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get to enjoy some time away from worrying about home life or school, and get to have fun with some older kids in high school."

High School Principal C.T. Hussion is always proud of his students, who go above and beyond to raise money, sponsor and spend time with their second-grade counterparts during Shop with a Panther.

"Both the older kids and the younger kids get a lot out of this - it's one of our favorite events of the year for that reason," said Hussion. "Just walking around seeing everybody coming together, it's a special thing."

John Hill, who heads up human resources at the board office but will take over as superintendent next year, said the schools are thankful to everyone who helped to provide positive Christmas experiences for Union County students of all ages.

"Everybody's coming together just to serve the kids here in our community, and it's amazing," said Hill.

With assistance from Walmart, the schools, Blairsville Police Department, Blairsville Cruisers, Union County Sheriff's Office and an untold number of community patrons put many thousands of dollars' worth of presents under the trees of many Union County families for Christmas this year.



UCHS Principal C.T. Hussion with future Superintendent John Hill. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



UCHS junior Jordan Fortenberry lines up a Shop with a Panther photograph for the yearbook. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Shop with a Panther encourages students to work together in the spirit of Christmas. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Miracle...continued from Page 1A

kidney). The doctors believed she was right at the top of the list four years ago," Thompson said. "What's happening is, the pool that is looking for a donor has expanded exponentially."

MiLan has been a frequent visitor of the Union County Dialysis Center since 2009, when she was diagnosed with kidney disease.

She goes through the process of dialysis for four hours each treatment, three times a week. January will mark the beginning of MiLan's ninth year on dialysis. She's on the National Kidney Registry, listed as being in need of a donated kidney.

The problem with finding a match for MiLan, her blood type is B+, a rare type that makes finding a match almost impossible.

She prays for a new kidney, mostly because she doesn't want dialysis to rule her life anymore. It's Christmas, and MiLan is in search of a Christmas Miracle. She's praying for an Angel to deliver a living kidney donor.

Though her blood type is a difficult match, a person with blood type O, the universal

blood type, could be a match. That is as long as they are healthy.

Her husband, Tom, wanted to donate a kidney to MiLan, however, his high blood pressure ruled him out as a donor because of the risks involved.

"There are 100,000 people waiting for a kidney transplant," Thompson said. "Only 7,000 people are getting donated kidneys each year."

Approximately 1 in 3 kidney donations in the U.S., Great Britain and Israel are now from a live donor. Potential donors are carefully evaluated on medical and psychological grounds.

This ensures that the donor is fit for surgery and has no disease, which brings undue risk or likelihood of a poor outcome for either the donor or recipient.

The psychological assessment is to ensure the donor gives informed consent and is not coerced. In countries where paying for organs is illegal, authorities may also seek to ensure that a donation has not resulted from a financial transaction.

MiLan knows that studies show that people with kidney transplants live longer than those who remain on dialysis.

Her prayer is that someone will read this story and know someone who would be interested in becoming a suitable donor for her. Finding out if you're a suitable donor is easy.

It's a no-pressure call to Leanne, a registered nurse at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta.

For those interested in being considered for the donor program, call (404) 605-4605.

In talking with MiLan, she's confident that there is a match out there somewhere. She's confident that God will make sure that she gets a new kidney.

She lies in bed at night hoping and dreaming of a day when she's not subjected to dialysis any longer.

"I hope that someone has a kidney for me," MiLan said. "I hope for a Christmas Miracle."

Almost a decade has gone by since she became a dialysis regular. She keeps the faith that a Christmas Miracle is still within reach. She prays that her quest for a donor kidney comes to complete fruition.

Until that day comes, she keeps the faith.

Vogel State Park offering site-specific camping



Vogel State Park, Union County, Georgia

Vogel now offers Site-Specific Camping! As of December 1, 2017 you can now make a reservation for a specific campsite at Vogel State Park. Please remember to pay close attention to which site you are choosing during your reservation booking.

One of Georgia's oldest and most beloved state parks, Vogel is located at the base of Blood Mountain in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Driving from the south, visitors pass through Neel Gap,

a beautiful mountain pass near Brasstown Bald, the highest point in Georgia.

Vogel is particularly popular during the fall when the Blue Ridge Mountains transform into a rolling blanket of red, yellow and gold leaves. Hikers can choose from a variety of trails, including the popular 4-mile Bear Hair Gap loop, an easy lake loop that leads to Trahyta Falls, and the challenging 13-mile Coosa Backcountry Trail.

Cottages, campsites and

primitive backpacking sites provide a range of overnight accommodations. The park's 22 acre lake is open to non-motorized boats, and during summer, visitors can cool off at the mountain-view beach.

This park is rich in history, with many facilities being constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps during our nation's Great Depression. The "CCC Boys" story is told in the park's museum. The CCC museum is open seasonally.

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