

Cruiser...from Page 1A

coordinate the beginnings of Shop With a Cruiser through her involvement at Union County Middle School.

The Cruisers raise money each year by raffling tickets to a car – most recently a 2004 Mustang Convertible – and by hosting Cruise-Ins from April through October, both at the Blairsville Square and the Union County Farmers Market.

“A lot of the people, you try to sell them a ticket on a car, and they say, ‘I’ve got a Ford, I’ve got a Chevrolet, I don’t need another car,’” said Tanner. “You tell them that, we’re just trying to make money to help out needy kids for Christmas, and they say, ‘Give me \$20 worth,’ just like that.”

Over the years, the Cruisers have grown from being a car club that cares to a car club that does tremendous work within the community, giving back more and more each year. On top of their Christmas program for kids, the Cruisers also give scholarships to graduating seniors each year, and they make donations regularly to the Union County Food Pantry.

Cruiser Kathy Niebur

joined the club with her husband Butch about four years ago, due mainly to Butch’s interest in cars.

“As we got more involved with the club, we saw what they did, like this, so we got involved with a lot of the fundraising,” said Niebur. “The first year I came shopping, I was hooked. This is my third year to shop with the children, and it just gets better every year.”

One of the things that impresses the Cruisers most about the children is how they conduct themselves, especially for being as young as they are.

“These children are so kind and so grateful,” said Niebur. “They’re polite, appreciative. We spend a lot of time from April through October, selling the raffle tickets and doing the Cruise-Ins and all that, and it’s a lot of time, but I like it mostly because I know all the money we raise stays right here. I like for the money to stay in Union County, and for Union County kids to get the benefit.”

As part of its own charitable endeavors, Walmart helps Shop With a Cruiser with donations and an

accommodating environment. “What we do is, we encourage the community to help the children that are in need, and a lot of them that come to us do it of their own free will,” said Rehnee Herr, assistant front end manager at the Blairsville Walmart. “It’s great to see the volunteers.”

“We like to make sure that, on our end, the kids can come in, get what they want, take their time in the store, come early. We will make sure that they have snacks and stuff, extra staffing to where they can get in and get out, and make it as less stressful as possible.”

Helping to take kids around shopping during this year’s Shop With a Cruiser event were the Good Neighbors Auto Club and the Union County Sheriff’s Office, as well as other volunteers.

“We had a lot of help this year,” said Cruisers President Pete Barley after the shop. “We had a lot of volunteers this year, a lot of people helped us out this year. It went really well.”

Tanner, Barley and the rest of the Cruisers would like to thank all of their sponsors and the people who helped to make the 2015 Shop With a Cruiser possible.

DDA...from Page 1A

stalemate the job, because you can’t do it because of the temperature, and just hold it up until we get decent weather. But we’re hoping we can get it in.”

The off ramp, which will be named Bob Head Street following a unanimous council vote in the most recent Blairsville City Council meeting, will connect Georgia 515 to Pat Haralson Drive just across from Young Harris Street, and the DDA board discussed whether or not there would be a four-way stop at that intersection, or if traffic will continue through for motorists on Pat Haralson Drive.

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, who attends the DDA meetings that take place in Blairsville City Hall, informed the board that the city council might be reluctant to approve a four-way stop there given the history of that particular spot at Young Harris Street.

According to Mayor Conley, back when the intersection of Young Harris Street and Pat Haralson Drive was a three-way stop, traffic was a constant problem, backing up Cleveland Street and making the square more congested than it is today.

DDA Program Manager Darren Harper and several board members expressed their concerns that, without a four-way stop there, safety might be an issue, and Harper also pointed out that many people choose to avoid Young Harris Street completely, preferring instead to take the roundabout around the Blairsville Square.

“It’s not like it can’t be tested to see how it’s going to work, because you’re not really going to know the true flow of traffic until that other (ramp) is eliminated,” said DDA Board Chairman Paul Thompson of the old ramp that will be closed off following completion of Bob Head Street. “That’s something I assume can be changed if needed to be, but even if it started out not necessarily be-



ing a four-way stop, you can test it and see which made the traffic flow better. I just assumed all along it was going to be a four-way stop.”

One suggestion to alleviate potential traffic in the area was to contact DOT to see about putting a left-hand turn lane into the Union County Courthouse from 515 East, to alleviate traffic heading to the courthouse, to Union General Hospital, or to the Union County Transfer Station.

“I’ve heard some good, positive comments from people visiting from out of town about the Downtown Square area, and if we can expand that theme in the future to include more, I think it will be

very beneficial to the town,” said Thompson. “It’s going to be interesting to see how this project will take off, and how it will effect what happens downtown.”

“I think we’ve got some good possibilities in the future, and I hope we can make it work well for Downtown Blairsville. I’m kind of apprehensive about the way traffic is going to work after today’s conversation, but I think everybody needs to look at that with an open mind and see how it’s going to sort out, even the city council, maybe, to consider the four-way stop there if that turns out to be the way it needs to be.”

Star Wars ...from Page 1A

“The prequels are modern, but there has been so much jump in technology since then that I’m interested to see what (J.J. Abrams) can do with it.”

Clay Collins, 21, drove from Blue Ridge with his family and girlfriend to be a part of the premiere, and it was important for him to see Episode VII in theaters because he grew up with the movies.

“I just fell in love with *Star Wars* as a kid,” said Collins. “I loved watching the movies – it just became a part of my life, and I just had to be here for the next step.”

A pleasant surprise for all who attended the film, 13-year-old Corton Olver brought his trumpet to the premiere and played the music of *Star Wars* outside the theater while patrons of Blairsville Cinema waited in line for the doors to open.

“I have a lot of expectations, a couple of theories on what’s going to happen,” said Olver, who had been practicing *Star Wars* music for about three weeks before deciding to play at the premiere. “I just really like the old movies and can’t wait for these.”

Reece Ogburn, 21, of Blairsville, dressed as a Rebel Fighter Pilot, and he had a more than favorable opinion of the movie after the credits rolled.

“It was amazing,” said Ogburn, summing up the gen-



Kate VanOrsdal and Kathy Thompson of Blue Ridge brought their light sabers to the *Star Wars* premiere. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Fans line up outside Blairsville Cinema, eagerly awaiting the long anticipated *Star Wars VII* premiere. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

eral consensus of moviegoers following the premiere of Episode VII in Blairsville. “I tried not to have many expectations, but it blew all of them out of the water.”

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