

# Hearing

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Clerk, Janice Gratton at City of Blairsville, P.O. Box 307, Blairsville, GA 30514, Mayor Jim Conley said.

"The Housing Authority of Cordele plans to use a portion of the proceeds to make improvements at Tan Yard Branch Apartments," Mayor Conley said, referring to the 49-unit affordable housing community at 14 Tan Yard Street, in Blairsville.

"That housing authority owns the Tan Yard Apartments," Mayor Conley said. "In order for them to apply for additional funding for upgrades at those apartments, they have to hold a public hearing in the town where those apartments are, and consequently, they're

here in Blairsville.

"They have to advertise this public hearing, and all they ask for the city of Blairsville to do, is allow them to use our facility to host the public hearing at our Oct. 1st meeting," Mayor Conley said. "They'll be in charge of their own public hearing at 5 p.m., prior to our monthly meeting. They seek public comment, and, they seek to answer any questions regarding what they're trying to do."

The apartments are approximately 20 years old, and in need of upgrades.

In other business, the mayor and council heard from Chip McGaughey, of EMI about the upcoming water proj-

ect of upgrading water lines from 2 inches to 8 inches on Haralson Drive to Deep South Farm Road.

That project also includes water system improvements that upgrades undersized and aging waterlines along Pat Haralson Memorial Drive and Deep South Farm Road for improved flow and pressure and reduced water leaks.

The city also plans to replace its existing water meters with a wireless automatic smart reading system for its 1,310 customers, which will improve meter reading efficiency, reduce labor costs, and provide a more accurate measurement of water usage throughout the system.

The project of replacing water meters with uber modern Automated Meter Reading technology will take place simultaneously, Mayor Conley said.

"We have a timeline schedule from Engineering Management Incorporated," Mayor Conley said. "The project goes out for bid this month. It's scheduled to go to construction in December, and it should be completed by June or July of 2014.

"The water meter changes will save money in manpower and equipment," Mayor Conley said. "It's more efficient from multiple standpoints."

# Pine Top

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All-in-all, almost 80 people turned out for the occasion.

Families brought covered dishes and refreshments to enjoy on this day of remembrance.

The day included singing, preaching and eating.

The Rev. Tanner presided over the event, and the Smokey Mountain Boys performed much to the delight of the crowd.

Joan Dyer Akins said she had fond memories of her school days at Pine Top, and remembered the 35 or so students who attended classes there.

"My last year at Pine Top School was 1951 but the school was closed in 1953," Joan said. "The last school reunion was in 2003 and approximately 15 people attended the reunion at Pine Top Baptist Church.

"It was good to see familiar faces today," she said. "It brought back memories that I hadn't thought about in a while."

The educators that taught while Joan Dyer Akins attended included Blanche Swain, Eva Mae Reece (Byron Herbert Reece's sister) and Bonnie Mae Hunter.

"My fondest memories were going to dip water out of the spring with a dipper for drinking," Joan said. "Our teacher picked one student for this task each day.

"I felt so special when I was selected for this duty," she

said. "We all drank out of the same dipper. We didn't think about germs back then.

"Another fond memory was playing dodge ball, soft ball, hopscotch and tag with my friends," she said.

Joan Dyer Akins also recalled one requirement of her teacher, Ms. Swain.

"We had to memorize every definition of glossary words in the back of every book, before we were allowed recess time," she said. "At the time I didn't appreciate the punishment, but as I look back now, I realize how important vocabulary skills are to me."

Sunday school classes also were taught at the Pine Top School, Joan Dyer Akins said.

"It was a one-room classroom, but it came with a lot of life lessons," she said.

The Rev. Tanner said that Pine Top Baptist Church dates back to the early 1920s.

There was a period in the church's history where no one attended services there.

However, beginning in 1940, the church came roaring back, the Rev. Tanner said.

"The church came back strong," he said. "There's a lot of history at Pine Top. The cemetery dates back to 1921.

"Yesterday was a Homecoming to remember," the Rev. Tanner said. "It was a good day yesterday, a lot of folks turned out, and a good time was had by all."

Joan Dyer Akins' sister, Sylvia Dyer Turnage said that

the one-room school houses lasted longer in our community than any where else in the country.

"The last of the one-room schools were still functioning here in the early 1950s," she said.

The schools were generally one room, in which a teacher taught all seven grades.

"Many of the buildings doubled as church houses," Dyer-Turnage said.

As for Pine Top School, Dyer-Turnage said that the little building was heated with a pot-bellied stove using firewood during the winter months.

"There was no water fountain in this building," she said. "We drank from a bucket of spring water that was placed on a table in the back of the room. We all drank from a common dipper."

Dyer-Turnage said that since all of the students walked to school along dirt roads, their shoes brought in a lot of dirt into the one-room schoolhouse.

"To keep the dust down, the wooden floor was oiled with motor oil. If you happened to slip down, particularly soon after a fresh oiling, you could count on your clothes to get badly stained."

Dyer-Turnage said the school didn't have an organized sports program.

"We didn't have enough students for any organized sports, but, we played many

games outside during lunch and recess."

She said students had good instincts for learning.

"We sat quietly and read, did writing assignments and arithmetic at our grade level," she said.

"It must have been a challenge for the teachers, switching from one grade to another through out the day," she said.

Dyer-Turnage admits to really walking to school.

"My brother, sister and I walked, well, mostly ran to and from school," she said. "In all kinds of weather."

*Dateline Georgia*, inside the *Atlanta Journal*, once ran a story on Old Pine Top.

It read: "The little, old one-room school houses haven't been gone long. About them there are special memories. What these schools had that you can't get now was personal attention. Discipline was expected by the students. They were never disappointed.

Not so many columns ago, I told the story of visiting Mr. and Mrs. Frank Twiggs in Choestoe, south of Blairsville.

"Mr. Frank told of his one-room-school-teaching experiences in schools, one of them being nearby Pine Top," wrote Bob Harrell.

Sylvia Dyer-Turnage wrote Harrell a few letters about Pine Top.

Harrell always enjoyed reading about Pine Top in Sylvia's letters.

# Lobelia inflata, the Clark Kent of Weeds

By Sylvia Purcupile

You'd hardly notice *Lobelia inflata* in your garden--just another weed, easily lost among the bolder or peskier ones with thorns, stinging hairs, bright flowers or rampant habits. No, this little *Lobelia* is not outstanding. One to two feet high, with slim stems, 3-inch alternate leaves and tiny, bluish flowers, it's easy to overlook. But gather it all up--roots, stems, leaves, seeds and flowers; tincture it in alcohol and KAZAM! it becomes a super herb, a powerful antispasmodic used to

quell muscle spasms and as a bronchial dilator to relieve acute spasmodic coughs and allergy or asthma attacks. It is so potent that it is used only in small doses for acute, not chronic, conditions. Large doses cause severe vomiting.

There's a moral to this hero's tale. As we look around us we see the landscape as beautiful--or not. In the woods or by the shore, we focus on the scene's restorative beauty: for us, beauty is its value. However, there is more here than meets the eye and soothes the senses, there

is a treasure chest of herbal riches--if we only know how to look. Our ancestors knew how to look because they depended upon these plants for every need: food, medicine, clothing, material for making tools, weapons and building homes. For them, survival was its value.

Thankfully, today we have modern stores where it's fast and easy to obtain what we need. We don't have to depend on the wild anymore -- or do we? Estimates vary, but some 25 to 40 percent of the medicines we use today are based on plant medicines. Our hero *Lobelia inflata*, for example, contains an alkaloid currently used in anti-smoking drugs. So far, however, we've researched relatively few plants for their medicinal properties: much remains to discover. How many more Clark Kents are out there? And, while we don't need to forage for food anymore either, stock from the original scrawny wild plants our luscious fruits and veggies come from may be needed in the future to reintroduce or reinvigorate crops that have been over-modified, or weakened by climate change, depleted soils, introduced pests or unforeseen disasters.

The moral is this: survival of native wild plants is still important to our survival. Over harvesting of these plants, uncontrolled development, ignorance and lack of care all threaten our precious native plant botanical reserve. What can you do about it? Arm yourself with knowledge, protect public wild space, preserve as much natural habitat on your land as possible, be respectful of the plants beneath your feet. That plant you step on may look like Clark Kent, but it may be the super herb that cures your pain or even saves your life.

To learn more, visit the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center (old Experiment Station) Ethnobotanic Gardens and Medicine Trail. Free tours Mondays 9am to 1pm. Call Clare Johnston at 706-745-2655 for more information. N(Sep11,22)CA