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Year's celebration being the first event that Change hosted as an organization.

"There really isn't anywhere that young people and families get to spend the New Year together in a fun way free of alcohol," Brendle said. "We want to host this event because we want to offer that opportunity for people to come in and join us in ringing in the New Year."

"We don't really have a lot of people right now, but we have had people come by and join us for a little bit to play some games and socialize with

us. We have some kids dancing and having a good time.

"It's just a lot of fun for us to put this on for them and give them something to do that doesn't cost them anything and doesn't have any substances involved."

And while the party may not have drawn a huge crowd, Brendle said she was happy to see that turnout seems to be increasing every year, with more teens showing up to participate, both with events and in the organization.

"In May, we graduated six high schoolers, and that was

awesome," Brendle said. "We are starting to work a lot more with middle schoolers now. I have five or six of them, and we still have high schoolers that are coming to us."

"Next week, we are going to start our regular weekly classrooms again. We haven't been able to do those as often lately because of the corn maze and the Christmas lights at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds."

One of Change's primary directives is to work with teenagers who may be vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and/or other negative behavioral tendencies.

"The classrooms are the weekly opportunity for students to come and join us and socialize with each other," Brendle said. "We combat suicide with socialization, so it's a big deal for us to have these classrooms, and they are supervised, clean and fun for them to participate in."

Parents concerned that their children may be vulnerable to suicide ideation can definitely benefit from the lessons of Change, which are aimed at helping children talk about problems they may be having.

"My advice to parents

is to have a relationship with their kids and to know what's going on in their lives," Brendle said. "With most of the parents I've talked with, they have absolutely no idea what is going on in their children's lives."

"That's why I have to come in and create a relationship with them and help them open up. It sounds so simple, but people aren't really doing it all the time. Even if the kids want to be in their bedrooms, they need to get out every now and then and socialize and have relationships with other people."

Change aims to continue hosting events for local kids to help them have a social circle they can feel part of, events like the fall 2019 corn maze in Blairsville that proved to be one of the group's most successful ventures.

Brendle is looking to make the maze an annual event, though Change is searching for another property to be used for the maze.

For more information and to get in contact with the organization, visit the Change in Our World Inc. Facebook page.



Rebecca Brendle, left, is the proud founder of the nonprofit "Change in Our World Inc.," which has hosted a substance-free New Year's Eve party for families for four years now.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Ferst Readers of Union County receive donation

Thank you to Naomi Havens, Independent Consultant for Usborne Books and More, and shoppers at the Holiday Stop-n-Shop, for making possible a donation to Ferst Readers of Union County.

Ferst Readers of Union County provide a free book each month to children age zero to five who are registered with Ferst Readers and live in Union County. If you have a child below age four and would like to register him/her, please get a registration form from the Union County Library or register online at [www.ferstreaders.org](http://www.ferstreaders.org). There is no charge to the parents to get these books.

Community support makes the Ferst Readers program possible. Thank you to Naomi Havens for promoting early childhood literacy and for being a supporter of Ferst Readers of Union County.



Janice Cochran, (left) and Martha Davenport, (right) are Co-chairs for Ferst Readers Early Childhood Literacy Program of Union County. Naomi Havens (center), Independent Consultant for Usborne Books and More makes the presentation of a check for Ferst Readers of Union County.

For more information please contact Janice Cochran about Ferst Readers Early Childhood Literacy Program, at 706-897-1259 or Martha Davenport at 706-887-0045.

## Blue Ridge Mountains SAR honors parents of Tsali Bentley III

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, SAR, recently honored the parents of Tsali Bentley III with the Chapter's Blue Star Banner.

The proud parents are Tsali and Jacque Bentley who reside in Blairsville GA. The award recognizes the parents who have children in the service. The banner can be placed in the window to show that the parents have children in the service. A certificate is also presented along with the banner.

The award is part of the chapters Veterans Program to recognize the service of our veterans.

Tsali Bentley III is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and is now a Second Lieutenant stationed in Texas.



(L-R): Tsali and Jacque Bentley and Sid Turner, Chapter V.P.






## Sink Your Tree

**Drop off your undecorated Christmas trees to the designated area at the boat ramp at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds before January 13th.**

**The Lake Chatuge Chamber will sink your tree in Lake Chatuge to help Mother Nature improve the fish habitat.**

**For questions or more info, contact the Lake Chatuge Chamber 706-896-4966**




