

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, November 3, 2021

## County aims to resume commercial dumping mid-November

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Government has been renovating the commercial side of the county-owned Transfer Station for the past month, aiming to make it both a safer place to dump trash and a cleaner environment for customers.

Commercial hauling has been paused since Oct. 4 to enable the upgrades, and County Manager Larry Garrett said they are still shooting for a 45-day completion window to have the commercial side operational, giving the county until mid-November to meet its deadline.

Formerly operated by Waste Management Inc., the site will be re-opening under county management, and Garrett said the hours will be changing slightly to accommodate a half-day during the week for

regular cleaning of the large dumping shed and commercial site grounds.

All major renovation work has already been completed, and currently, the county is awaiting the delivery of specialized computer equipment to run the scale house, as Waste Management removed its system after vacating the premises last month.

As previously reported, Waste Management decided to suspend operations there pending county-implemented safety upgrades to the main dumping shed, at which point the county chose to step in and run the facility off Deep South Farm Road.

As the county owns the Transfer Station, Garrett said taking over control locally will enable the county to make revenue to better maintain and upgrade the station over time without affecting property tax

payers.

Garrett said global shipping delays have contributed to the scale house equipment being harder to come by, so while the county waits for a permanent solution, it is sorting out the acquisition of loaner equipment to get the commercial scales running within the proposed timeframe.

The issue of shipping delays is one reason the county decided to renovate the existing facility rather than tear it down to build a completely new one, Garrett said, as such a project would likely have pushed re-opening back six months or more as they waited for building materials.

### RENOVATIONS & NEXT STEPS

Since Oct. 4, the county has installed steel support

beams spanning the interior of the shed to shore up structural integrity of the building, as well as 12-foot-tall solid concrete walls to prevent damage inside the structure should customers hit the facility when backing in to unload trash.

A new roof and exterior metal sheeting have been affixed to the building, and paint has been added in several places. The entire commercial site has been cleaned up and landscaped; driving areas have been repaved; and remaining gravel areas will receive surface treatment soon.

In addition to waiting on a system to operate the scale house, the county is in talks with various companies to round out its equipment needs; secure trailers to load local waste; hire haulers to transport it; and locate a landfill to take Union County's trash.

See *Commercial Dumping*, Page 2A



Workers pumping concrete into the new walls erected inside the commercial dumping shed at the Transfer Station last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## School System, Rotary Club to observe Veterans Day '21

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For many American civilians around the country, Veterans Day is just another day, during which U.S. veterans come together at their VFWs or for family gatherings away from the general public. Not so in Blairsville, Union County, Georgia.

People in Union County, both young and old, understand that American servicemen and women go into military service, ultimately, to defend the liberty and freedoms of all Americans. And around here, people respect, honor and appreciate that.

So, Veterans Day in Blairsville is a community celebration of the dedication and sacrifice of those

individuals who have served or are currently serving in America's armed services. It's also an affirmation of this community's respect and appreciation.

As testament to this, on Veterans Day this year, Nov. 11, from the Primary School to the High School, the student body of the Union County School District, with

See *Veterans Day*, Page 2A



Members of the North Georgia Civil Air Patrol Squadron posting the colors during the Union County Schools Veterans Day Program in 2016. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Union County recognized by GreatSchools.org, Niche



Principals of Union County Schools being recognized for excellence in the October meeting of the Board of Education. L-R: Casey Jones, Shane Womack, Pat Donaldson, Jerry Bavero and C.T. Hussion. Not pictured: Carol Knight. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

In the Oct. 26 regular meeting of the Union County Board of Education, School Superintendent John Hill announced that Union County High had been awarded the "College Success Gold Award" by www.GreatSchools.org.

"They were one of 1,770 high schools across the country to be recognized for their

day-in, day-out track record of college success based on college preparedness and post-secondary readiness," Hill said. "And this from data provided by the (Georgia) Department of Education for this agency.

"On behalf of the board, we'd like to give this to you on behalf of all your employees," Hill continued, as he presented UCHS Principal C.T. Hussion with a plaque. Hussion said this was the fourth year in which the High School had received

the award.

Hill also announced that the Union County School District had an overall A rating by www.Niche.com, an organization that "develops in-depth profiles on every school and college in America" for students and parents on the hunt for good schools.

Of the 180 school districts in Georgia, Union County was rated No. 2 in the "Districts with the Best Teachers in

See *UC Schools*, Page 3A

## Halloween at Meeks Park a family-friendly fright fest



Cruella de Vil attended Halloween at Meeks Park on Sunday with her precious pack of Dalmatians, aka the Youngbloods. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Eerie music and ghostly noises echoed through the trees of Meeks Park Sunday afternoon with a fantastic Halloween celebration that welcomed hundreds of area families.

Resurrected since last year's COVID-19 threat, the event brought out the scariest "haints" the mountains had to offer, and in fact featured a costume contest for children to compete in ghoulish fun.

To ensure safety, Blairsville's Hometown Halloween was moved to the open air of Meeks Park in

2021, and tables were socially distanced for trick-or-treaters as they lined up to get their share of the sugar-filled bounty.

Although brief, the costume contest at 6 p.m. was a huge hit. Contenders included everything from food costumes like a banana and a burrito to popular characters like "Baby

See *Meeks Halloween*, Page 6A

## Nottely Marina delights kids with candy, spooky sights

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

It was a party to die for at the Nottely Marina Halloween celebration Oct. 29 and Oct. 31, with the graveyard smash hosting 17 different pick-up stops for candy and other sweet treats posted along a winding trail encircling the property of the managing Doucette family.

Normally, the event would have spanned three days, but rain on Saturday put a damper on the spooky shindig, and the marina decided to cancel for that night only, though the party picked right back up Sunday evening.

As he did last year, Union County Sheriff's Capt. Tom Mangifesta—in a "Scream" mask and with help from his wife Colleen—directed traffic inside the marina grounds, and upon parking, trick-or-treaters were greeted with a multitude of bewitching sights.

Inflatable lawn

See *Marina Halloween*, Page 6A



Mogwai from "Gremlins" attended Halloween at Nottely Marina over the weekend. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

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**SPORTS**  
CROSS COUNTRY  
11/5 @ CARROLLTON 9 AM  
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SENIOR NIGHT

Election Results for  
TSPLOST Referendum & City of Blairsville  
Available Wednesday, Nov. 3  
Online at  
www.nganews.com  
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Childhood  
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# Commercial Dumping...from Page 1A

The Commissioner's Office is also working to staff the commercial site, with former Waste Management employee Bobby Bright being hired to operate the county's new concern. Bright has held multiple positions at

the Transfer Station over the years.

Cost to commercial haulers under Waste Management was \$46 per ton of trash. Garrett said that cost will increase under county management, as one way

Waste Management was able to keep costs down was by using the Transfer Station as a drop-off point for trash from local businesses and nearby counties.

Presently, local trash hauling businesses and people with non-bagged waste are having to drive to Mineral Bluff to dump garbage at the Transfer Station there, and many contractors are taking their construction debris to Georgia Mountain Grinding & Recycling.

For now, Waste Management is continuing to manage residential bagged garbage and recycling at the Transfer Station, as well as the Convenience Center off Georgia 325 near the Horse Arena, but moving forward, the county will operate the commercial side of the station.

## SPLOST FUNDING

Like the Convenience Center at Georgia 325 and the



The big shed at the Transfer Station has gotten a facelift – and important safety improvements, too – in preparation for re-opening later this month. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

separate residential trash area constructed at the Transfer Station – both finished in 2016 – the county is using voter-approved Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax money for the current “solid waste upgrades” at the commercial site.

Garrett said final costs will not be known until the project is closer to completion and invoices have been submitted and tallied.

The Commissioner's Office has sought and received voter approval on consecutive SPLOST referendums over the last two decades, and some critics of Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris have alleged that county government has illegally and/or inappropriately used SPLOST funds.

One argument is that Paris has repeatedly failed to follow through on his promises to voters, instead shuffling SPLOST money around to pay for pet projects while neglecting the will of the people who supported specific projects that were used to sell the SPLOST at the ballot box.

For its part, the Commissioner's Office has said that state law gives the county broad discretion in prioritizing projects within the voter-approved categories on SPLOST referendums, and simple differences in opinion as to how the money should be spent do not amount to illegal or inappropriate activity.

Further, County Purchasing Agent Pam Hawkins said that, while some money has always gone toward the various project categories for each SPLOST as required by law, the county has been well within its rights in assigning higher and lower priorities to projects in different categories.

Factors that go into such prioritization decisions include SPLOST collection levels – for example, SPLOST III under-collected projections by more than \$10 million due to the Great Recession – and changes in the perceived need that occur years on from the initial vote.

Still, critics believe

the county should be more transparent in recounting how projects are decided.

Case in point, there's been some public disagreement over past SPLOST funding earmarked for solid waste upgrades, with major Transfer Station improvements pitched by the county as far back as 2007 never having come to fruition.

According to criticism against him, that's because Paris has been operating an illegal “slush fund.”

The county, however, has said it did not pursue some major Transfer Station upgrades in the past due to lower-than-expected SPLOST collections, and it also concluded over time that not all but a lot of the limited funds that could be allocated there would be better spent on other eligible projects.

Adding to the complexity of the situation, Hawkins said that past contractual stipulations saw former Transfer Station manager Appalachian Waste Systems agreeing to upgrade the commercial dumping shed in exchange for the ability to manage the site.

But before it completed the upgrades, the company was acquired by Advanced Disposal, which contested that part of the contract as something it did not agree to, so the upgrades never took place. Advanced Disposal was itself acquired recently by Waste Management Inc.

Now, the county contends residents will directly benefit from the upgrades that are being paid for by SPLOST instead of providing locally funded infrastructure for a third party to profit.

## RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE

In terms of bagged household garbage, people will have noticed that rates went up at the beginning of October. Formerly \$1, small bags up to 30 gallons now cost \$1.50 to throw away, and large bags over 30 gallons, previously

\$1.25, are now \$1.75 per bag. Recycling remains free.

“Waste Management would like to thank the citizens of Union County for their patience as we undergo safety upgrades at the Transfer Station on Deep South Farm Road,” the company said. “As I am sure you are aware, global inflation is impacting business in all industries.

“Those impacts are being felt at Waste Management in disposal, parts and materials, labor, as well as significant cost increases and delays to our supply chain. As a result of these global inflationary pressures, bagged garbage rates have increased.

“As a company, we value your partnership and look forward to continuing to service the residents of Union County, Georgia, for years to come.”

Since the commercial site suspended operations, the North Georgia News has received multiple complaints about cleanliness conditions deteriorating over on the residential garbage side of the Transfer Station.

Prior to the suspension, Waste Management used front loading dumpsters to transfer garbage bags into trash compactor trucks, which the company then hauled to the commercial area on the other side of the Transfer Station for loading into trailers bound for the landfill in Ball Ground.

After suspension, the company brought in open roll-off dumpsters that are being packed down with a backhoe, unfortunately allowing more trash than usual to blow out and around the property. Once full, these dumpsters are covered with tarps and taken to Mineral Bluff.

When asked about residential garbage conditions at the Transfer Station last week, Waste Management told the North Georgia News it would “look into” the complaints and respond back. Additional comments are expected but were not available by press time.

# Veterans Day...from Page 1A

help from their teachers and mentors, will hold a program of recognition to honor those who have protected them.

The program will start with a full breakfast for veterans and their spouses and families from 8 until 9:45 a.m. at the Union County High School Cafeteria.

Following the breakfast, a student-led Veterans Day Program will take place inside Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on the football field beginning at 10 a.m.

Parking will be available adjacent to the stadium, and transportation will be provided to and from the breakfast for those wishing to park there.

This year's ceremony will include the High School Chorus led by Alicia Covington, the Middle School Chorus led by Melissa Pilote, the High School Band led by Will Stafford, and the Middle School Band led by Daniel Foster.

Elementary and Primary School students, along with students from Woody Gap School, will present veterans with letters of appreciation for their service to the country.

The keynote speaker will be High School senior Katelyn Rash, with junior Constance Moore and senior Taylor Walls assisting in the ceremony.

Senior Hannah Sheffield will orchestrate the Quilt of Valor Ceremony, and students will award deserving local veterans Quilts of Valor sewn by the ladies of the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild.

The 152nd North Georgia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, commanded by Lt. Kenneth J. Stanger, will provide the Color Guard.

Veteran members of the

local American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121, commanded by retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dan Wickersham, will bear the service flags.

School Safety Coordinator and retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Art McCann said the Daughters of the American Revolution will close the occasion with the presentation of a plaque to all students of the school system in recognition of their efforts in leading the patriotic event.

McCann, who supervised the student effort in putting on the event, said this will be the ninth year the students at Union County Schools have collaborated to show their appreciation for veterans on Veterans Day.

Following the school event, the Rotary Club of Union County will host a Veterans Day luncheon in the banquet room of the Union County Community Center starting at 11:30 a.m.

All local veterans and a spouse or guest are cordially invited for a buffet lunch prepared by Matt Leonard's staff at The View Grill.

The limit of one guest or a spouse is because of the limited room capacity per fire code. At press time, the event was near capacity, but people may inquire about reservations by emailing rob@rwm7.net.

Serving as keynote speaker will be Doug Collins, former U.S. Representative for the 9th Congressional District of Georgia and a veteran U.S. Navy chaplain and U.S. Air Force Reserve colonel.

Rotary Member and retired Navy Seabee Bob Ramay said Collins heartily agreed that the event is meant to be a “thank you” to veterans for

their service to the country and not a platform for politics.

Union County's own Tommy Townsend of Waymore's Outlaws fame will round out the luncheon with about an hour of musical entertainment.

Both Ramay and McCann commented that these Veterans Day events in Blairsville are somewhat unique because they are not just veterans slapping each other on the back but real showings of community support.

These events in Blairsville-Union County are being initiated in large part by non-veterans – civilians who really want to express their appreciation and respect for the people who are willing to stand in harm's way to protect them.

People will also want to be sure and support the Fourth Annual Salute to Veterans Car Show by the Blairsville Cruisers, set for Saturday, Nov. 6, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market. Funds from the car show will go toward needy children's Christmas programs.

**YOU  
ARE THE  
PTO**

The Blairsville PTO will have the November meeting at the UCMS in the cafeteria on Monday, November 8, 2021 at 6 p.m. Please come out and be part of your parent/teacher organization. We look forward to seeing you there. N(NoV3.27)CA

# UC Schools...from Page 1A



Superintendent John Hill with Union County Schools Resource Officer Scott Deyton, who has medical training and helps out in multiple areas of the school district.

Photo by Mark Smith

Georgia" category; No. 3 in the "Best Places to Teach in Georgia" category; and No. 11 in the "Safest School Districts in Georgia" category.

Also in the meeting, the principals of the high school,

middle school, elementary school, primary school, Woody Gap School and the alternative education program presented Extra Mile awards to their administrative staffs in honor of their exemplary work.

Moving along, Union County Schools Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport announced the successful collaboration with Union County Family Connection in being awarded the Drug-Free Communities Grant.

Family Connection Coordinator Katy Jones, who initiated the grant application with Davenport's help, said the purpose of the grant is to strengthen community relations and reduce drug abuse.

Jones said it is a federal grant in the amount of \$125,000 for each of five years, with an automatic renewal for five more years if in good standing at the end of the first five years.

Next, Davenport initiated a discussion on utilizing Educational Substitute Staffing to take the substitute needs of the district off the shoulders of school staff. It would also relieve the school of some employment liabilities.

"This company would actually take over or manage the (substitute teachers, bus drivers, food service, administration, etc.) in our school system," Davenport said. "They would do this by actually employing the substitutes."

"As part of their rate of pay, the company will actually have a dedicated person that will be split with Rabun County. We'll house them in our school system, and their job will be to train and recruit and manage the substitute pool."

The rate of pay for the substitutes would remain the same as current levels, but with a 25% premium charged to Union County Schools for the service. Educational Substitute Staffing requires a one-year contract, so school board members could elect not to renew after a year.

For his part, Hill said he was skeptical at first but warmed up to the idea after talking with superintendents of several nearby school districts who use the company.

After many questions and much discussion, board members unanimously approved the hiring of Educational Substitute Staffing for one year beginning in January 2022.

Regarding the current Education SPLOST V, Hill said \$6.5 million was what the system had spent so far.

"We have cash on hand to finish completing the transportation and

maintenance operations facility," he said. "We've got on procurement a fuel island. That's a big expenditure. It's probably going to go over that \$100,000 threshold, but it's a must have."

Hill said the School District's part of the under-construction College and Career Academy project totaling \$850,000 will come out of ESPLOST V.

"And then the big expenditure, of course, is our primary school renovation. We're a pay-as-you-go system," he said, adding that "it's a whole lot of work, but we've saved our money and now we're ready to execute these projects."

In his Superintendent's Update, Hill said that, as of Friday, Oct. 22, there were 3,014 students registered in the district, and as of 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 26, that number had grown to 3,025, "so we've had 11 kids move in here since Sunday."

"Athletics are going really well," Hill said, and Athletic Director Mandy Hunter echoed that sentiment, adding that the fall and winter sports programs are currently overlapping, so it's been very busy.

On Nov. 11, Union County Schools will host its ninth annual Veterans Day event, beginning with a full breakfast for veterans and their families from 8-9:30 a.m. in the High School Cafeteria followed by a full program at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium from 10-11:30 a.m.

The program is completely a product of student initiative.

In other news, Finance

Director Karen Bundy said the July and August financial reports were done and that the annual audit is underway and should be completed and submitted to the board in

January 2022. The Union County Board of Education meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. for a work session and 7 p.m. for a business session.

## Union County Christmas Parade



December 4, 2021 - PM

Sponsored by the Union County Historical Society  
Theme: "Christmas in the Mountains"

Name of Entry: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Entry: Float \_\_\_\_\_ Automobile \_\_\_\_\_

Walkers \_\_\_\_\_ Animals \_\_\_\_\_

Motorcycle \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*All entries must have lights\*\*\*\*\*

Entry forms must be received in the Historical Society office by noon on December 2nd. Send completed form by email [history1@windstream.net](mailto:history1@windstream.net) or drop off at the Society's office in the old courthouse on the square. For more information call the office at 706-745-5493.

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# William Clyde Collins, Sr. celebrates 100th birthday

William Clyde Collins, Sr. will celebrate his 100th birthday on November 7, 2021. The experiences of this centenarian spell out a life well lived. A life of faith and dedication to his family, country and the students of Union County.

Mr. Collins was born in Union County to William Harve and Northa Dyer Collins on the family farm in Choestoe district. He graduated from Union County High School in 1938 and subsequently graduated from Young Harris College 2 years later. He started his teaching career at the age of 18 at Harmony Grove Elementary which had a student population of 23 students grades 1st through 7th. He worked for TVA on the construction of Nottely Dam during the summer and returned to teaching that fall at Town Creek Elementary School.

He married his high school sweetheart Roma Sue Turner in May of 1942. Soon after he was called to service during the WW2 conflict in the United States Army Air Corps in December 1942. He served at a variety of stateside locations until February 1946, gaining the rank of Sargent.

Mr. Collins returned to Union County after completing his service and attended the University of Georgia from 1947-1949 receiving his BS Degree in Education. He returned to teaching at Union County specializing in history. During this time, he taught veterans at night in order to help them achieve their high school diploma. He received his Masters in School Administration in 1964 and served as principal at Town Creek Elementary School and Ivy Log Elementary School. He was



Roma Sue and William Clyde Collins, Sr.

later named principal of Union County High School in 1968. Mr. Collins enjoyed his tenure as principal. He along with Doris Colwell was instrumental in bringing head start to Union County. In 1976 he was elected Union County School Superintendent. He served the school system there until June of 1981 retiring from education after serving for over 40 years. He taught college level courses at the Epworth campus of Truett McConnell College after retirement before taking his favorite seat on the front porch of his home on Collins Road. It is here that he enjoys visiting with family and friends and the occasional student who stops to reminisce about the "good old days". He says he did everything he had ever dreamed of accomplishing in education.

Mr. Collins had 4 children, Bill, Carolyn (deceased), Debbie and Carlton. He has been blessed with 13 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren. Mr. Collins is an avid



William Clyde Collins, Sr., U.S. Air Corps Georgia Bulldog fan.

Mr. Collins is a member at Choestoe Baptist Church. He served this congregation as Sunday School Superintendent, Sunday school teacher and as Deacon. He continues to serve as Deacon Emeritus.

# Meeks Halloween...from Page 1A

Yoda," Iron Man and the Bride of Chucky.

For the 0-4 age category, Everly Burns won as Jenny from "Forrest Gump." The champion of the 5-8 category was Zoe Harris as Lilo from "Lilo and Stich."

Finally, the 9-Teen category had four winners, each representing a different Hogwarts house from "Harry Potter" - Derrick Baughman, Carrie Webster, Lilly Wasko, and Dakota Stanger.

Whether they participated in the contest or not, some trick-or-treaters came up with particularly creative, unique guises, like 10-year-old Marlee Cisneros, who dressed as a jellyfish with glowing lights festooning the tendrils that streamed from her homemade headpiece.

"Well, I didn't really know what to do, so I just thought it would be simple and it turned out pretty good," Cisneros said.

Using homemade supplies, Cisneros' mother, Heather, helped her daughter put together the impressive suit within four hours on the night before Halloween.

"It's a bowl and some cardboard that we had to hot glue and tape together, and we had to glue battery packs into it to light it up because she had to have it lit up," Mrs. Cisneros said of the headpiece. "We had to sit last night and cut strips of tablecloth and ribbon to make her tentacles."

Just past the Clyde "Cuz" Bruce Bridge crossing Butternut Creek in lower Meeks Park was the "Haunted Forest." Sponsored by Will Stafford and the UCHS Band, the walk was kept a secret until Oct. 31, when all was revealed before those brave enough to travel through it.

The heavy carpet of dead leaves and the smell of loam lent themselves well to the setting as costumed youths ducked in and out of the trees, whooping and threatening passersby with their outdoor



Several winners of the 2021 Halloween Costume Contest for kids at Meeks Park Oct. 31. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

haunted-house experience. Overhead and to the side of the trail were bits and pieces of toys or dismembered plastic skeletons, sometimes stained with bright-red fake blood.

But the best part about the trail was the surprise finale. Just when the end was in sight, a boy in plaid flannel came screaming through the woods from behind the tour to run through the crowd, earning more than just a few shrieks of fright.

Local businesses and organizations like the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club were there to hand out candy alongside other groups, like Region IV of the beneficiary American Motorcycle Group. Vice President Scotty Keaton was offering awareness alongside candy.

"We really try to do our best to give back to the veterans, because they have literally given everything they have, whether it was their time to be away from their family during Halloween or Christmas or Thanksgiving," Keaton said.

"If they've given all of that, what is it from us that we just give a little bit of candy?"

Added Keaton's wife Misty, "Motorcycle groups are not just about angry things, you

know?" Just a few feet away, many trick-or-treaters and their families took advantage of picnic tables at Meeks Park to have supper served from one of the several on-site food trucks.

Among these dining guests was the Ward family of Young Harris. They've only been in the mountains for a month after moving from their native Colorado, but they already prefer living in Georgia.

"My son's out somewhere playing right now, and that never happens," Kenny Ward said, commending the community for its closeness and trustworthiness.

Overall, the turnout was massive Sunday night. Some theorized that it was "more than the Sorghum Festival," and it was certainly possible, as the trick-or-treat line stretched all the way to the lower parking lot beside the Memorial Bridge.

But there was no impatience or unhappy faces among those gathered. In fact, typical of most interactions that evening, the Wards' older son Blake chased Marlee Cisneros around the field, and both the little jellyfish and miniature Iron Man wished those around them a "Happy Halloween!"

# Marina Halloween...from Page 1A



The Doucettes had a great time hosting costumed children for their now-annual Halloween at Nottely Marina. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

decorations like pumpkins and ghosts filled the yard, along with lights and tree hangings shaped vaguely like shrouded bodies. Further up the property, a skeleton crew with glowing eyes and tattered clothing stood around a gazebo decorated like a pirate ship.

Although the lake added to the eerie ambiance, guests were not allowed to go near the docks, and the boats and parking lot were cordoned off for the safety of all.

Of course, feeding Frankensteins is a challenging feat, so to make the most of the frightful event, it was requested that individual ghosts and ghouls only haunt the marina for a single day to ensure there was plenty of candy to go around.

And indeed, there was much fun to be had. Despite rain the first night, the turnout was excellent. Most of the booths had more than one person handing out candy, and there were even a couple of games to entertain younger guests, such as Brian Preston's rubber ducky pool.

Inspired by the viral Duck Duck Jeep movement, Preston decided to spread the positivity of the movement by creating an activity featuring a pool filled with a minimal amount of water and glow-in-the-dark rubber ducks.

"We have the ducks floating in the pool, and there's numbers on the bottom," Preston explained, holding up one of the billed birds as an example. "And

the kids pick the number and show me the number, and there's different prizes for each number."

Said prizes included slime, deluxe candy bars, plastic teeth, popcorn balls and glowsticks. No stranger to creative thinking, Preston noted that last year, instead of the duck game, he used remote control dump trucks to pass out candy.

Organized primarily by Moriah Doucette, manager of Nottely Marina, the Halloween event was first conceptualized last year when COVID-19 restrictions prevented the traditional Halloween on the Square.

"I was super bummed; we always loved going to the square (to hand out candy)," Doucette said. "We'd done it for several years before that, and they were like, 'It's canceled, sorry. No Halloween.' I'm like, what do you mean, 'no Halloween?' There's got to be Halloween."

And so, she and her husband set out to start a Halloween event of their own at the Nottely Marina.

It didn't take long for other businesses to follow suit. This year, some of the repeat visitors at the Marina Halloween event included the Hole in the Wall, Shores & Moor, and Mountain Home Health. Local families also heard about the event and set up trunk-or-treat stops.

The Schmitt family, dressed as werewolves, manned a moonlit table wherein alpha and father Greysen Schmitt offered trick-or-treaters a chance at Nerf dart practice.

"This is so important," Schmitt emphasized, voice muffled by his mask. "And we're not going to let the kids down. Look, Halloween on the Square is the best event around, but when they shut it down, we stepped up to the plate. We're here doing it."

Halloween on the Square was moved to Meeks Park in 2021, and Blairsville's residents are always encouraged to come out and attend all of the delightfully frightful celebrations the community has to offer.

# Union County Schools 2021 Veterans Day Presentation



Elementary and Primary School students along with students from Woody Gap School will present Veterans with letters of appreciation for their service to our country.

Our keynote speaker is Katelyn Rash, and assisting in the ceremony is Constance Moore and Taylor Walls. Hannah Sheffield will orchestrate the Quilt of Valor ceremony.

We will award deserving Veterans the Quilt of Valor sewn by the ladies of the Misty Mountain Quilters. The local American Legion has also asked to be a part of our ceremony this year along with students representing the Civil Air Patrol.

There will also be a special presentation by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Our Veterans deserve the recognition, and our School District takes pride in presenting this great event.

The point of contact for this year's ceremony is Art McCann. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Art McCann at 706-745-2216 ext 1112, or you can email him at amccann@ucschools.org.

In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the Fine Arts Center.