

# Class of 2020...from Page 1A

slides to appear on the electronic billboards around town, so people will be able to admire the future of the county on the five digital billboards in the community.

“So proud of our school and staff, and especially our seniors and families,” Paris said on Facebook. “Congratulations to all.”

Mayor Conley said that he, too, was proud of the seniors and their accomplishments, and

that he wished them well heading into and beyond graduation.

“(UCHS Assistant Principal) Pat Donaldson from the school contacted me wanting to know if it was OK for them to place signs around the square representing all of the seniors that are graduating this year,” Conley said. “Of course, I said it’s perfectly alright.”

“We definitely gave them permission to do that – wherever they wanted to put them, they

were welcome to put them. And they’re good looking signs, too, with the seniors’ pictures on them. I think it’s a very good thing that the school did for their seniors.”

For his part, Superintendent John Hill said the school will be announcing finalized graduation ceremony plans to students, parents and the community this week.

“We are all so proud of the Class of 2020,” Hill said. “Our team is committed to providing them the best ceremony we can possibly do safely during these

challenging times.

“I would like to also thank UCHS administration and the Graduation Planning Committee – comprised of senior parents

and Chamber President Steve Rowe – that have worked hard to put together a plan that included our signage on the square.”

North Georgia Sign

helped the school with graphics, and Coosa Creek Embroidery printed the Class of 2020 senior signs.

# Masks for Workers...from Page 1A

So far, the primary benefactor of their ingenuity has been Atlanta’s Scottish Rite Children’s Hospital, as well as WellStar Atlanta Medical Center, where their niece Trisha Harris is employed as a registered nurse.

Although, according to the sisters, they have made dozens of masks for local individuals, all free of charge.

“We help family members, friends, neighbors or anyone that asks us,” Gates said. “Now we’ve had all this fabric donated to us, and it’s just unreal. People keep on giving to us, so we just keep on sewing. It gives us something to do.”

They would never admit it, but there is still a bit of competition between the two, according to the Olas’ “niece-in-law,” Corinna Caudill.

“They love to exaggerate (the) sibling rivalry,” she joked. “They work diligently every day, often quipping that it’s the

only thing that enables them to tolerate quarantine together.”

“We went from womb mates to roommates,” Gates said with a laugh.

No, their toughest challenge isn’t actually one another, but finding certain materials to complete the masks have presented the sisters with quite a hurdle.

“We are so thankful for all of the material that people have donated to us, but the only thing is, nobody can find elastic, so we have to put ties on the masks,” Gates said. “It works, but most people want the elastic that goes around the ears.”

“If you go to Walmart and ask for elastic, they’ll laugh at you. Someone tried ordering elastic (online) for us, and the company gave them a June delivery date.”

This wouldn’t be the first or even the second time the twins have seen society-wide adversity. Their “womb-mate”

days began in the Mulkey Gap community of Union County, where they were born during the Great Depression of the 1930s and raised as World War II raged in the 1940s.

By 1954, the identical twin daughters of Garnett and Edith “Geno” Rich were all grown up, and they left the mountains for jobs in the big city.

After spending more than 40 years in Atlanta, where Gates worked at Sears and Lyons was a nurse, they returned to Blairsville in the 1990s and have lived at their parents’ former homestead ever since.

“We both got married, but the way things worked out, both of our husbands passed away, and we wound up back here together,” Gates said. “We got the old house back, repaired it and remodeled it. Now we’re just living here together, happily ever after.”



All students have missed important moments this school year due to COVID-19 interrupting on-campus instruction, but seniors won’t get another crack at it, so UCHS has been working to honor them for their sacrifices.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Nurses at WellStar Atlanta Medical Center sporting masks made by “The Olas,” as they’re affectionately known.

Photo/Submitted