sheriff Stephens retired Badge 221, the one worn by the 38-year-old deputy.