

Shop With a Cop...from Page 1A



Christmas spirit with Shop With a Cop, including A&A Auto Rental and Harmony Grove Baptist Church, which both donated vans to transport children's purchases, and X-treme Christian Outdoors, which also provided a vehicle for carrying purchases.

Walmart donated refreshments for children and volunteers at the store, and lunch was provided by Chick-fil-A restaurant.

"I told everybody at the grand opening from day one, I'm ready to dive in deep on this, and jump in to be part of this community and it is events like this that excite me and I have a passion for," said Daniel Liberatore, owner/operator of the Blairsville Chick-fil-A. "It's all about giving back to the community."

Those involved in Shop With a Cop want to make sure that the most children possible have a special Christmas.

"I think this is a wonderful thing they're doing for the county," said one grateful mother, speaking of Shop With a Cop and all the volunteers who made the day possible for her children.

Lt. Darren Jones of the Union County Sheriff's Office is the school resource officer at Union County Middle School, and he also works part-time for the police department.

"They're good kids," said Lt. Jones, who has been an SRO since 2000 and has attended every Shop With a Cop. "They're very respectful,

we interact very well. It's a good relationship between me and the kids. I enjoy it."

Lt. Jones gets to see these students every day, and for him, Shop With a Cop is just another chance to see those children smile.

"We're fortunate to have a community that supports us and helps us out with this cause - it takes a community effort," said Lt. Jones.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason was happy to have his deputies assist children in picking out Christmas gifts on Saturday.

"It's a very worthwhile venture, and I want to thank everyone who donated," said Sheriff Mason. "A lot of people are struggling this time of year especially, and we want to do what we can to make them have a better Christmas."

The Blairsville Cruisers raise money throughout the year to give to efforts like Shop With a Cop, and the group even hosts its own shopping experience for younger children known as Shop With a Cruiser. And as in years past, the Cruisers, along with founder Wayne Tanner, helped kids do their shopping on Saturday.

Current Club President Pete Barley offered a word of thanks to Walmart for going above and beyond this Christmas season, with facilitating children's shopping, as well as offering charitable donations.

"We got a phone call

from a family that, the children are going shopping today, and the boy was going to take his money that the police department was going to give him to buy a Christmas tree, because they didn't have a tree or anything to put on a tree," said Barley. "I contacted Walmart, and they gave me a tree with all the trimmings on it, everything."

That example highlights the kind of shopping children usually do during Shop With a Cop - buying for the family as well as for themselves, which always warms the hearts of volunteers.

"I just love to see the kids happy," said Robin Hardin of Proflame Gas, who volunteered for the second year in a row. "That makes me happy, to see their little faces light up."

Joey Brooks, department manager in the Garden Center at Walmart, said that he's grateful for the program because his kid benefited directly from the Shop With a Cop program years ago.

"It's an awesome thing, it really is," said Brooks. "To me, I want to make a big deal out of it for the kids, try to make it exciting for the kids and a fast experience for them, because this might be the only Christmas they get. Nobody really knows what they go through at home. It's just a different situation, so to see them come through here and do what they're doing, it's a blessing."

Quilt of Valor presented at the Union County Schools Veterans Ceremony

On November 10, 2015, with family, friends, military veterans and the students of the Union County Schools present, it was an honor for the students of Union County High School Anna Danek, Justin Eigel, Madison Capstick and Nathan South under the auspices of the Misty Mountain Quilts of Valor Outreach program to present a Quilt of Valor to Mrs. Laurie Reid, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Mr. Shane Womack, Assistant Principal of Union County Middle School and Mr. Art McCann, Union County High School Administrator. These special honorees were presented their Quilts of Valor at a moving Veterans Memorial Ceremony presented by the students of Union County Schools.

Laurie Reid is a U.S. Navy veteran of Desert Storm and Desert Shield, Shane Womack, a Persian Gulf Veteran, was a U.S. Navy Corpsman assigned to the U.S. Marine Corps during the Persian Gulf War and Art McCann is a U.S. Army Iraqi and Afghanistan veteran.



(L-R): Laurie Reid, Shane Womack and Art McCann

Anna Danek opened the ceremony with an invocation. The student Master of Ceremony, Dylan Byers, provided the opening remarks and closing remarks honoring the Fallen. The student guest speaker, Matt Penney, delivered a moving speech dedicated to the United States veterans, past, present and future. The students of the Middle School and High School combined bands and chorus' along with Cody Short, Brooks Patterson and Tori Walker provided a moving musical tribute to our veterans.

The student Civil Air Patrol members posted and retired our national and state flags.

Quilts of Valor are presented to those veterans and active duty military who have served in combat zones. Information about Quilts of Valor may be found at www.qovf.org. The patriotic quilt presented to Mrs. Reid, Mr. Womack and Mr. McCann, represents a thank you to them for what they have done to defend and protect our nation. Each Quilt of Valor presented is registered with the National Archives.

NDec16,Z3/CA

Community Council receives donation and support

Snap-on Tools recently continued its support of the Community Council at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. The Community Involvement team at Snap-on has been a consistent financial supporter of the programs of the Community Council. In addition to their financial support, members of Snap-on's Community Involvement team volunteer in area elementary schools with the Council's first grade bird program. Snap-on employees teach the students about hummingbirds, bluebirds and how to build a bird feeder. Currently, Snap-on is the only corporate donor to contribute employee time to the Council's programs. "We are happy to support the mission and the programs of the Council," said Snap-on associate Rose Jones.

Snap-on Tools are an industry leader, providing high quality tools to industry professionals in over 130 countries. Their franchisees support professionals in Blairsville and the



(L-R): Bruce Hoening, Lilly Barnes, Lynn Williams, Ryan Jones, Robyn Trehan, Rose Jones, Reid Woody, Regina Anderson, Jen Caldwell, Ray Covington

surrounding area, providing premium products to the service industry. Whether it's hand tools, diagnostic equipment, or tool storage solutions, innovation is a quality found throughout their product line. In Murphy, NC they have a manufacturing facility employing over 215 Snap-on associates.

A donation was presented to Ray Covington, Superintendent of the Center. "I'd like

to thank the wonderful people at Snap-on for their generous contribution to the educational programs of the Community Council. This will help us to continue to provide new and engaging opportunities for area youth and adults", said Covington. Last year the Council served over 4,800 youth and adults through the education, outreach and preservation programs. NDec16,Z9/CA

AAA...from Page 1A

Wesleyan, Darlington, and Holy Innocents are somehow returning to Class A.

Along with Union, the rest of Region 7-AAA will include Greater Atlanta Christian (GAC), Fannin County, Lumpkin County, Dawson County, East Hall, and North Hall.

East Hall's enrollment of 1,130 put them in Class AAAA but the Vikings are being allowed to play down in Class AAA. North Hall (1,073) is moving down from Class AAAA, and Lumpkin County (1,114) is one student short of being the largest school in Class AAA and played in Class AAAA through the spring of 2013.

GAC's enrollment of 736 wasn't enough to bump them up to Class AAA but since 39.7 percent of their students come from outside of Gwinnett County, the new rules moved them up.

Union County is the second smallest public school in Class AAA.

Currently, Region 8-AA looks like this: Rabun County, Banks County, Social Circle, Oglethorpe County, Elbert County, Monticello, and Putnam County.

Former region members Greene County and Washington Wilkes will drop to Class A while Riverside Military Academy is forced to play in Class AAAA due to 96.6 percent of its cadets coming from outside of Hall County, and being a single-sex school, they must double their enrollment of 888.

The move to AAA was spearheaded by Assistant Superintendent Jeremy Williams, UCHS Principal John Hill, and Head Football Coach Brian Allison, who represented the school's Athletic Committee that was implemented in 2013.

However, some coaches feel this decision was made behind closed doors with any input from the female coaches or the community.

According to a former coach, there was also member of the Athletic Committee, who happened to be against the appeal, that was kept in the dark regarding the decision. The committee member wasn't notified of the appeal until it was sent in, finalized, and posted on the GHSA's website. That's when a friend came across the reclassification results online and contacted the committee member,

who was unaware of what had happened.

According to Williams, the reason for the move is to reduce travel time to games, which will increase class time for student athletes.

"When you look at basketball, softball, baseball, and the teams that travel to a region game throughout the week, it makes it pretty challenging," he said. "Now our student-athletes will receive more instructional time in the classroom. Also, our families are going to be able to travel to see their kids play. Not many parents are going to make the trip to the schools that are off (Interstate) 20."

Another reason is the ability to play a more local schedule will increase gate revenues.

"When we have Oglethorpe and Social Circle, they don't bring a fan base," Williams said. "We need some good rivalries that will bring a good fan base. Unfortunately, in AA, the range of competition was very wide. You're either going to blow people out, or they are going to blow you out, but stepping up to AAA, we're going to see a better level of competition, day in, and day out. We're hoping that will lead to more kids participating in sports and the possibility of adding more sports in the future."

Another issue, according to Williams is student safety, due to the late arrivals back in Blairsville following a road game, most notably in football.

"Sometimes they don't get back until 2 or 3 in the morning, so it's not only travel time, but student safety is an issue as well," he said.

Those arguing loudest against are the cross country and soccer teams, who have been dealt a serious blow to their quest for the school's first ever Team State Championship. Union County has won several individual State titles, as recently as 2013, but has yet to win a team championship. Something that has been accomplished multiple times by neighbors Towns, Fannin, and White County.

Had Union remained in AA, the four soccer teams that finished ahead of the Lady Panthers in the 2015 State Tournament would all be gone, clearing a path to a possible Class AA State title.

Last month, the Union County mens' cross country team

finished sixth in State. Four of the five schools that finished ahead of Union are on their way out of Class AA. The only school remaining is Bleckley County, who graduates three of its top-six runners.

The Union County men, who will return its entire top five in 2016, will join GAC, Lovett, the 2015 Class AAA State Champion Westminster, and six of the Class AAA top 10 in 2016.

Head Cross Country Coach Jackie Hughes, Union's winningest coach at the region and state level, wasn't contacted regarding the decision, nor was her opinion sought.

Softball is another sport that would have been a contender for a Class AA State Championship with defending State Champ Gordon Lee moving to Class A and taking the team (Lanier County) that eliminated the Lady Panthers in the 2015 Elite 8 with them.

All of these sports will definitely be in the mix for a State title in Class AAA, but staying in a Class AA depleted of private schools, would have made Union one of the favorites in multiple sports. Since Class A split into public and private, Towns County has won four straight State Championships in Cross Country, reached a State title game, and a final four in girls basketball and Union could have possibly benefited from being in similar circumstances.

During the 2014-15 school year, every sport that had the opportunity to host a first round State Tournament game did, except for one. The soccer team hosted the first three rounds of the State Tournament last spring. Only the top two teams in each region get to host the first round, something that generates a lot of revenue for the schools. Now that feat could become much tougher in AAA.

According to a former coach, and a current coach, the decision to move up to Class AAA would have been accepted had those in charge been transparent about the decision and involved the coaches and the entire athletic committee in the process. What has angered many is the way the decision to move up involved only three people, working over the Thanksgiving Holidays, then immediately turning the appeal into the GHSA and getting it finalized as quickly as possible.

UGH receives new quality-based accreditation from DNV GL

Union General Hospital (UGH) announces the successful completion of its new accreditation process from DNV GL - Healthcare.

By earning accreditation, UGH has demonstrated it meets or exceeds patient safety standards (Conditions of Participation) set forth by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. DNV GL's accreditation program is the only one to integrate the ISO 9001 Quality Management System with the Medicare Conditions of Participation.

"The DNV GL program is consistent with our long-term commitment to quality and patient safety," says UGH CEO, Michael Gowder. "The ability to integrate ISO 9001 quality standards with our clinical and financial processes is a major step forward."

"We have taken an entirely different approach to accreditation, and hospitals are really responding," says DNV GL - Healthcare CEO Patrick Horine. "Since accreditation is a must-have credential for just about every hospital in this country, why not make it more valuable, and get more out of it? That's where ISO 9001 comes into play, and turns the typical get-your-ticket-

punched accreditation exercise into a quality transformation."

DNV GL's accreditation program, called NIAHO® (Integrated Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations), involves annual hospital surveys - instead of every three years - and encourages hospitals to openly share information across departments and to discover improvements in clinical workflows and safety protocols. NDec16,Z15/CA

Parkinson's support meeting location change

As of 1/1/2016 the Blairsville area Parkinson's Disease Support Group (PDSG) will change its meeting location from the Southern Bank & Trust to the Cabin Coffee Co. of Blairsville at 44A Town Square (706.745.0073 www.cabincoffeecompany.com).

The monthly meeting day (second Wednesday of each month) and meeting start time (3 p.m.) remain unchanged. For more information: Chuck Esposito terraesp@windstream.net 706.747.2183. N