

Halloween...from Page 1A

spot on that dozens stopped him for pictures and even hugs.

"Like everyone, I love *Pirates of the Caribbean* and Captain Jack Sparrow, but I've had a lifelong fascination with pirates," said Thompson, who attends the event every year with his children.

Marty Duncan, pastor of Fellowship of the Hills Church, handed out hundreds of bags of assorted candy with his wife Susan and other volunteers from his church.

"It's been a wonderful event," said Duncan. "I would dare say that this is probably the most attended event that I've ever seen in the years that we have done this. It's just a great event, it's a wonderful outreach opportunity to participate in the community, as well as just doing something that's really good for the kids."

"It's a safe environment, too, and I think it's wonderful that the city puts something like this on so the kids can have a safe environment where they can come and get candy, and it's not something that the parents have to worry about."

Blairsville City Police officers were on hand, walking through the crowds and directing traffic around

the square, all to make sure that this year's Hometown Halloween went off without a hitch.

"I look forward to this every year," said Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll. "The children always have a good time - the kids love it."

Walmart of Blairsville also passed out candy, but they went a step further and provided Halloween masks to children in need of a costume. Store associates used the time to raise money for Blairsville Shop With a Cop.

"What we're doing is, Walmart has a program to where we can volunteer time for the community, and we've actually volunteered at the store, handing out candy and doing awareness for Shop With a Cop, and also here on the square," said Front End Assistant Manager Rehnee Herr. "What we do is, if we earn 250 hours of volunteering, Walmart will actually give \$5,000 to the Shop With a Cop program for them to be able to buy gifts for children that would normally not have Christmas."

Others from around the community dressed up to the delight of children, including 18-year-old Keyla Brendle



with The Griddle Cafe, who went as Princess Leia from *Star Wars*, and her sister Keltsey Brendle, 20, who dressed as rocker Stevie Nicks.

Nottely Marina had a festive table with lights and a giant skull, and Peggy and Ken Sampson, representing the Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers, posed for pictures with children as Batgirl and Batman.

"We enjoy entertaining the kids," said Peggy, a point on which her husband, Ken, agreed. "We go out, we get donations for the candy. Food City was especially helpful this year. A lot of the Jeepers donate money, and we go out and buy candy. We do a lot for the kids."

All in all, the event was a family-friendly success, and children got plenty of candy,

as noted by 7-year-old Ivy Chambers.

Chambers dressed as Little Red Riding Hood for Halloween this year, and her stepfather, Casey Henderson, played the role of Big Bad Wolf, while her mother, Kristina Henderson, embodied Red Riding Hood's grandmother.

"It's my favorite story, and I wanted us all to be someone from a fairytale," said Ivy, who decides every Halloween who the family will dress as, and this year, she even added claw marks to her face for that extra detail. "A lot of people liked us."

Over at North Georgia Technical College, Fire Station 10 hosted its first ever "Nightmare on School Street," a dance geared for those ages



13 and up.

Rhonda Cole volunteered to work the door, taking donations as people came dressed as anything from zombie nurses to the Cat in the Hat.

"My son is a volunteer firefighter, Warren Cole, and I just support him by being his mother, so I volunteer," said Cole.

The dance featured a

live DJ playing dance hits from the '80s, '90s and 2000s, and firefighters and friends of firefighters danced until the late hours on Halloween.

"This is a good venue to have a dance out here," said Station 10 2nd Lt. Alan Foster. "North Georgia Tech is very accommodating. Anything you need out here, they'll get it for you."



Schools...from Page 1A

brave Americans, and looking out and seeing their faces and watching them stand and salute when their Armed Forces hymn is played," said Steppe.

"Patriotism is taught through these programs, giving the due respect these veterans deserve and being proud of them for what they have accomplished on all our behalves," Steppe continued. "As much as we complain, we still need to remember we live in the greatest nation in the world, and we owe it to those who have fought and sacrificed to keep all these freedoms we all enjoy."

Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Art McCann of the U.S. Army, who is an assistant administrator at the high school, has put the ceremony together each year with the help of teachers and students.

"We're going to have the band and chorus from the high school and the middle school," said McCann. "The Beta Club and the FFA will be assisting along with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes from the high school as far as students helping out with the ceremony."

The program will be run entirely by students as a way of showing youth appreciation of veterans both local and abroad.

Students have been delivering ceremony invitations to veterans in their families and in the community, and veterans will have special seating on the field, while teachers and students from the entire school district, including Woody Gap School, their family members and people from the community will fill the bleachers.

"This year, we're going to incorporate a Quilts of Valor ceremony within our ceremony, so we'll award two to three local people with a Quilt of Valor," said McCann.

The Civil Air Patrol Blairsville Squadron GA 152, which is made up of high school and middle school students, will act as the Color Guard for the ceremony in presenting and retiring the colors, and the North Georgia Honor Guard, a group consisting of area veterans, will be the firing party for the event.

Union County High School senior Dylan Byers will be the master of ceremonies, senior Anna Danek will also be a featured speaker, and student guest speaker senior Matthew Peney will deliver a speech on Veterans Day and what it means to him.

"A couple of years ago, Mr. Steppe came to me and said that this is what we want

to do," said McCann on the origin of the ceremony. "The idea was to make the students more aware of what Veterans Day is and the importance of it. There's a lot of great veterans support here in the community, just speaking for myself and what I do, but Mr. Steppe, that was his whole idea, was to just make the entire school system more aware of Veterans Day, and what freedom is, what we have. You couldn't have it without our veterans."

The Union County Schools Veterans Day program takes place on Nov. 10 instead of Nov. 11 so as to avoid conflict with other veterans' events that take place on the actual day of Veterans Day.

In the event of bad weather, the ceremony will be moved to the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center, which is where people will want to park in just such a case. All else will remain the same.

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