

Relay For Life celebrates 25 years in Union County, with big event May 31st



The American Cancer Society event featured a luau theme, with plenty of good food and auction items to raise money for cancer research. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
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Union County Relay For Life hosted a Hawaiian Luau to celebrate their 25th Anniversary on Saturday, May 11, at the First United Methodist Church.

“We have a Relay For Life team, and we have been part of Relay For Life for 25 years,” said Glenda Taylor, Team Leader for the organization. “Because it is the silver anniversary for Relay For Life in Union County, we thought about what we could do to celebrate, and we thought that people like to go to Hawaii for their anniversaries, so we decided to make the luau our theme for tonight.”

Guests of the event received each received a lei as they walked into the celebration and enjoyed their dinner with live entertainment by local band The Swing Set.

Relay For Life has seen growth in Union County and received much community support over the years that has helped members reach the goals that they have set for their organization.

Allyson McGaw, a long-time Relay volunteer who helps to organize the big event annually, said she’s glad that much of the stigma associated with having cancer has gone away over the years, and she’s thankful for the community support.

“To me, this has been a fantastic pulling together of the community, because we have churches coming together, businesses coming together, and everyone else that has been with us for 25 years,” said



Allyson McGraw speaking in the Relay Dinner & Auction on Saturday. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

McGraw. When the program began in the area, around 10 people walked the very first lap, but now the event brings more than 100 guests every year who come out to walk and support their family, friends and fellow residents.

The organization uses funding to support cancer research to work toward a cure for the disease so that people will no longer worry about suffering and hearing the doctor say that they have cancer.

“We lose people sometimes, but those numbers have changed, and that’s because we support research,” said McGraw. “It’s not research that is just pie in the sky – it is DNA research, and we support that.”

“At one time, we were

also able to do college scholarships for students that had cancer, and there are so many things that we support and work toward to help those that have cancer.”

The next Relay For Life takes place on Friday, May 31, beginning at 4 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market.

“We will have other teams and churches at the event to provide other activities for people to partake in at the Relay,” said McGraw. “Later that night, we will also be doing the Lighting of the Luminaria to remember and honor every life touched by cancer.”

For more information on the Relay For Life event, visit Relay.ACSEvents.org and click Join a Relay to search for the local event, or call Allyson McGraw at 706-835-8384.

Cobb-Vantress...from Page 1A



Cobb-Vantress employees and their family members celebrating the May 11 Grand Re-Opening.

a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, during which Mayor Conley was asked to say a few words.

He recalled that, back when the plant was built, there was only a dirt road leading out to it.

“Cobb-Vantress has come a long way since then,” said Conley, before going on to express his gratitude for the company’s latest investment in the area.

Paris also offered his gratitude in the gathering, thanking Cobb-Vantress’ leadership for keeping faith in Union County and the hatchery here.

“It’s a great investment for our community, for the employees that work here, and just for the status of Union County,” said Paris. “We have some of the finest chicks going out of

here that go all over the world and the United States, and we’re very proud of that.”

“Anything we can do to help you in the future besides keeping the road paved and the potholes out, just let us know.”

Owned by Tyson Foods, Cobb-Vantress is one of only two companies on the planet that ultimately provides chicken to all grocery stores and restaurants.

For its part, the Blairsville site sells great-grandparent chicks, aka pure-line chicks for breeding, and eventually, the descendants of those chicks become broiler chickens that are reared for their meat.

As for the new major equipment installation, the hatchery’s machinery had become outdated after being in continuous operation for 20 years, so the company decided

to replace it with newer, more efficient equipment.

Getting the old equipment out and putting the new equipment in was no easy task, however, and the entire site had to be shut down in early February because of the quarantine requirements associated with maintaining a sterile hatchery production area.

Blairsville hatchery manager Thomas said that, in the 20 years the site has been operational, no one but properly cleaned and attired employees had ever been allowed into the production areas of the plant.

This made the grand re-opening an extra special occasion for visitors, including employees’ families, who got to go inside the hatchery for the first time ever.

“Our anticipated startup date when we will be receiving eggs back into the hatchery will be May 20,” said Thomas. “We’ll be expanding our employees probably only by three or four.”

“But with us basically shutting the hatchery down, we did not lay off the first person. We used them to install the machinery. Our employees basically installed every bit of the equipment.”

For more information on the world’s oldest poultry breeding company, visit Cobb-Vantress.com.