

# Reunion...from Page 1A

clude a CCC Boys Reunion.

The CCC Boys helped clearcut the grounds that were to make up Vogel State Park, making way for cabins, planting trees, helping build the 20-acre lake called Trahlyta, boat houses, and other amenities that made up Georgia's second state park.

They never met a stranger, and the countless young men who made up the Civilian Conservation Corps became lifelong friends.

The days were long, the hours crept by and the work was not even close to easy.

When they first arrived, they cleaned up all around what became the lake.

Once that task was complete, they started to build the dam. They dug down to the bedrock, and then started putting in the clay. The clay came from the park grounds near today's Group Shelter.

The CCC provided unskilled manual labor jobs for about 3 million unmarried young men, ages 18-25, many of whom might otherwise have drifted onto the wrong side of the law.

Organized into outdoor government camps, the CCC Boys worked in conservation and development of land resources owned by federal, state, and local governments.

They planted 3 billion trees to replace the forests that had been devastated by unlimited harvesting.

They fought fires,



worked in flood control, drained swamplands, and built public access and service roads in rural areas.

Almost 800 parks were created, and state parks like Vogel were built.

The CCC Boys wore uniforms, lived in tents, and earned \$30 a month in wages. They sent \$25 of that home to their parents to keep their families solvent.

The pay wasn't much, but the money and the work had a notable effect on morale.

The CCC Boys Reunion and the CCC Museum near the Group Shelter are impor-

tant parts of Vogel's legacy.

This is the 81st anniversary of the formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps. It's a very important year in the history of Vogel State Park.

Remembering the CCC days through the park's museum is an important way to remember the legacy of the nation's fight against the Depression era.

The museum is a part of the history of the park, and it's very important.

It's a part of history that Vogel State Park wants to keep going.

When the CCC Boys Reunion started, there were 75 men that attended.

Last year, five CCC boys attended, so that resource is slowly slipping away.

Vogel State Park is a legacy to those men. The CCC Boys Reunion is a tribute to those men.

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who came and broke bread with us today. We know that they didn't go home hungry. We don't just serve pancakes and sausage. We break out the works. And that comes with coffee, juice and tea. What ever you want."

The proceeds of the event go toward local scholarships, food boxes during hard times, to helping families at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and to the Masonic Homes, and the Widow's Fund.

"We couldn't have pulled this off without our incredible crew of volunteers," Brother Baumgardner said.

"It's all about brotherhood, community and making a difference here."

It's good brotherhood for those who come to help; it's good brotherhood for those who come to dine with the lodge, Past Master Doug Shea said.

"It also lets everyone know what we're trying to accomplish in the community," Brother Shea said. "We want to do good things in this community."

Brother Baumgardner has been around for quite some time, and he says the annual breakfast event has been

going on since he can remember.

"We've served a lot of meals out of this Lodge," Brother Baumgardner said. "And we've enjoyed every minute."

Allegheny No. 114 has given out as many as seven \$500 scholarships in one year.

They also helped several families at Thanksgiving with food boxes, and even more families at Christmas.

They also were able to provide numerous Widows' Baskets.

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ncials.

Each of the five tribes has to agree to how anything is placed into a memorial to see that it matches the "facts" as recorded by written or oral history.

We are dealing with tribal liaisons of each of the five tribes, the state, the federal government and even the local community has to be addressed each step of the way, said Brown.

And he should know, Brown had the privilege to work on the inaugural American Indian National Arts Exposition, or Kituwah that was held at the Asheville Civic Center in September of 1992.

He subsequently worked with the Red Earth Pow Wow in Oklahoma City, and served as a purchasing agent for the Qualla Co-op on the Qualla Boundary, as well as photographing the 75th Annual Crow Fair at Crow Agency, Montana.

The idea of inviting five heads of sovereign nations to Blairsville, for any reason will in effect bring the attention of the nation and quite possibly the world on our community.

"Our goal," said Brown, is to garner the attention of as many different avenues as we possibly can.

The first that come to mind, *Native Peoples Magazine*, *Native Times Newspaper*, *The National Museum of the American Indian*, and from there anybody that we can reach out to.

"We have already been in talks with a documentary film producer to cover the project but we have tiptoed through the proceedings and aren't sure if it is something we want to get involved with yet," Brown said.

Leadership Union said that the first tribe that they had actually had the chance to talk with was the United Keetoowah Band located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Lisa Larue-Stopp, UKB THPO (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer), gave the most stirring evidence of the magnitude of the project when she said, "y'all can't comprehend the sensitivity of what your Leadership Union group is attempting to do. Y'all are inviting us home, and we have never been invited home before," she said.

Lisa went on to discuss the emotions tied to such a project in the sense that the United Keetoowah Band were descendants of the Old Settlers, a band of Cherokee who left the eastern portion of North Georgia for Ar-

kansas in 1817 prior to the Removal of 1838.

She continued in saying that it was prophesied 196 years ago that they (the Cherokee) would return home to their ancestral homelands to memorialize their beginnings.

The Leadership Union group which now has expanded to include, John Chitwood representing Service Plumbing, Matthew Collins of the Lance Law Firm and Renee Deibert of North Georgia Technical College, was two weeks ago graciously awarded an audience with the Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina.

Brown, Lance, Collins, Nelson and Chitwood made the journey and spent a full four hours meeting with Principal Chief Hicks, the THPOs Russell Townsend and Yolanda Sannooke and head of the Cherokee Museum, Bo Taylor to discuss the project.

While no promises were made during the meetings by either party, the Leadership Union group expressed interest to honor the five tribes as original inhabitants of Union County and the Eastern Band of Cherokee seemed interested in forming a partnership to discuss the validity of putting together a fitting memorial that would recognize the tribes.

"What we walked away with was a sense that they were willing to help us to move forward, but they were going to be very cautious as to what they would eventually agree to if anything," Lance said. "It was indicated during the meeting that this was a unique opportunity for both the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Union County to build a partnership of mutual respect and collaboration."

"We can't say that what was expressed in the Chief's office meant anything, but we felt confident that the Eastern Band officials we met with were willing to listen to what we were proposing and were willing to consider a collaboration of sorts," Lance said.

Brown added, "Let's face it, outside entities don't have the best intentions when viewed through the eyes of tribal members. We aren't trying to right a wrong but we are trying to run with what we were tasked with by Tobie Chandler, Cindy Williams and Patrick Malone of Leadership Union.

"We are trying to establish something that can bring a mutual respect between the tribal communities that inhabited this area and give them a connection to the same place we call home," Brown said. "Our hope and desire is that this would work out for all parties involved and allow us to collaborate on future endeavors."

Brown has already reached out and been granted consent to move further in discussions with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Muscogee, Oklahoma.

Justin Giles, THPO for the Muscogee Nation, carried the idea of the project and Brown's power point presentation of the project to the Intertribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes that convened weeks ago in Tahlequah.

While not going into specifics Giles indicated that it was indeed a worthy project to pursue as he acknowledged that the Muscogee peoples did indeed once inhabit all of Georgia to include the Union County region of North Georgia.

As recent as last year, Muscogee tribal members in remembrance of the Trail of Tears rode from Macon, and the site of the Ocmulgee Indian mounds to Muscogee, Oklahoma.

There is still a very distinct tie to their ancestral homelands as much as there is for the Cherokee Indians and any person who knows their heritage.

Just as the Muscogee tribal did last year, members of the three federally recognized tribes of the Cherokee have also been making the trek from ancestral homelands to Oklahoma to memorialize the plight of their ancestors.

Enrolled tribal members of the Cherokee Nations have had the opportunity to be selected and participate in the Remember the Removal Ride since 1984, riding from New Echota, Georgia to Tahlequah, Oklahoma all in the name of connecting with their past.

The endeavor that Brown, Lance, Nelson, Worden, Chitwood, Collins, Deibert and the remaining class members of 2014 Leadership Union will indeed have a lasting effect on Blairsville, the Union County community, the state of Georgia and the nation as a whole as they seek to honor our predecessors and invite them to return home to their ancestral homelands.