

Christmas...from Page 1A

is especially meaningful to kids who don't normally get to take part in the same Christmas morning experience as their peers due to hardship. "Shop with a Panther is a tradition that (the late) Principal Ed Rohrbach started about 10 years ago," said Dixie Conger, who is the 2018-2019 High School Teacher of the Year. "Each year, our high school students take around 30 second-grade students to shop for their Christmas. "Then, we go back to the gym to have lunch, wrap

presents, play games, and do all kinds of things." Second-grade students ran around the store with their high school elders that Monday, laughing as they went to handpick their favorite toys and gifts with the allotted amount of money they received through the program. High school students joined in on the fun the younger kids were having by playing with them and having fun, friendly conversations as they all shopped together, making each child feel comfortable

around the older students. The high school students were in charge of keeping track of how much money the children accumulated in their shopping carts, making sure that the kids did not go over their budget. When the children used up their allotted money, they all made their way to the checkout areas to conclude the shopping part of their day before returning to the gym to enjoy lunch and wrapping their new gifts. While this program is important for the second-graders that may not be fortunate enough to have the luxuries of Christmas, it is also



The Shop with a Panther program gives younger students the opportunity to bond with older students who serve as role models. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Union County Sheriff's Office Christmas Banquet/Party

The Union County Sheriff's Office held its annual Christmas Party/Banquet at the Civic Center on December 19th. There was plenty of good food and fellowship for the officers and employees of the Union County Sheriff's office and their families. There were humorous slide shows showing Sheriff's office personnel throughout the year, plenty of door prizes and even a visit from Santa.

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution presented a Law Enforcement Commendation Medal to Lt. Craig Davenport. Lt. Davenport is a team player. He is a hostage negotiator, assistant firearms instructor and serves on the Emergency Response Team. He is a field training officer and heads up the field training program. Lt. Davenport manages prisoner transports, and serves as communications officer between Union County Sheriff's Office and all other agencies throughout the entire United States. He serves as a civil processor and warrant server, while heading up the Union County warrant and fugitive recovery units.

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter SAR also presented a Bronze Good Citizenship Medal to Sheriff Mack Mason. Sheriff Mason is in his second term. He has made himself readily accessible to the citizens of the county. He looks for ways to improve the safety of the citizens of our community. He has implemented programs to augment the Sheriff's Office budget



(L-R): Lt. Craig Davenport and Sid Turner, President of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter



(L-R): Sheriff Mack Mason and Sid Turner providing more equipment and serves from funds and property seized in drug raids. Sheriff Mason leads a professional and dedicated group of law enforcement officers. Union County is fortunate to be served by such a group of people that are willing to put their lives on the line to make this community a better place to live. NDec26Z13CA

important for the education of the high school students.

"I think the program is just as good for our high school students as it is for our little ones, because they get to help each other and have fun," said Conger. "Talk about being tired at the end of the day, I don't know who is most tired, the high schoolers or the second

graders, so it's a great day all around."

The program helps teach the high school students community building and the importance of giving back.

"Our high schoolers get a lot out of it and give back to the community," said High School Principle C.T Hussion. "Ms. Conger does a great job

organizing the whole thing and working with the second-graders.

"I think it also shows community cooperation with Walmart here ... We are proud to keep the tradition continuing on, because this is all that some of these kids get for Christmas."

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 Who is Tom Taylor?
 Tom has been in the insurance business 36 years since his medical retirement from the US Army as a LTC. He has numerous awards, such as LUTCF, LILI AIA, Lifeleaders of GA & SC, Instructor for new agents. His awards for the Army include Silver Star, Bronze Stars, Meritorious Service Medals, Army Commendation Medals, Combat Infantry Badge, Airborne Wings, Air Crew Wings, Air Medal, Meritorious Unit Award, Good Conduct Medal, Reservest National Guard Achievement Medal and National Defense Medal recipient.

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