

# Forest...continued from Page 1A

Forestry Agriculture Day? The Union/Towns County Cooperative Extensions are teaming up with the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center and Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council to offer an all things forest-related workshop on Sept. 28, at the GMREC Auditorium.

"We came together with Mickey Cummings and Frank Riley to brainstorm on topics that would be of interest to people in the area, especially an underserved interest among the community," said Ray Covington, GMREC superintendent. "One that immediately popped up was the forest. There are lots of programs for gardens and growing fruit trees, but no one is really addressing the forest issues here, in terms of a seminar.

"Look at our county – 60 percent of it is in Forest Service land. Most of the homeowners have forest on their property. I've had so many people asking what's going on with the oak trees and what they can do to improve it and sustain it.

"They're wanting to know, what's a weed, and what needs to be removed? So, we definitely have a need for this."

The workshop will be divided among five different speakers, all of whom are specialists in their respective fields from the University of Georgia, Georgia Forestry Commission and the U.S. Forest Service. These specialists will be covering nuisance wildlife, tree identification, invasive plants and trees, and diseases and pests of native trees.

The nuisance wildlife aspect of the workshop will focus on how to manage everything from feral pigs to Canada geese, plus moles and voles and everything in between that could be a potential threat to personal property.

Identification of invasive plants will be covered in the invasive plants and trees portion of the workshop. Those who attend will not only learn what these plants are, but also best management practices of each species.

"We're going to learn how to identify different fungal diseases, different insects that

could be infecting trees and the forest environment, and that is actually going to give us what is called pesticide credit," said UGA County Extension Agent Melissa Mattee, who covers Towns and Union counties.

"You can get a pesticide license, and every couple of years you need credit. This is a one-credit workshop, since we'll be talking about applying pesticides. We can teach members of the community how to treat trees to prevent disease and pest spread."

A volunteer from the Firewise Communities Program will also be making a presentation at the workshop. Firewise is program housed within the National Fire Protection Association that focuses on educating community members on how best to prevent forest fires.

The workshop itself is being funded through the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D, which covers 13 counties in Northeast Georgia. Frank Riley, executive director of the RC&D, coordinated with Mattee and Covington to facilitate the grant for the program.

"You can apply for educational grants that allow you to put on programs, and Frank Riley was able to get

a grant to do a field day or educational day, and it will last us three years," said Mattee. "So, we can do this seminar series three years in a row, and then do an assessment to see how perceptions changed, if people are implementing what they've learned to aid in conservation of natural resources and agriculture."

The workshop in September will be the first in a series, all focused on agriculture and conservation. Two other workshops will be offered in the winter and spring, one of which will cover soil conservation while the other will discuss best farm management practices.

"Even if you're primarily a farmer or producer, you're going to have some kind of timber or forest ecosystem on your property," said Mattee. "It's important to understand how that forest ecosystem operates so it can be cohesive with your agricultural endeavors so you minimally disturb the other."

The workshop will begin at 10 a.m. and last until 2:30 p.m. A \$5 fee is required to attend, which will include lunch. To RSVP to the event, call the GMREC at (706) 745-2655 by Sept. 14.

# Lodge...continued from Page 1A

their services."

This is the first year the lodge has done a First Responder Breakfast, and throughout the course of that Wednesday morning, the masons served free breakfast to dozens of first responders ranging from sheriff's deputies to police officers, jail employees, 911 dispatchers and firefighters.

The food, made in-house by members of Allegheny Lodge No. 114, included a hearty breakfast of bacon, eggs, pancakes, biscuits, sausage and gravy – and there were no complaints.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason was one of the many guests at the lodge that morning, and he said that as far as appreciation went, the feeling was mutual.

"We appreciate that organization, they do a lot for the community," said Sheriff Mason. "I appreciate them thinking about us. It uplifts our spirit when the community stands up for us. That's why we're here, to stand up for our citizens, and we appreciate it so much."

Union County Fire Chief David Dyer also attended the breakfast at Allegheny Lodge No. 114 headquarters, located in Downtown Blairsville, and he said he, too, appreciated the masonic organization for thinking of his firefighters and other first responders in the county.



Union County Fire Chief David Dyer shared a free meal with Lt. Jeff Fortenberry, on Wednesday, Aug. 3, in Allegheny Lodge No. 114's tribute to Union County First Responders

UCSO Detective Sgt. Tom Mangifesta, speaking to Benfield's concerns over a recent nationwide shifting of attitudes toward members of law enforcement, said that he's been feeling the love locally.

"In light of what's been happening the last couple of years with officers all over the country, we're seeing everybody around town just coming up and thanking us for our service, and it's really humbling," said Mangifesta. "But that's the way the folks

are in this community here. They appreciate us, and we appreciate them very much for the support we get from them."

The masons are already talking about holding another appreciation breakfast next year, and they hope to do it up bigger and better than this first time around.

Allegheny Lodge No. 114 was able to provide the free breakfast to Union County first responders thanks to community support for its

many fundraisers throughout the year.

"We've got a barbeque (fundraiser) coming up Sept. 30," said Benfield. "It'll be \$7 a plate, and that'll get you a big barbeque sandwich, a bag of chips and an oatmeal cookie, or \$35 for a whole Boston butt."

And of the many endeavors undertaken by masons each year, all 433 lodges statewide come together to support the Masonic Home of Georgia in Macon.

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