

North Georgia News

75¢

2 Sections 22 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Blairsville Rodeo gives Gerald Patterson tribute

By **Todd Forrest**
North Georgia News
Sports Editor

The Blairsville Pro Rodeo began as a summer attraction more than a decade ago, only to become a beloved local tradition that draws thousands of visitors to Union County every year, most recently over the weekend of June 20-21.

"This year's rodeo was one of the best," said Union County Saddle Club Secretary and Rodeo Committee Chair Kayla Murphy. "A little over 2,500 people came through the gates to watch cowboys and cowgirls from all over the Southeast, including several from our local area."

Now in its 14th year, the event unites the community for two fast-paced nights filled with dust, excitement, and family-friendly entertainment at the Union County Saddle Club Arena.

The 2025 event began not with the roar of the crowd but with a somber tribute in

memory of Gerald Patterson, a Saddle Club mainstay who passed away on June 14 following an extended illness. The rodeo commenced with a riderless horse led by his wife of 45 years, Beth Patterson.

With boots turned backward in the stirrups, the empty horse served as a heartfelt homage to the beloved local figure – a touching recognition of a man whose legacy will resonate within the Union County Saddle Club for generations.

As for the action itself, the rodeo showcased bronco riding, barrel racing, steer wrestling, ladies' breakaway roping and calf roping, both individually and in teams, concluding with ever-popular bull riding, sanctioned by the International Professional Rodeo Association and the National Cowboy Association.

The event saw local competitors from Blairsville and Blue Ridge; Hayesville and Murphy in North Carolina; and Turtletown, Tennessee.

Among the local contestants in barrel racing were Annabell Lillard, Reba Burke, Tallie Fortner, Lindsey Tincher, Alyssa McFarland, Karyn Woody, Hannah Allison, Emma Allison, Dea Kramer, Piper Tatro, Indiana Groom; Marley Conner; and Susan Anderson.

Mason Bohannon participated in bronco riding; Kenzie Bohannon took part in breakaway roping; and Garrett Davis and Micky Davis competed in team roping.

The rodeo provided an exciting opportunity for adult rodeo fans to throw their hats into the ring as well, particularly through the steer-dressing competition. In this event, three-person teams attempted to dress a steer in shorts, a shirt and a hat to the delight of audience members.

Additionally, there was a horseshoe toss with a chance to win \$5,000 for throwing a "ringer," and the rodeo included activities designed for kids such



Gerald Patterson, a giant of the Union County Saddle Club, passed away a week before the Blairsville Pro Rodeo. His wife Beth led a riderless horse in his honor on both nights of the 2025 event. Photo by Todd Forrest

McBride, Roberts awarded \$25,000 Legion scholarships

By **Brittany Holbrooks**
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

For the first time, Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 handed out scholarships worth \$25,000 each to two talented Class of 2025 graduates who have bright futures ahead of them.

The pair – Kendyl McBride of Union County High and Mia Roberts of Woody Gap School – were introduced to the rest of the veteran service organization at the post's monthly meeting on June 17 to offer some insight into their plans and be congratulated for their hard work.

It all started when an anonymous donor gave the organization \$50,000 with the instruction to "give it to people in need" and "do good things." With that in mind, Post 121 created the Ray Leonard Memorial Scholarship.

Ray Leonard, a veteran himself, was the mentor of the anonymous donor, and the donor wished to honor the legacy of the man who meant much to him in life.

Seven applicants were interviewed before a panel of local Legion members, and two rose above the rest. McBride and Roberts were each chosen as recipients, and \$25,000 will



Class of 2025 graduates Kendyl McBride and Mia Roberts were honored to have received \$25,000 scholarships through American Legion Post 121, made possible thanks to the generosity of an anonymous local donor. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

be transferred directly from the Legion to the postsecondary schools they plan to attend.

McBride is no stranger to local veterans, seeing as she

is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. She plans to join the Air Force as a fighter pilot and will attend Embry-

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Dr. Todd advances dream with med school graduation

By **Shawn Jarrard**
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

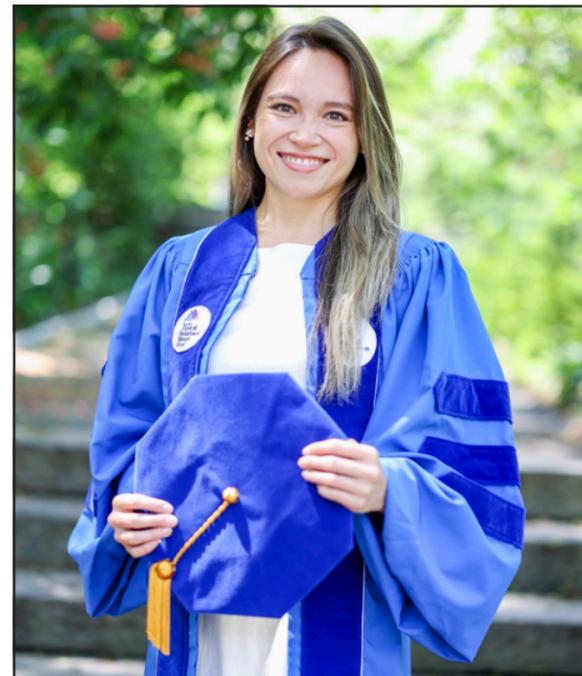
Blairsville's own Rachel Todd has made her hometown proud once again, raising the bar even higher by graduating as a medical doctor from the internationally renowned Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai on Thursday, May 8.

Dr. Todd is now the 10th M.D. on her mother's side and the first on her father's, enabling her to carry on a family legacy while simultaneously creating a brand-new tradition.

Of course, those who know her best understand that the 27-year-old has been ambitious from the start.

Her mother Cynthia, who recently celebrated 25 years of teaching at Union County Elementary School, read the Bible to her in the womb, and with instruction from her parents, Todd quickly learned to read on her own, developing a lifelong love of books at the

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Dr. Rachel Todd

'The Georgia 50' honored at Vietnam Memorial Wall

By **Brittany Holbrooks**
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville veterans have made a stunning contribution to national efforts to remember American soldiers killed and missing in action during the Vietnam War, and, in so doing, they may have just started a ripple effect when it comes to how these service members are being honored.

Local Vietnam Veteran Sid Turner orchestrated the donation of two plaques to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, one of wood and one of metal. Both not only educate the public but maintain the memories of those who were unable to come home over 50 years ago.

It all started when Turner decided to attend a reunion of his unit, the 716th Military Police Battalion. Initially skeptical, Turner took the plunge in 2010 and attended one in Branson, Missouri. Immediately, he noticed the

See *Georgia 50*, Page 7A



Jay and Melissa Kalner are friends with local resident Sid Turner, and they placed his plaque honoring missing soldiers at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall on Memorial Day.

Blairsville woman succumbs to injuries in Gumlog crash

By **Shawn Jarrard**
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Blairsville resident Tammy Lee Mullins of Lafern Lane died on Tuesday, June 17, from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash in northern Union County. She was 50 years old.

Around 9:40 that morning, Mullins was traveling east on Gumlog Road in her 2001 Dodge Ram 1500 as another driver, from Young Harris, made her way west on Gumlog in a 2014 GMC Sierra 1500, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

While negotiating a curve near the intersection of C And M Walk, Mullins failed to maintain her lane, traveling

partially off the westbound side of Gumlog Road, per GSP.

Mullins' truck continued traveling east in the westbound lane and struck the Sierra head on, with an area of impact in the westbound lane, per GSP.

The second driver told GSP the Ram 1500 veered toward her in the road and that she had attempted to stop prior to impact.

Both drivers were transported via ambulance to Union General Hospital for medical treatment. Mullins succumbed to her injuries, and the other driver was listed as having received a possible injury, per GSP.

No charges will be filed, as the deceased was the driver suspected at fault.

According to her obituary, Mullins was "a loving and caring wife, mother, sister, grandmother and great-grandmother."

"She always accepted everyone with opened arms," the obituary continues. "Tammy was outgoing and loved everyone. She enjoyed spending time with her family and friends."

Mountain View Funeral Home had charge of her arrangements, hosting a memorial service after press time on Tuesday, June 24, at 7 p.m. inside the Mountain View Chapel, with Rev. Tully Griggs officiating.

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Early Submission Deadline for July Fourth Week is Thursday, July 3, at 4 p.m.



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Reece Farm to host family-friendly summer events



**Reece Farm
Creekside Critters**

Wednesday, July 23, 2025
10am-2pm

Join us for a splashing good time at Creekside Critters at Reece Farm led by The Rog and UC 4-H! This hands-on, nature-filled adventure is designed for young explorers eager to discover the wildlife and wonders of our farm's creekside ecosystem. Perfect for kids and families, this fun and educational event offers the chance to get up close with the critters that call our creek home!
MUST Register for program: CALL 706-970-5985 or email us at bhrfarm@unioingov.com
cost: \$5/person

Reece Heritage Farm, nestled in the heart of the North Georgia mountains, is thrilled to announce a series of engaging and educational events for the summer season. From outdoor adventures to creative workshops, the farm invites

families, teens, and nature lovers of all ages to experience the beauty, history, and culture of Appalachia. Program registrations are available on the Event Page at www.receefarmevents.com

Upcoming highlights include:
Summer Music Series: The Wilderness Pickers - Saturday, June 28th 1 PM - 3 PM Bring lunch and a lawn chair to hear some wonderful bluegrass music at the farm! Free concert, Tips are appreciated.

Summer Music Series: Curtis and Kim Jones - Friday, July 11th 1 PM - 3 PM Bring lunch and a lawn chair to hear some wonderful bluegrass music at the farm! Free concert, Tips are appreciated.

Sunset Hike at Reece Farm - Friday, July 11, 7-9 PM Registration Required
Join us for a guided stroll through scenic trails as the sun sets over the Appalachian hills. Enjoy storytelling, wildlife spotting, and a peaceful connection with nature.

Creekside Critters- Family Event: Wednesday, July 23rd 10 AM - 2 PM Registration Required - Reece Farm along with our friends from UC Extension office, will Splash into discovery as we explore the lively world beneath the water's surface! During this hands-on nature adventure, kids and families will visit the creek to uncover the hidden lives of frogs, salamanders, crayfish, water bugs, and more. Lunch is included \$5/person.

Creek Week Kids' Camp - July 28th-August 1st. Registration Required

An action-packed week for young adventurers ages 4-6! Campers will explore mountain streams, go critter-hunting, enjoy nature crafts, and learn how

to protect our waterways.

All events are held on-site at Reece Heritage Farm and many are free to the public. Donations are welcome to support ongoing educational programming and preservation efforts.

For full event details, visit www.receefarmevents.com or follow us on Facebook!

Legion Scholarships...from Page 1A

Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida to pursue a degree in aeronautical science.

For Roberts, her goal is to major in psychology at the University of North Georgia. She hopes to become a therapist specializing in helping teens but ultimately believes in seeing "where the Lord takes me."

"Tonight was all about children and youth, and so, the scholarships fit under that," explained Post 121 Senior Vice Cmdr. Kathy Merritt. "Why are children and youth so important to the American Legion? Because you've got to grow good citizens to keep our country strong and progressing."

In fact, June 17's meeting highlighted the accomplishments of several local youth and unofficially served as a sort of "children's night." Merritt attributed this to one of the American Legion's pillars, Children and Youth.

Although the establishment of that pillar had much to do with helping the orphans of war initially, according to www.legion.org, Merritt's sentiment rings true as well, and Post 121 members are dedicated to raising up the young men and women of their community.

"It touched me that they've got the vision, and they know where they're going to go, and they're going to do

great things for our country," said Post Cmdr. Mike Merritt in closing.

The Merritts recognize that the amount given to Roberts and McBride is more than many other scholarships offer, and they had many thanks to give to the donor who made it possible.

Speaking of the donor, the individual has committed to sending another \$50,000 next year to make two more \$25,000 scholarships possible, and potentially more in future years.

"Once the funds from the donor dry up, we won't be able to offer scholarships in this amount," Kathy Merritt clarified.

NGTC Recognizes Local Graduates

North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) recently recognized 183 students who completed their degree or diploma programs during the 2025 spring semester. Commencement ceremonies were held Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at Level Grove Baptist Church in Comelia, GA.

Young Harris graduates include: Makayla Bouchard, Cosmetology; Melissa-Lynn Caldwell, Registered Nursing;

Austin Fairless, Welding Technology.

Hiawassee graduates include: Elisha Arrowood, Early Childhood Care & Education; Samantha Matheson, AS Degree in General Studies; Zachary Mullins, Automotive Technology; and Kyle Smyth, Environmental Technology.

Blairsville graduates include: Lindsay Barber, Cosmetology; Tessah Collins, Cosmetology; Quinn Donahue, Cos-

metology; Jaceyallen Elliott, AS Degree in General Studies; Robert Harden, Networking Specialist; Evan Hargus, Welding Technology; Zade Houghlin, AS Degree in General Studies; Chandler Kraft, Registered Nursing; Samuel Logan, Welding Technology; Samuel Page, Air Conditioning Technology; Madison Park, Horticulture; Jessica Peardon, AS Degree in General Studies; and April Seabolt, Business Management; Christy Sinclair, Accounting; and Sierra Soakie, EMS Professions.

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Dr. Todd...from Page 1A

remarkably young age of 2.

Excelling everywhere she goes is a way of life for Todd. Before leaving home, she earned STAR Student and Valedictorian honors for the Union County High School Class of 2015.

Princeton University was the next step in Todd's journey, making her the first female graduate of UCHS to attend an Ivy League school. Four years later, in June of 2019, she graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Literature and Cultures.

Following Princeton, Todd spent five years at the Icahn School of Medicine in New York City. Normally, her program takes four years, but she completed an extra year of research with a transplant surgery laboratory in which she

was an inaugural member – a particularly proud achievement for her.

At Icahn, Todd chose to specialize in life-saving general surgery after rotating onto a surgery team during her third year of school, and thereafter, she couldn't see herself doing anything else.

"I feel alive and engaged and in awe in the operating room, in a way that no other part of medicine makes me feel," Todd said. "I like the dexterity and skills required and the workflow of a typical surgery day."

Though not yet a surgeon, Todd has already begun to make a difference in the medical world by helping start up the transplant surgery lab and supporting the clinical machine perfusion program at Mount Sinai.

Their research enabled the safe transplantation of livers that would have been too risky to use in the past, "because we can actually test them to see if they function well before giving them to the recipients."

"It's also allowed for more transplants to happen during daytime hours, when there's more support available in the hospital," Todd said. "All the work our group did last year is something I'll always be proud of."

During her dedicated research year, Todd was honored to receive the Sherilyn Gordon Memorial Travel Award for attending the American Society of Transplant Surgeons Winter Symposium, "where I was able to present some of my research, hear other phenomenal presentations, and meet people in the field."



Dr. Rachel Todd was happy to have her family with her last month when she graduated from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. She is pictured here with her dad Phillip, mother Cynthia and sister Hannah.

In the spring of her final year of medical school, Todd "matched to residency" at the highly prestigious Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia – her No. 1 choice.

There, she will spend the next seven years completing a general surgery residency not as a student but as a physician training to advance her skills. This work will include five years of clinical duties, with two years of research in between due to the rigor of the Penn program.

Upon completing residency, Todd hopes to obtain an abdominal transplant surgery fellowship to learn how to perform liver, kidney and potentially pancreas or small intestine transplants, though she said it is common for subspecialty interests to change over the first few years of residency.

One thing is for sure: Todd has her sights set on becoming a surgeon, regardless of subspecialty, as the exacting nature of surgery lends itself well to her personal disposition.

"I'm someone who thrives under pressure and am always pushing myself to do the hard thing because it's fun," Todd said. "So, the challenge of becoming a surgeon and the grit associated with it aligns with my personality pretty well."

In her studies, Todd has gleaned much from a general health perspective, too, and she advises people to take hold of their own wellbeing and run with it.

"I can't stress enough that so much of your own health is your own responsibility," Todd said. "Of course, there are always things outside of our control. But you'd be amazed at how much of a positive impact healthy eating and consistent exercise and fresh air can have on your health."

Unfortunately, America's health care system is still way too reactive and not proactive. We focus on fixing problems once they're already present, instead of preventing them from happening in the first place.

"So, the burden is on individuals to make proactive decisions about food and movement/exercise. Hopefully that will change in my lifetime, because the environment in the U.S. makes it very hard to even get good produce in some places."

"Blairsville has so many amazing vegetable farmers – don't take those tomatoes for granted! I have to shell out \$8 per piece at a produce stand in New York to get the same thing you grow by the dozens in your backyard."

Speaking of Blairsville, Todd's accomplishments to date – too numerous to list here – have not gone unnoticed at home. She was incredibly honored to have received the Alumni Pacesetter Award from Union County Schools in the annual Evening with the STARS Banquet in February.

"It was such a surprise because in some ways – I feel like I haven't accomplished anything yet! At least relative to my future goals and aspirations, I'm just getting started," Todd said. "But reflecting back, it has been a pretty fun 10-year adventure since graduating high school."

"It honestly still doesn't feel real that I'm a doctor. I think it'll hit once I start residency and it's truly my responsibility to care for patients and I'm applying and expanding my knowledge every day."

Fortunately, Todd has been able to squeeze some play into her busy schedule, like international travel to five countries in 2025 alone. She has also developed a serious rock-climbing hobby that has helped her "stay fit and find a community of friends outside of medicine to keep me grounded."

In other important ways, life has changed much for Todd since she struck out on her own after high school. As noted above, she's seen more of the world and has grown to care deeply about global health, a concern she plans to take with her in the chapters that follow.

"Now that many – but of course not all – clinical

challenges have been addressed, much of the unaddressed needs within global health are actually basic surgical needs," Todd said. "I'd love to help improve access to transplantation in Latin America as one focus of my career."

And thanks to her years in New York, she has fallen in love with big-city life, where seemingly anything can happen at any moment, and the diversity of everything seems magical – from the numerous talented people to the delicious array of foods to the dizzying variety of things to do.

But she still remembers her roots and honors where she came from in the ways that she is able from afar, with a heartfelt recognition that she "wouldn't be the person I am today without the community here who helped raise me."

"I still love gardening like my parents and grandparents do, though now I'm limited to houseplants and community garden plots rather than my own land," Todd said. "And I'm still just as driven and work/education-focused as ever."

"That's something that was drilled into me from birth, but I'm learning how to balance it with other interests, relaxation, and fun as I get older. My next season – residency – won't leave much room for all the 'other' parts of life, but I'll learn how to integrate it all eventually."

Whatever Dr. Todd accomplishes moving forward, her parents, Phillip and Cynthia, will be proud of how far she has come, and she will continue to cherish their contributions.

"I'm incredibly grateful for my parents as always," Todd said. "They were the ones who chose to raise my sister (Hannah) and me in Blairsville in the first place! But they've continued to be my biggest supporters through all of this. I couldn't do it without them!"

The North Georgia News looks forward to the next time Todd raises the bar for herself and, by extension, her hometown of Blairsville, Georgia.

Veteran Richard Haigler honored with Quilt of Valor

Marine Corps Veteran, Richard Harold Haigler, joined the United States Marines at the age of 17. July 21, 1960 - July 20, 1964.

He was Active Duty and two years Reserves to 1966. First 2 years in Newfoundland, Canada as top secret clearance, was caught in Cuban crisis in October 22, 1962, he landed in Cuba then to Viejas Puerto Rico as Military Police until the end of his tour.

While in Puerto Rico, when Kennedy got killed, his duty was to put the U.S. Flag up and then down at half-mast every day for 30 days. He then met his wife Willene Dyer Haigler in Hiwassee and they have been married for 59 years. He worked at the GM plant in Atlanta until he retired.

Richard was presented with the Quilt of Valor by The Quilts of Valor Foundation.

"We wish to recognize you for your service to our nation. We consider it is our privilege to do so. Though we may never know the extent of your sacrifice to protect and defend the United States of America, we award you with this Quilt of Valor as an expression of gratitude from a grateful nation."



Richard Harold Haigler

'Golden Eagle' coming to Made in GA Festival



This Golden Eagle named Majesty will be present for fascinated onlookers at the Made in Georgia Festival this weekend.

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Now in its seventh year, the popular Made in Georgia Festival is all set to return this weekend on Saturday, June 28, and Sunday, June 29, at the Towns County Recreation & Conference Center at 150

Foster Park Road. Running from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day, the family-friendly annual festival highlights the creations of crafty folks from all over Georgia while offering an opportunity for regional residents to just get out and have some summer fun. Everything from a variety of food and drink to

clothing, handmade décor of all types, soaps and even knives will once again be on display thanks to over 90 vendors attending. The first 125 visitors will receive a shopping bag sponsored by Realtor Jo Ellen Thornton and Young Harris, but there'll be more to see than just the items one can buy.

New in 2025 from Buster Brown and his birds of prey with Georgia Mountain Falconry is an 11-pound Golden Eagle named Majesty, who features a truly majestic 7-foot wingspan. As the only one of her species licensed for falconry purposes in the state, she's an even more special rarity.

Golden eagles are the most widely distributed species of eagle in the U.S. and have a centuries-long history of use in hunting. The birds are so large that some are capable of carrying off coyotes or deer, though their primary diet consists of rabbits and small rodents.

The Towns County Historical Society will be providing refreshments in the form of hot dogs and hamburgers, selling the grilled goods for their own fundraiser. To provide more options, EJ's North Georgia Cooking & Catering will be available alongside Southern Sips Lemonade.

As always, the Lake Chatuge Chamber of

Commerce has organized the Made in Georgia Festival, which Chamber President Julie Payne touts as "a great place to find one-of-a-kind gifts and items that are not normally found in our immediate area."

"Please support our Georgia growers and crafters by attending this event,"

implored Payne, who hopes that folks will come out to see Majesty and do some shopping for pottery, honey, woodwork, leather, jewelry, shrubs, pecans, pickles and more – all made in Georgia.

Adult admission to the festival is just \$5, and children 16 and under get in for free.



Julie Payne and Mary Ann Miller of the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce are excited for another year bringing the Made in Georgia Festival to the community. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Georgia 50...from Page 1A

affle for a memorial-themed helmet that featured the names of all the men in that unit who perished in Vietnam.

"That was special," Turner remarked, adding that a board bearing their names had been handcrafted via woodburning and was also on display. "I was impressed by that; I was so impressed that the next reunion I went to, I made a battlefield cross to go with it."

Flashing forward to about 2022 or 2023, Turner's interest fell on laser engraving after his brother-in-law purchased a machine capable of the craft. Now with the tools available to do it himself, Turner began making his own military memorials.

His first project went to this unit. He immortalized the names of his brethren lost in action on personalized plaques, and he handed out several to the survivors who attended the reunions with him. These were on a small scale, typically big enough to hang on a wall and display in a home.

Upon returning to North Georgia, he met Wayne Jones, regarded by Turner as "a really good guy." Jones,

who volunteers at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, pursued a years-long project to put faces to the names on the wall. Once again, Turner was inspired and decided to add another facet to remembering the fallen and missing.

With assistance from Allison Caldwell of West Printing in Blairsville, Turner downloaded all the photos of the missing and deceased men from his unit and had them put on a new series of metal plaques and more than 100 paper posters.

Then came Jack Dugger, who shared with Turner at a local Veterans of Foreign Wars Fish Fry why he wears a vest in honor of Bobby Jones, his friend. Jones was a surgeon aboard a flight carrying wounded soldiers when his plane crashed into a mountain in Vietnam. His remains were never recovered.

"He said, 'This is for Bobby Jones,' and he had to tell me that, because, you know, you couldn't look at the vest and tell," Turner recalled. "I'm thinking, 'If this is about Bobby Jones, let's make it to where we can show it's about

Bobby Jones.'"

With a little help from Coosa Creek Marketing, Turner had some custom-made vests embroidered with Jones' name, information and portrait. Jones' sister received one, as did Dugger and others, ensuring Jones' memory lives on.

Hearing about a motorcycle anonymously donated to the Vietnam Memorial featuring the names of Wisconsin's missing soldiers, Turner set his sights on a larger project. Deciding to focus his attention on Georgia's own missing men from the Vietnam War, Turner got to work again.

Knowing that it could be done, he commissioned help from fellow Vietnam Veteran Mark Harbison of the North Georgia Honor Guard, who contributed his woodcarving talents for a new plaque.

The wooden piece honors the "Georgia 50" by displaying their names, the branch they served in, and the years they went missing. It was placed at the Vietnam Memorial in the nation's capital on March 29.

The second plaque, made of metal, features the names and portraits of those 50 men. Melissa Kalner is credited with creating a spreadsheet detailing them and the actions



Jay Kalner placed a second plaque by Sid Tuner at the Vietnam Wall in D.C. in March.

during which they went missing, helping in Turner's construction of the memorial.

Jay and Melissa Kalner placed the plaque at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall on May 26 after it was featured at the 2025 Memorial Day Ceremony in Union County.

"I think it's a good thing," Turner said of his efforts, and though he admits it would be nice to see the project mirrored in other states, he conceded it would be difficult for those who faced more casualties.

In the end, Turner does what he can for the men he has

come to know largely through secondhand stories that piece together their lives and deaths in Vietnam.

To this day, Turner wears bracelets bearing the names of some of these men around his wrist, and he tells the stories of brave heroes like Bobby Jones whenever he can.

Already, his tributes have had an impact on others. Jay Kalner was also a member of Turner's unit. Today, he is the President of the Vietnam Veterans Association in Arlington, Virginia, and the Kalners are working on making a plaque for the missing Vietnam soldiers of Virginia.

Currently, Turner, with help from Harbison, is looking into installing copies of those plaques at the Georgia State Capitol.

In the meantime, Turner said he'd be interested in seeing folks across the state displaying their own copies, such as for American Legion posts or other veterans who may recognize a friend.

People wishing to purchase and display their own copy of "The Men from Georgia Missing in Action in the Vietnam War" plaque may call West Printing at 706-745-6343.

Blairsville Pro Rodeo...from Page 1A

as a calf scramble, mechanical bull and more.

Presented by Beds Etc., Circle N Rodeo Productions Inc., Hedrick Rodeo Company and the Union County Saddle Club, the Blairsville Pro Rodeo provided fans with an opportunity to meet Addison Williams, Georgia's Miss Teen Rodeo.

Furthermore, Hedrick Rodeo trick rider Emily Moss showcased a variety of crowd-pleasing stunts.

Concessions and vendors circled the outside of the arena, with food, drinks, entertainment and other goods provided by Circle R Western Store, Chick-fil-A, Chill & Fill, Heyman Kettle Corn, J&P Concessions, Jim's Smokin' Q, Nana & Pops Ice Cream, Party Harbor with the bounce house and mechanical bull, Peppermint Pony Rides, the Union County Saddle Club and the Union County Shriners with hot dogs. "Our main sponsor,

Beds Etc., was great and showcased top-notch Amish-made furniture," Murphy said. "All of our sponsors are local to Blairsville and are always willing to support Union County Saddle Club as well as the Blairsville Pro Rodeo."

A full list of sponsors is available at www.BlairsvilleProRodeo.com: "Without them, we couldn't put on such a great event. Sponsor spots are available for 2026," Murphy said.



The Blairsville Pro Rodeo featured tons of bull-riding action on Friday, June 20, and Saturday, June 21. Photo by Todd Forrest



Bronc riding is a particularly fast-paced sport showcased annually at the Blairsville Pro Rodeo. Photo by Todd Forrest



Calf-roping takes a tremendous amount of skill and dexterity, with a competitor's focus on both riding their horse and roping a moving target. Photo by Todd Forrest

75th Anniversary of the Historic GA Mountain Fair Photo Contest

75th Annual Georgia Mountain Fair Parade

This year, the Annual Photography Contest will help celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Historic Georgia Mountain Fair in Hiawassee, GA. The week-long Fair begins Friday, August 15 and the Photography Contest starts on Thursday August 21 at 11 a.m., lasting until the end of the Fair, August 23.

The Photography Contest is free to enter and

over \$1500 in prizes will be awarded for winning photos in several categories. Most of the exhibitors and winners over the years have not been professionals, although professional photographers may enter. Leaders of the Contest are always looking for new talent, so first-time exhibitors are eagerly welcomed.

Those who wish to exhibit their pictures in the Contest are requested to sign up by August 1st, Friday, by submitting a Registration Form, which can be obtained from the Fairgrounds Office -- or -- go the web site: Georgia Mountain Fair and select Fair Forms and Applications; scroll down and print the 2025 Photography Application.

Judges will strictly follow the new Display Rules. Therefore, all Exhibitors need to pay close attention to all instructions found with the Registration Form. Also: Setting up photos is only from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday,

August 19 (not Monday). Judging starts promptly at 1 p.m. the same day. Participants may learn about winning photos on Thursday, August 21, when the Contest Opens to the Public. Prize money is awarded on the final day of the Contest. Judges' names are not revealed but each one is an experienced photographer who comes to the Fair from several cities and states. Photos must stay in the Exhibit until the end of the last day of the Fair, Saturday, August 23.

The photo exhibit opens to the Public at 11 AM on Thursday morning, August 21. After reading the Registration Form and the Rules, participants may have questions answered by directly contacting the Contest Director, Janet Cosby through Email only at janetcosby@gmail.com

Please do not call the Office at the Georgia Mountain Fair for answers to Contest questions.