

COVID Uptick...from Page 1A

end of last week. "That has not happened since last May.

"We have since seen a slight increase in our percentage positive COVID tests over the last week. We have also had an increase in our inpatient numbers this last week, getting as high as 11 inpatients. That number has dropped back off a little toward the end of the week.

"We currently have 6 patients in COVID isolation, with three of those pending test results, so three confirmed positive. It looks like from their reported numbers that Northeast Georgia saw the same bump earlier in the week."

Regional increases appear to be moving from west to east across North Georgia, with recent local testing and hospital admissions seeming to follow this same pattern, Barnett said, adding that she is hopeful vaccination efforts will help minimize the impact of any new surges.

Additionally, Barnett said the hospital will continue to monitor the situation closely "so we will be aware if it looks like another surge is coming

our way."

"We have tried to respond as a health system to the decline in prevalence by loosening our visitation restrictions some," Barnett said. "We are currently having scheduled visitation inside at both of our nursing homes. This has been a welcome change for our residents, their families and our staff. A large percentage of our nursing home residents have now been vaccinated."

Vaccines are now available via multiple locations, both private and public, including from the Union County Health Department, which has administered about 8,600 doses of vaccine since doses first arrived locally the week of Christmas.

"We continue to encourage people to get vaccinated, to wear masks, watch their distance and wash their hands," District 2 Public Health Public Information Office Dave Palmer said.

Currently, appointments

are still required to receive vaccination through the Health Department, and Palmer said he wasn't sure when walk-ins might be allowed.

"We need to have a good gauge of how many people are scheduled to manage waste," Palmer said.

By now, there are multiple avenues for residents to schedule vaccination appointments, including the Office of the Governor's own partnership with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency at <https://myvaccinegeorgia.com>.

People may also visit <http://phdistrict2.org> and click on "REGISTER HERE" at the top of the page to schedule an appointment at the local Health Department, or they can call 706-745-6292.

Local pharmacies like Walgreens, Ingles and Walmart are also carrying the vaccine, appointments for which can be scheduled via each company's website.

Folks may visit ngvax.com

for vaccination through Synergy Health of Hiawassee, which has been vaccinating as many people as possible since the first doses arrived in the mountains. Synergy is using Moderna vaccine, so people under 18 will need to find a location giving Pfizer.

In other news, Gov. Brian Kemp signed a trio of executive orders last week, effectively extending Georgia's Public Health State of Emergency through April 30 while scaling back some of the COVID-19 restrictions that have been in place since early spring 2020.

Starting April 8 and lasting through at least April 30, there will be no more gatherings ban, no shelter-in-place requirements, no critical infrastructure distinctions, social distancing easing for restaurants, bars, movie theaters, etc., and law enforcement will no longer be able to close an organization for failure to comply with executive order provisions.

Choestoe Market...from Page 1A

and then," Guess said. "I know the Farmers Market is full, and some people can't get in there right now. We are just a little place, and we can give more people in the community an opportunity because of the need."

Guess, who started Jim's Smokin' Que with her husband in 2010 before selling the restaurant last year, hopes the new marketplace will grow and be used for pop-up selling all throughout the year.

"We are looking to do this year-round and every Friday and Saturday, weather permitting," Guess said. "It is just for people that want to do it by the day, and we aren't holding them to showing up."

"We wanted to be able to utilize the property because we get a lot of traffic from Jim's, and a lot of people are staying at Vogel. This is a high traffic area for out-of-towners. People have also started doing more small business since the start of COVID, and we want to help out."

Grand Opening vendor Suzanne Taylor plans on attending the market as many weekends as possible to share her photography capturing the natural beauty of the area.

"I'm a single parent with a special needs son, so it is really hard to have a profession that fits, but this one seems to," Taylor said. "I picked up a camera for the first time in 2015. It is a fairly new passion. I wish I had been at it a lot longer, but I have been doing it for six years."

Two sibling youths in the community, Noel and Aiden Hyatt, are using the Choestoe Market to promote their first



Be sure to check out the Choestoe Market every Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., weather permitting, next to Pigs Gone Amuck Mini Golf. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

small business Appalachian Tails selling leashes and collars, as well as performing pet ID stamping.

"It is BioThane material," Noel said. "Our mom bought us the material and machines for Christmas, and we started from there."

The sister-brother duo is looking forward to participating in a market for the first time to sell their handmade pet products.

Another first-time market seller, Nicole Garrett, plans to be at the market every weekend she can with her variety of home goods.

"Eventually, we will be doing pallet furniture," Garrett said. "I do door hangers, and pretty much anything custom I can do. I have been doing

this for a year and a half, and I absolutely enjoy it. I love seeing people's visions come to life and helping them with that.

"This is my first pop-up, but I do a lot on Instagram and Facebook and word of mouth. I am very excited to see how this market grows, and I hope to be here both Friday and Saturday every week."

Set-up at the market will be from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. every Friday and Saturday, and the market will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day it is open, weather permitting, adjacent to Pigs Gone Amuck Mini Golf.

For more information on selling at the market, contact Donna Guess at 706-835-7568 or swapnshop2021@gmail.com.

Rotary: People of Action

Rotary contributes over \$2000 to local projects

The Rotary Club of Union County has been busy making donations to support our community. Last week the club presented \$1,500 to The Backpack 2 School Bash sponsored with the Union County Family Connection. The program, coordinated by

Alexis Noe, helps ensure that all kids have the materials necessary for their studies.

The next stop was to give \$500 to the First Baptist Church in Blairsville to support their drive-through food ministry, Feed the Hungry.

After Easter, Rotary

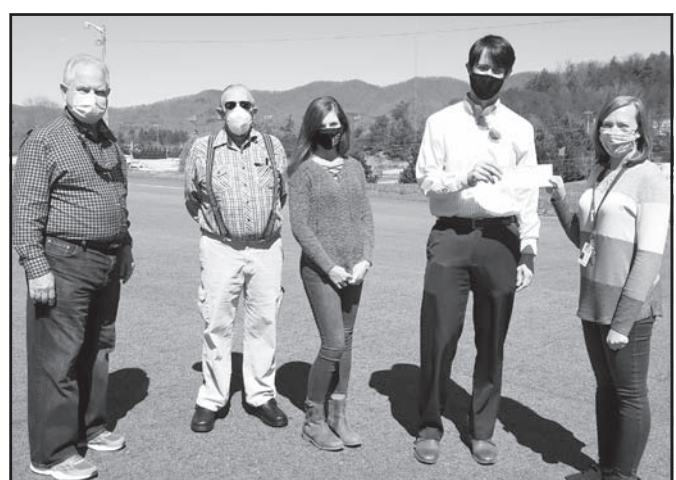
will provide contributions to S.A.F.E. feeding projects and deliver almost 2,000 protective masks for the Union General Hospital and Nursing Home.

Going Live: The board of the Union County Rotary is pleased to announce that the club will resume lunch meetings at The Skillet on Thursday, April 22. It will be a special meeting with awards and presentations, as well as a chance to greet old friends and meet new members for the first time in almost a year!

If you are interested in joining a fun service organization that provides vital services on a local, national, and world-wide level, think about joining Rotary. Hopefully, the club's last Zoom meeting will be at noon on April 8th. Members and others who express interest will receive a Zoom invitation the day before the meeting and are encouraged to share it with a friend. If you would like an invitation, give club president Ed Sternberg a call or leave a message at (706) 379-2018 or email unioncountytrotaryclub@gmail.com.

UC Historical Society's Brick Walk

To show our appreciation for the overwhelming community support for the Union County Historical Society's Brick Walk, we are extending the current price of \$50 per brick. Please call the Historical Society at 706-745-5493 or come by the old courthouse to purchase one in memory or in honor of a loved one.



President Elect of Union County Rotary, Daniel Duello, presents a contribution to Katy Jones, director of Family Connection, for The Backpack 2 School Bash while Richard Raborn, Ed Sternberg and Angela Sarrell look on.



Rotarian Angela Sarrell presents a check to Kristen Hacker in front of First Baptist Blairsville's donation storage facility on Blue Ridge Street.