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maintains the appropriate level of funds year after year. But those funds are starting to get low, and he'd like to get

reserves back up to \$20,000 to ensure that the scholarship continues in perpetuity.

"If people remember 'Fess' Collins, as an educator of the state of Georgia, or whether you remember him or not, please help us out," said Akins. "It's a good time to do it for a tax break, as well as to help out some child in Union County. We'd like to get donations for the scholarship."

Collins picked up the nickname "Fess" – short for professor – while an educator at St. Mary's School in Camden County, but the name serves as a fitting tribute to the kind of man Collins was right here in Union County.

"C.R. Collins was a fatherly figure to so many

people in Union County," said Akins. "When he came back from St. Mary's as the principal down there and the basketball coach, he came back to Union County, to his home county where he was raised, and where his father drove the mules and wagons across the Logan Turnpike going to Gainesville to sell produce."

Born in 1907, Collins attended public school in Union County, and he would go on to graduate from the Blairsville Collegiate Institute in 1927. From there, he spent two years at Mercer University, after which he would begin his illustrious career as an educator.

Collins spent several years as principal and coach at St. Mary's in Camden County,

before making his way back to Union County. But even before St. Mary's, Collins served as an educator in Hall County, Colquitt County, McIntosh County and Chattooga County, cementing his reputation as an "Educator to the Four Corners of Georgia."

Back in Union County in the 1950s, Collins became principal of Union County High, where he had Bud Akins as a student, before going on to be Union County Schools Superintendent, and then principal of Woody Gap School, from which he retired in 1972 after 42 years as an educator.

Even St. Mary's, a school nearly seven hours drive from Union County and located on the Eastern seaboard, has

contributed to the scholarship in the past, out of respect for what Collins did for Camden County students.

Akins, who graduated from Union County High School in 1956 under then Principal Collins, remembered that Collins always gave to students whose families may not have had much.

"He slipped many a \$5 bill into a student's pocket that needed some money," said Akins. "He's a figure that will stand forever in Union County. He did so much for all the schools. I know times have been tough, but times are getting better now, and we need to keep this up and not let it die out. We need to keep the C.R. Collins Scholarship."

UCHS students take second graders shopping

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When it comes to giving, it doesn't get much more heartwarming than watching children give to other children, which is exactly what happened when more than 150 Union County High School students treated 30 second graders to a very special day with the annual Shop With A Panther program.

The student-led event took place on Monday, Dec. 14, when the high school students traveled with the second graders to Walmart to help them shop.

"Participants of Shop With A Panther believe they have a responsibility to help and support the community where they live and work," said UCHS CTAE Director Jennifer Ludlum. "Former UCHS Principal Ed Rohrbaugh started the Shop With A Panther program not only to help younger students during Christmas, but to teach our high school students that giving back inspires hope in each other and empowers everyone to believe in a better future."

Participating students included members of BETA Club, FFA, Interact Club, Key



Club, FCCLA, Skills USA, Softball, HOSA Club, UCHS Student Council and the Spanish Club. Together, these students raised more than \$4,500 dollars to give deserving second grade kids the opportunity to shop for their own and their families' Christmases.

Following the shopping expedition, all of the students returned to the high school for a pizza lunch and games, and everyone made Christmas

crafts together and wrapped presents for the children to put under their trees at home.

Dixie Conger, a biology teacher at UCHS, accompanied the students to Walmart that day, and she helped the children coordinate some of their fundraising initiatives, including a Zaxby's fundraiser, among others.

"One of the best fundraisers was called the Miracle Minute," said Conger. "They started that last year, and for an entire week, the BETA Club members go around to the first blocks, and kids donate. And just for the Miracle Minute this year, we did it one week, and the students as a whole collected around \$800."

The program has grown each year, allowing high school students to take more second graders every Christmas season.

What impresses the students and high school staff the most is the fact that the second graders insist on shopping for their families.

"They'll want to buy essential things or nice presents for their mom and dad, their older or younger brother and sister, and a lot of them don't get much for themselves," said UCHS Principal John Hill.

And this year, high school students took money out of their own pockets to make up the difference if a second grader went a little over.

All involved consider Shop With A Panther a blessing, and Principal Hill believes that the program helps to build the culture of the school.

"The culture of our school is one of caring about the less fortunate and just doing the right thing," said Principal Hill. "Our kids treat each other with respect, and it filters into the culture of our school – what we're about and why we're here, the bigger picture, so to speak, that life's not all about me, and that we need to be cognizant of other people's needs and making sure we're taking care of them. I think it makes a big impact on our kids."

Give a Gift...from Page 1A

Gift, my kids would not have a Christmas this year."

Black bags lined the inner hallways of the sheriff's office, as deputies and clerks

sorted presents to go to specific families, and got those assorted bags ready for pickup a couple of days before Christmas.

Toys everywhere throughout the office can make the workspace cluttered, especially during the heavy giving time of Thanksgiving through the week of Christmas, but Sheriff's Office Clerk Ginger Carey said that it's a good problem to have.

"We don't just pile them up with whatever we want them to have – we take each individual child, and we say, this is what they want, this is what they like or are interested in," said Carey. "We break it down for each child. We shop and we find clothing or whatever for each individual child."

"It's not just, take some stuff and put it in a bag and give it to them. They are each specifically shopped for, and each wish is filled individually. So it's not just a bunch of kids we get for, it's one child at a time that we purchase for."

Give-a-Gift relies on both monetary and toy donations, and each year they get plenty of help from community sources. As with every year, patrons of the Christmas program and tree lighting at Vogel State Park were a big help toward the toy drive, and the Blairsville Cruisers presented the sheriff's office with a sizeable monetary donation.

Area churches play a huge role annually, calling in to the sheriff and asking what needs to be supplied. Toy donations also came from students of North Georgia Technical College, and every year, one individual anonymously crafts by hand baby doll cradles and trucks.

Big this year were toys from the new Star Wars movie, as well as Legos and action heroes.

And for those heroes involved with Give-a-Gift, the important thing is not receiving recognition for the parts they play each Christmas, but for families to have normal, happy family time.

"We don't want the recognition for it," said Carey. "We want the families to be able to have a good Christmas morning. These families, they struggle to make it payday to payday, with bills and groceries and doctor visits. And especially with kids, there are always unexpected expenses that come up that you can't budget for. At Christmas, it's just not there, and they just need that extra little help, so this is what it's all about."