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terminal got its name.

The mayor explained that it was United Community Bank President Andy Williams who gave the city the idea to name the new terminal after W.C. Nelson, in honor of Nelson's many contributions to the city and county over the years.

Many know Nelson as a Blairsville business leader, with his family-owned Nelson Tractor Company.

Of course, Nelson is also a community leader, most recently in his role as board member on the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority, which is looking toward the future with development projects like the Haralson Property behind Blairsville City Hall.

The Blairsville native is also a pilot and flight enthusiast, and has worked hard over the years to build up and promote the Blairsville Airport.

"I hope that the addition of this building and the facilities here will encourage more people to come to the area," said Nelson on Saturday. "We're trying to create an environment here that welcomes not only the people who own the plane, but the pilots also."

To give a little background, pilots have been flying into Blairsville since the establishment of the airport in 1962.

For many years now, visiting pilots have made do with a repurposed house that was moved from Shotgun Alley to serve as the Blairsville Municipal Airport Terminal Building.

And while the old terminal building has faithfully served its purpose over the years, it never had that "wow factor" or the amenities that many pilots were accustomed to finding at other airports around the country.

With the opening of the W.C. Nelson Terminal, all that has changed.

The new building, designed by local architect Richard Landau with direct input from Mayor Conley and W.C. himself, is a place where clients and, perhaps more importantly, pilots can truly relax.

Upon entering the lofty building, visitors are greeted with a large living area featuring plenty of comfortable seating and near 360-degree views of the mountains and airport.

A nearby kitchen sits just across from the spacious community room, and down the hall is the pilot's lounge, where pilots will undoubtedly spend most of their time as their clients conduct business in the region.

The lounge can accommodate up to two pilots at a time, and contains reclining chairs and a TV to aid in relaxation.

Just inside the lounge is a private bath, where visiting pilots can unwind and freshen up between flights.

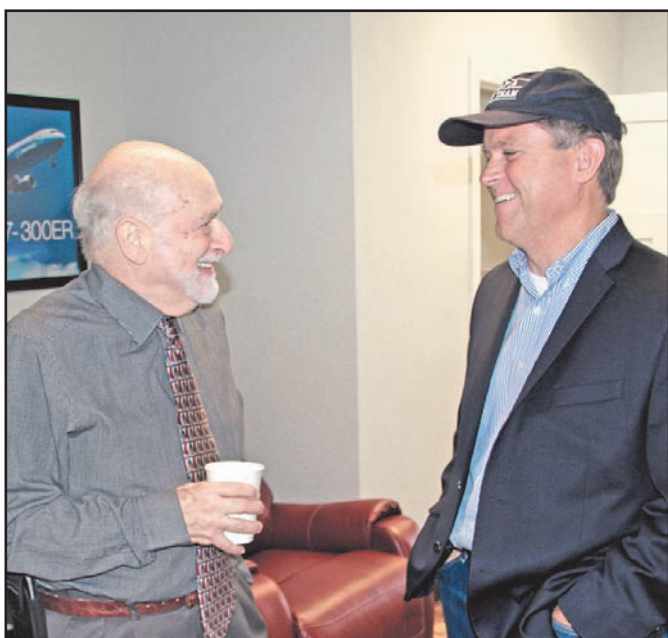
A dedicated flight planning room is available just outside of the lounge, so that pilots can make use of their downtime to chart out their next destination.

Some might ask why it is important to make sure pilots are so well cared for when they fly into town, and the answer is rather simple – pilots are the lifeblood of the airport.

Without pilots, no one



GDOT Intermodal Director Carol Comer with Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Architect Richard Landau with Tsali Bentley in the terminal building's pilot lounge. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

would be flying into Blairsville, which would mean a loss of potentially millions of dollars in investments in the area.

Oftentimes, pilots work for clients who have money to invest, and since pilots hold considerable sway over where they fly their clients, they play a crucial role in promoting the Blairsville Airport so that it continues to be an economic engine for the city and county.

District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch attended the dedication that Saturday, and he believes the new terminal building will be a principal factor in bringing investors into Blairsville and Union County.

"Even if they're just here to vacation and live here part-time, some of them are going to bring their businesses with them," said Sen. Gooch.

Mayor Conley made sure to express his heartfelt appreciation for Intermodal Director Carol Comer, with the Georgia Department of Transportation.

Comer has been instrumental to the Blairsville Airport throughout the years, giving the go-ahead for expansions and construction projects with an eye to the future, which has included grant monies for the new terminal building.

And apart from its status as an economic development tool, everyone seemed thoroughly impressed with the new terminal building on Saturday.

Patsy Nelson, W.C.'s wife, was the driving force behind the interior design of the building, which features

a comfortable, yet sturdy aesthetic that feels right at home in the North Georgia Mountains.

The Aug. 19 dedication featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Of the dozens of guests in attendance, Denny Laney of Laney Construction received a special thank you from Mayor Conley, as did Betty Easter, Tony Dyer and Buddy Moore of the Blairsville City Council, for their roles in making the terminal a reality.

The mayor also thanked former Council member Martha Cone, who passed away in May.

GDOT had other representatives attend the opening, such as GDOT Project Manager Michael Giambrone. GDOT, in concert with Sen. Gooch, helped to secure most of the funds to construct the new terminal building.

Others in attendance were people in town to see the eclipse, regular airport patrons, as well as Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris. Paris, too, received words of thanks for the many friendships he has forged with other local leaders.

The Air Life Georgia helicopter, which has a hangar at the airport, made an appearance on Saturday, though it departed early to respond to a medical call.

Pastor Terry Stuart of Blairsville Church of Christ, the Nelson family's home church, closed the dedication with a prayer.

Disaster Preparedness Drill at Union General Hospital



On Thursday, August 10th a group of volunteers, hospital employees and local emergency responders took part in a mock disaster drill at Union General Hospital. The drill tested the preparedness and response of local agencies should a real crisis occur.

The event staged by Union General Hospital Environment of Care Director, Cecil Solaguren, focused on response plans for an actual disaster which would trigger a sudden influx of patients, media, and concerned community

members to the hospital.

The full scale multi-casualty drill was conducted in collaboration with multiple partner agencies including Union General Emergency Medical Services and Union County Police and Fire Departments.

The scenario for the practice event started out as a severe thunderstorm watch and turned into a deadly tornado that hit Union County. Normal hospital Emergency Department operations and patient care were not affected

by the drill in any way.

Hospitals are required to have disaster response plans in place and conduct periodic drills for improvement and training purposes. "The goal of this exercise is to enhance working relationships and collaboration between the agencies and organizations involved," Solaguren said. "It's a mock exercise, but it's also a very real test of our ability to respond to an actual disaster. We appreciate the cooperation of everyone involved." (N/Aug23.A.3)