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and FFA adviser at the high school this year, and she said the festival was a great experience for the kids, who were getting to interact with the public while raising funds for their respective chapters by selling food and club merchandise.

More than 60 vendors took part in the festival this year, offering handmade goods, educational experiences and food guaranteed to cater to the widest possible audience.

Libby Stevens, the long-time vendor coordinator for the festival, was more than pleased with vendor/patron participation on the front lawn of the Mock House, and she also appreciated the involvement of the FFA kids as carriers of the historical torch moving forward.

Joe and Dixie Stella of Epworth were just two of the many people to attend over the weekend. They came upon the festival much by accident, having spotted it while visiting town to eat at one of their favorite restaurants, Jim's Smokin' Que south of Blairsville.

"We love these kinds of festivals and looking for arts and crafts," Joe said. "The way I look at it, the people in the past gave us what we have today as far as the way we live, things that are positive about life."

"I respect all they did with the little bit they had as far as technology when you look at the things they built, and they didn't have all the construction equipment that we have today."

Bud Akins, former multi-term president of the Historical Society, said it was the best attendance he'd ever seen at the long-running festival, and current Society President Judy



The 1906 Grapelle Butt Mock House was covered up with activity for the 2019 Mountain Heritage Festival over Labor Day Weekend. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Carpenter said she was excited about the turnout and interest in local history.

"Our mission is to preserve and get other people interested in the preservation of history from Union County, and that's what this accomplishes," Carpenter said.

Of course, live musical entertainment organized by Sam Ensley is always a major part of the two-day festival, and this year proved to be no exception.

The bagpipers with Appalachian Saint Andrew's Pipes and Drums opened the festival Saturday with a traditional performance and kept guests entertained throughout the day.

And there was plenty of Mock House porch pickin' by many locally renowned bands on Saturday: The Nearly Normal String Band, The Pressley Girls, John Cochran

and the Cowhands, The Jones Brothers, The Mars Hill Porch Pickers, The Tunnel Rats and Kathy Payne.

Rounding out the musical weekend were Sunday performances by three generations of Ensleys in Sam, Sammy, and Samuel; Mountain Breeze; The Pressley Girls again; The Jimmy Wilson Family; and an encore performance by The Mars Hill Porch Pickers.

To learn more about the Historical Society, including how to volunteer and/or donate, visit the Old Courthouse Museum on the Blairsville Square, and be sure to check out the website at [UnionCountyHistory.org](http://UnionCountyHistory.org).

The Historical Society is actively seeking donations to help cover the many repairs and maintenance costs required to keep up the Old Courthouse and Mock House.



Union County High and Middle School FFA students sold food and brought farm animals for this year's Heritage Festival. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

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grateful for the turnout. "We feel like the community is our customer, and we want a happy customer."

"So, we work really hard with our training, our equipment, and try to provide the best service that we can with what we have. And we can never do any of this without the support of the community."

"The community has always supported us in just about everything we've done, and they've really helped us out in the last few years especially to increase our capabilities."

Station 1 is the only career station in Union County, with all other local stations acting as backup volunteer stations, though the volunteers manning these stations are fully-trained firefighters.

The main station located at 507 Shoe Factory Road features state-of-the-art facilities allowing firefighters more expanded local training opportunities for live burn and other situations.

And Dyer, who also runs the county's Emergency Management Agency at Station 1, makes sure to implement regular training at the Emergency Operations Center there, where he hosted a weather briefing Saturday outlining Hurricane Dorian's expected impacts to the area.

Members of the Union County Community Emergency Response Team attended the Aug. 31 open house, where they disseminated information to guests about volunteering to train as part of an auxiliary team with limited but crucial first responder roles.

The Georgia Forestry Commission brought its big dozer to the party to familiar people with the first line of defense in the event of a local forest fire, and kids had fun inspecting it alongside all the other firefighting equipment.

Fire Rescue 1, Engine 1, Rescue 1, Tanker 1 and Ladder 1 entertained children as well, as did Sparky the Dalmatian, who lives at the station. Firefighters handed out plastic fire helmets to kids, too, and showed them how to use a hose connected to one of the new hydrants at Station 1.

Inside the fire station, folks took tours, ate hotdogs and hamburgers, enjoyed each



Firefighter Patrick Schmidt introducing his daughter to Sparky the Dalmatian, who lives at the station, on Saturday, Aug. 31. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Firefighter and Advanced EMT Warren Cole waving to Open House guests from atop Ladder 1 on Aug. 31. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

other's company, and learned all about various emergency response methods like rope rescue and swift water rescue.

"People can really engage us one on one, and they get to look and see where a lot of the (tax) money that they give us is going," Firefighter Will Barton said of the open house, during which he demonstrated rope techniques.

Barton's mother-in-law, Kim Bridges, attended the open house as a member of the public, and she expressed gratitude for a fire department that so often engages with its community.

"A lot of smaller communities don't have this, and it's awesome to have someone that we can depend on to be there when we need them as far as fires, wrecks and other emergencies," Bridges said.

Station 1 held a boot drive and raffle on Saturday to raise money to benefit the Georgia

Firefighters Burn Foundation.

Local businesses that contributed donations to the open house were 7M Family Farms, Mike's Seafood, Jim's Smokin' Que, Butternut Creek Golf Course, AutoZone, General Supply, Foodland and Sunrise Grocery.

Also on Saturday, Firefighter/EMT James "Rooster" Rosser invited fellow members of the American Patriots Motorcycle Group to the open house.

The nonprofit American Patriots MG will be hosting a "Run For The Hills" motorcycle ride fundraiser starting Sept. 28 in Dahlonega, with proceeds going to the Shepherd's Men Foundation.

"This group works with post-9/11 veterans who have sustained a traumatic brain injury to include post-traumatic stress," according to [AmericanPatriotsMG.com](http://AmericanPatriotsMG.com).