

Community happy to attend classic car museum soft opening Saturday

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YOUNG HARRIS – The Memory Lane Classic Car Museum hosted a soft opening on Saturday, July 25, at which Museum Owner Jerry Smith told those gathered for the occasion he was happy to be part of a community with such inviting people.

“Everybody has been so nice, everybody I have run into,” Smith said. “I cannot tell you what a wonderful feeling it is to be wanted and just accepted. It feels like I have known all

of y’all my entire life. It is just a good feeling, and I hope we live up to everybody’s expectations. We will do our best.”

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw offered comments that day on the significance of the museum, which will be donating 100 percent of proceeds to area organizations.

“The economic impact this is going to have on our community and our area is going to be unbelievable,” Bradshaw said. “Every day and every week, I meet a lot of people that I haven’t met

before.

“When I met Jerry and June, I’ll be honest with you – and this might sound cheesy or corny – but I felt like I was around my family. That is how nice, caring and loving they are. They are a great fit for Towns County.”

Residents like John Case, who has lived here for 30 years, feel welcoming of the museum and the Smiths, even if the attraction is likely to make the North Georgia Mountains even busier over time.

“This is a tremendous addition to our area,” Case said. “For a host of reasons, we have been stunted (in this location); there hasn’t been anything. This building was so many different venues over the years, and they closed all of them. This is a tremendous asset to our community.

“It is kind of a love/hate, because we like our sleepy little community, and that is going away. This moves that agenda forward. I think it is wonderful. This is something that more people in our retirement community can enjoy, and it brings people here.”

The museum will officially open on Thursday, July 30, coinciding with the first day of the three-day Georgia



L-R: Rakes Parrish, Jerry & June Smith, and Hilda Thomason together at the July 25 soft opening of Memory Lane Classic Car Museum in Young Harris. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



Memory Lane is every classic car lover’s dream, with enough eye-popping vehicles to keep people coming back time and again, especially since the selection will rotate.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In at the Fairgrounds. Entry into the museum is \$5, with children 12 and under getting in free.

Proceeds from the business will be used to donate to a diverse range of local charities and organizations, including the Mountain Shelter Humane Society, Future Farmers of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars and anything else in the community that needs assistance.

“To me, being here is like being part of a big family,” Smith said. “I can donate to charity and help people that need help. I feel like I have been very blessed, and I can give back to the community.”

As for the cars, the large collection features a variety of makes and models Smith has obtained over the last 30 years.

“I love old cars, and as you can tell, I don’t have one

particular make or model or year,” Smith said. “I like them all. If I had to say I had a favorite, I’d have to say I like an old ‘57 Chevrolet, but I don’t know that I have any favorites. I like every color and every model over the years.”

The museum is located at 1195 Jack Dayton Circle where Fun World used to be, next to VIP Fieldstone.

Davenport Retires...from Page 1A



Doug Davenport and his father, the late U.S. Army Maj. Leon Davenport, celebrating the 35th anniversary of the nursing home in 2009. Photo/Submitted

the countless other pillars of the community who made the county what it is today.

He assumed leadership as nursing home administrator about 20 years ago, and indeed, he has enjoyed every minute of his tenure coordinating the various departments there, despite the job becoming so much more challenging of late due to COVID-19, which like most infectious diseases is particularly dangerous to elderly and chronically ill people.

Fortunately, he and his dedicated team at the nursing home have been able to keep residents safe with minimal impacts, including just three residents and six staff infected, with no deaths by press time.

In addition to ramped up health care precautions amid COVID-19, nursing home employees are having to figure out ways to engage with and boost morale for residents who are shut off from community visitors and from congregating themselves, all in the name of continued health.

“I don’t know of any group that this has been more difficult for than long-term care residents, because they’re isolated,” Davenport said.

Outside of COVID, much has changed in long-term care over Davenport’s career; residents are living longer thanks to progressing medical advances, with an average age of 85 in the facility, though many seniors are sicker nowadays with more complex needs than in the past.

And in the last few years, the nursing home has begun accepting more and more short-term residents recovering from various medical procedures and needing to undergo physical rehabilitation before returning home.

Davenport credits the nursing home’s continuing success with support from all quarters, both inside and out of the facility, including historical visitations from the public which he hopes can be restored as soon as it’s safe.

“We are truly a community-oriented facility,” Davenport said. “One of the most important factors in our ongoing success is the phenomenal support we receive from our many volunteers, both through the Union General Hospital Auxiliary and many community volunteers, churches, civic clubs, the school system, and very importantly our many local agencies as

well as our county and city officials.”

The retiring administrator also wanted to make sure to thank Hospital Board members and his immediate supervisors at Union General Hospital, acknowledging the importance of the hospital to the nursing home’s mission and outcomes.

“Being hospital-based, we have extensive resources and personnel talent, as well as the support of senior management available to us, which is extremely important, (especially during times like the) COVID-19 pandemic,” Davenport said. “And of course, the many physicians and entire medical community are instrumental in our services.”

Davenport will be missed by staff and residents alike, though he does plan on returning to visit once things settle down pandemic-wise. After all, the nursing home has largely been his home over the years, too, with his connections there dating back more than four decades.

“In the summer of 1977, I had the opportunity to start working at Union County Nursing Home on Saturdays, as they needed someone to mow the lawn and do some general housekeeping duties,” Davenport said. “This was my first experience working in health care, particularly long-term care.”

That lawnmowing job ended up becoming a full-time janitorial position for Davenport that summer before he headed off to Brenau University in Gainesville, and he made sure to return to his duties each Christmas and summer throughout his postsecondary schooling.

He enrolled in a few business classes initially, and he realized quickly that his calling lay in the direction of long-term care. So, he switched his focus and, upon graduation, entered employment with Union County Nursing Home as a social worker.

“Around 1988, Mrs. Rebecca Dyer, administrator at the nursing home and later CEO of Union General Hospital, gave me the opportunity and encouragement to get my nursing home administrator’s license,” Davenport said, noting that he was able to continue thereafter as a social worker and assistant administrator, “gaining valuable experience” before becoming full-time administrator.

A native to the area, Davenport is the son of Leon and Barbara “Bobbie” Davenport. Many remember Leon, who passed away in 2017 at age 90, for his years of service as Union General Hospital administrator following his retirement from a highly distinguished career in the U.S. Army.

Doug said his father “was always super encouraging and supportive” of whatever he wanted to pursue in life, which he initially didn’t realize would go from lawncare duties to a fuller 37-year career serving first as full-time social worker, then as assistant administrator, and finally as full administrator.

“I am very thankful to the Lord for showing me a career path many years ago,” Davenport said. “I have thoroughly enjoyed and been enriched by the many individuals who have been a part of my life through my work. I’m so thankful to be part of this caring, giving great community.”

As far as why he’s retiring, Davenport said he’s simply at the right age to do so at 62. He concluded about a year ago that he wanted to retire about this time, and though he’s a bit conflicted over leaving during COVID, he recognizes that there’s no definite end in sight for the pandemic.

So far, Davenport doesn’t have any big plans besides spending greater time with his wife Delila and family, as well as getting more mountain biking in, and he expects to become more involved in community activities.

Pending improvements in COVID-19 conditions, he also wants to take his mom to visit his dad’s grave again at Arlington, and perhaps even make a circuit of his favorite Minor League Baseball teams.

Lisa Bonham is set to take over from Davenport, transitioning from assistant administrator to full administrator of the nursing home starting Aug. 1. Davenport said he has full confidence in Bonham’s ability to lead there, adding that he’ll miss her and everyone else at the facility.

“I have had the opportunity to be associated with some of the nicest people anywhere – residents, families and staff,” Davenport said. “It has truly been a blessing to be a part of this community through my work at Union County Nursing Home.”