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Thousands gathered in Meeks Park, North Georgia Technical College's parking lot on Highway 515, various locations in downtown Blairsville, and other favorite vantage points to wait on the 9:30 p.m. Fireworks show.

People start gathering early in the day to save their favorite viewing spaces while enjoying cookouts, watermelon feasts, games, and picnics.

People of all ages came out to participate in the celebration festivities. Blankets and lawn chairs dotted the landscape – all the comforts of home with the added bonus of a Fourth of July fireworks extravaganza.

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce sponsored the fireworks, which has become a tradition in Union County and is considered by many to be one of the premier Fourth of July events in the region.

Blairsville Mayor and Chamber Board member, Jim Conley said the event never ceases to amaze him.

"This is a very positive thing for our community and it brings people in to Blairsville where they spend their dollars that could be spent elsewhere," Mayor Conley

said. "Visitors have come to expect the fireworks and look forward to the annual event when visiting Blairsville and Union County.

"This in and of itself is a very good reason to continue to this great show."

Many Union County residents have expressed concerns that the cost of the fireworks is too much of a burden on local taxpayers.

To address these concerns, the Chamber holds a raffle each year to offset the cost of the event. These raffle funds typically cover more than half of the total bill and relieve the pressure on local taxpayers.

Mayor Conley said the raffle has paid dividends.

"The Chamber wants to increase the size of the show each year, but the cost seems to escalate at a faster rate than the Chamber can budget money, so we created the raffle to help offset that increase," he said.

As a nation, America takes time every July to celebrate its independence and to honor the brave men and women who gave their all so our citizens can live in a free country.

Americans also remem-

ber that the price of our freedom is not free.

With that thought in mind, Blairsville Union County Chamber President Cindy Williams said the annual event is designed to bring the community together.

"The fireworks show is intended to bring the community together to celebrate our nation's independence and to bring honor to those who have served in our military," she said. "A special thanks goes out to all Union County employees who assisted with the safety of the event and I'd like to thank the Chamber board and volunteers who made the raffle a success."

The fireworks show is a family-oriented event that intends to stimulate the patriotism in all residents.

Sometimes we take for granted the freedom that was bought with such a heavy price tag.

Union County is fortunate to have a rich history in the continued fight for freedom.

The fireworks show at Meeks Park is another way to help us all remember our heritage will never die and the sacrifices of our loved ones will never be forgotten.



Fireworks enthusiasts gathered early at Meeks Park on the Fourth of July to witness the annual Fourth of July Fireworks Extravaganza. The event, sponsored by the the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce attracts thousands to the community. Photo/Joe Collins