

Duck Derby...from Page 1A



Duck Derby spectators lined the banks of Butternut Creek and the railings of the overlooking covered bridge at the Union County Farmers Market on Sept. 5. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

to expect, so we had 1,200 ducks," Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter said. "This year we did 1,700 ducks (at \$10 per duck).

"We sold out of 1,200 last year, and we thought we would increase it this year to the 1,700, and we sold out again. It is a huge success. We could have sold more but we didn't know what to expect."

Before long, ducks began crossing the finish line and winning numbers started to be announced, and City Councilwoman Betty Easter learned she had won the First Place prize of \$500. Second Place and \$250 went to Lester Chesser, and Third Place's \$100 went to Karyn Woody.

The biggest winners, of course, were the children of Union County, who will benefit come Christmastime from the funds raised by the Duck Derby and its participants.

"We raised \$17,000, and all proceeds will go to Shop with a Cop," Baxter said. "This will be our 21st year doing the program."

"Kids are selected through Family Connection in the Union County School

System. We take the kids shopping and give an allotted amount of money to each child. We also donate a \$100 grocery card to each family. It is not just the kids; we try to help the families out, too."

Over the years, Shop with a Cop has helped more than 1,200 kids go Christmas shopping for gifts to put under their family tree, which is always appreciated, as without Shop with a Cop, it's possible these kids wouldn't have any gifts at all under their trees.

And due to the overwhelming support of the community this year, made all the more generous due to the current economic struggles with COVID-19, the Shop with a Cop program will likely be able to provide for 20 to 25 more children than usual.

Baxter said the Blairsville Police Department is thankful for individuals and the many local businesses that worked to provide greater than 45 prizes for the derby.

"This is a big event for us and for our community," Baxter said. "We couldn't do this without our community. Whether they bought a duck

ticket or donated a prize was a business – it has been a tough year because of COVID, but nobody hesitated to help us.

"We know that, and we appreciate it, and we won't forget those people. None of the businesses that donated a prize asked for anything; they just donated out of the kindness of their heart, and we recognize that and appreciate it."

Attendees of the race felt the derby was a truly beneficial event and were happy to witness a local police department working so hard to serve the needs of the community and its children.

"I have never seen the police so involved with the people," said Shaun Wilson while visiting the Farmers Market that day. "I heard that they were doing this to raise money for kids in need and I think that is wonderful."

"These guys are showing an example of what the police should be for their communities. You can tell the people love it, too, because everyone is out here and helping them support this thing."

Bobby Lance...from Page 1A



Lance's family and friends gathered in Meeks Park two Sundays ago to say, "Happy Retirement, Bobby!" Photo by Jarrett Whitener

good job. I'd been doing hard manual labor before I started, and this was a lot better pay and easier work for me.

"The people have been so nice on my route out there, and I work with some of the nicest people in the world. I enjoy working, and it has taken care of my family. The people on the route are my favorite part."

"I told management that the Post Office paid me, but I was paid by my patrons out there. Without them, I wouldn't have a job."

Over the years, Lance has made friends with many of his patrons and enjoyed seeing familiar faces on his day to day drive through Rural Route 5.

"Being on the same route for over 32 years, I have seen people have kids and the kids grow up and have kids," Lance said. "You know everybody, and I had a man tell me yesterday that I was the first mailman that knew their name."

"I reckon people don't stop and talk, but we had so many packages that I always said hello or asked about their day. It was important to be friendly, and people would be friendly back. That's how you make so many friends."

Of course, Lance will be missed by his coworkers and all the friends he's made over the years.

"He's one of the old-timers, and he believes in doing a good job," said fellow Rural Carrier Hope Reynolds. "He has always been a help when



Janice and Bobby Lance appreciated receiving this painting by one of the longtime mailman's patrons on Rural Route 5. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

any of us were sick. He is the first one to come when we need the help. We will miss him terribly."

Reynolds' remarks mirror the general sentiments of the employees at the Blairsville Post Office, who believe Lance has been an exemplar of the job, leading by example and putting in the effort to make others feel welcome.

"He always did the job right and he cared for customer service," said Rural Carrier Carol Collins. "Service is in our name, and it is part of our job. He has been a huge help to all of us when we first started. He was always there to help guide us and give advice. He is kind of the anchor at the Post Office, and we don't know what we will do without him."

Lance decided to retire earlier this year after concluding that he needed to make more time for things in his life outside of work. As usual, however, he thought of his coworkers before making

the decision official.

"I could have retired seven years ago," he said. "In the last year, I have really wrestled with retiring. We have to go through our paperwork from the government, and it is only good for six months. We ordered it back in spring and filled it out and had the phone interview."

"Then I let the papers lay there and Corona came, and I was afraid they would need some help. We had to order a new book and fill out the paperwork all over again."

One of the reasons Lance has decided to retire is so he can tend to his farm better, on which he is now dedicating more time since his days are not filled with delivering mail.

In honor of his retirement, Blairsville Post Office and some of the patrons on Rural Route 5 arranged gifts and memorabilia for Lance to reflect on the impact he has made on his community, and he had a fun retirement party Aug. 30.

Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting

David W. Payne Camp #1633, Sons of Confederate Veterans, continues to meet the second Thursday of each month at 7 PM.

Our new meeting location is the Davenport Veterans Building, across the 4-lane from Longhorn. NT(Sep9/21)CA