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U.S. Armed Forces plus one that to represent civilians.

"The table is round to show our everlasting concern for our men and women who are still missing," said Honaker. "The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty. The single red rose displayed in a vase reminds us of the life of each of the missing, their loved ones and friends who kept the faith awaiting answers.

"The vase is tied with

a red ribbon, symbolizing our continued determination to account for the missing. A slice of lemon on the bread plate is to remind us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land. A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families who seek answers.

"The Bible represents the strength, gained through faith, to sustain those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God. The glass

is inverted to symbolize their inability to share in today's toast. The chairs are empty. They are missing."

Honaker then called for a raising of water glasses in a toast to honor America's prisoners of war as well as those missing in action, and for the success of efforts to account for America's missing men and women.

After American Legion Auxiliary First Vice President Eulalie Jones led guests in the pledge of allegiance, Honaker took a moment to recognize veterans in attendance by their branch of service, and the members of each branch stood to the applause of their fellow veterans and guests.

"I also want to take a moment to recognize the members of the North Georgia Honor Guard," said Honaker. "Each of these men not only belong to veterans' service organizations — they have taken on the added responsibility of making sure any Union and Towns County veterans who have passed can be interred with military honors. Rain, snow, early or late, these men are ready to provide dignity and honor to the departed veterans. Thank you, gentlemen. Please rise for a well-deserved recognition."

Just before lunch catered by Jim's Smokin' Que, Joanne O'Malley of the American Legion Auxiliary read Andrea C. Brett's poem entitled "I Am a Veteran," followed by the presentation of the Commanders Award to Jack Howington by the commanders of the American Legion, VFW, DAV, VVA and Navy Seabee Island X-3.

"Every year, a veteran who is a member of one of these service organizations is picked as a recipient of the Commanders Award," said Honaker. "This award is the highest honor that can be given to a member. The selection of the recipient is a serious task. They must have served their community well and represent what a veteran should be.

"This year, the commanders have picked a member of the American Legion. (Howington) has also served many years in the North Georgia Honor Guard. He served in the U.S. Navy. In civilian life, he worked in law enforcement in Atlanta."

Howington's contributions to the veterans community in Union County go back to the forming of the American Legion Post 121 in

Blairsville many years ago, and over the years he has honored hundreds of deceased veterans as part of the Honor Guard and delivered Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners to veterans in need.

"I am truly, truly humbled," said Howington on acceptance of his award. "This has been an organization that has meant a great deal to me, and most of all, the North Georgia Honor Guard. I encourage those of you who are physically able to join this North Georgia Honor Guard. You will not have a more satisfying experience in your life to see the families of deceased veterans get a military burial."

Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Bernard Fontaine of Suches was the keynote speaker for the event, and one of his overarching themes spoke to the importance of veterans supporting veterans to get what they need and deserve, especially in a political atmosphere where those in power don't necessarily understand the plight of those who have served.

Fontaine, who gave 30 years of distinguished service in the Army, walked those in attendance through a history lesson of America's wars, harkening back to the Revolutionary War and moving forward to today, highlighting how veterans have been the best champions of causes important to them.

"Today, it's our turn," said Fontaine. "Veterans back then helped other veterans, and I want to press this point, we need to help each other, because the American people want the veterans to get what they deserve."

In his closing remarks, Honaker thanked those in attendance, including public officials of Union County and the City of Blairsville, and asked that those in attendance who were not yet part of a veterans' service organization reach out and become involved.

Richard Hoibraten led the closing prayer, and many guests remained at the church for a while after the program to visit with one another.

Also recognized during the luncheon were distinguished veterans, such as Union County's most decorated veteran, Leon Davenport, as well as the heads of the various active veterans' organizations

of Union County:

Don Sullivan, commander of American Legion Post 121 and Honor Guard member; Mike Ruback, commander of both the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 11 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7394; Mike Priven, commander of the Vietnam Veterans of America Blairsville Chapter 1101, who received special recognition for his work orchestrating the coming of the Vietnam Moving Wall Memorial to Blairsville;

Wayne Roshaven, commander of the Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment 783 and commander of the North Georgia Honor Guard; Richard Hoibraten, commander of the Navy Seabee Island X-3; Mary Arnold, president of the American Legion Auxiliary Post 121; and Bob Spaulding, manager of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service's Blairsville Field Office.



Barbara and Leon Davenport with Roy Hamby



Union County Veterans come together to break bread at FUMC



Crosses bearing names of fallen soldiers circled the Blairsville Square on Veteran's Day. Crosses were built and supplied by Clint Johnson's Principles of Engineering Class at UCHS

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get up and make my little spiel, and then the parents leave and the children are matched up with the people who have come to shop.

"We have people that come from a couple local churches. We have the Blairsville Cruisers that come, and then the police officers and their wives, they usually come. And then we get on the bus and we go to Walmart, we're there a couple of hours, and we meet back and the kids get their packages."

At the very end of the day, the children of Shop with a Cop get a nice big lunch.

"We call it a picnic lunch, whether it's pizza or hamburgers or whatever," said Neely. "Usually in the past it's been pizza from Papa's Pizza, and they can eat as much as they want. We order enough pizza to feed Bragg's Army."

Shop with a Cop goes back about 13 years in Blairsville, and that first year the police department took 15 kids shopping.

For the past several years, both the need and the donations have grown so much that Chief Carroll and his officers and volunteers have been able to take their annual goal of 100, a goal they hope to be able to repeat this year with enough donations.

"We have a gracious community," said Neely. "We're very blessed to have what we have. We have already been receiving donations all through the year. We have people that, if someone in their family dies, instead of sending flowers they'll bring us a check for Shop with a Cop."

Shop with a Cop benefits the community in a multitude of ways, including acting as an outreach program between police officers and youths of the city and county.

"I see these kids, they

hug and love on you — they are the most grateful children in the whole wide world," said Neely.

Anyone who would like to donate to Shop with a Cop can contact the police department, and donations are accepted year-round, including up to the day of the shop.

"Every year, Chief

Carroll can be walking around in his uniform, and there will be someone that we don't even know walk up and hand him a \$100 bill, just at Walmart while they're there, just realizing what's going on," said Neely, adding that she's always impressed with and thankful for the level of community support for Shop with a Cop.

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



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