North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Smith recalls lifetime of service to country, community second-chance alternative high the Depression, so the entire the entire community came

North Georgia News editor@nganews.com

Every community has its pillars, those dedicated men and women whose actions directly contribute to enhancing the quality of life for families and individuals of an entire area. Here in the North Georgia Mountains, one of those community pillars is Wade C.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Smith, 88, has spent his life singularly devoted to serving and advancing his fellow man and more especially the children - with experiences so robust and far reaching that mere words on a page must necessarily fall short of fully describing his contributions.

Having committed decades of valiant service as a war hero and decades more tirelessly working to educate the youth of the mountains and beyond, all while bettering his community as a man of God and a Freemason. Smith has led a selfless existence pledged to causes greater than himself.

Many people know Smith locally as the founder of the Mountain Education Charter High School, a regional

who are at risk of dropping out, traded for the food that made to attend self-paced evening classes and graduate with a diploma and hope for the future with secondary educational institutions.

But Smith is as humble as they come, so the only way one may attempt to even scratch the surface of the life of such a distinguished and driven individual is with humility in return. And perhaps the best place to begin such an endeavor is, as they say, at the

EARLY LIFE

Born in 1933 in nearby Otto, North Carolina, Smith remembers participating in a was one of eight children seven boys and one girl. Like many families during the period that encompassed the Great Depression, the Smiths, parents and children, lived off the land and did whatever odds jobs they could to make ends meet and put food on the table.

Looking back, Smith is amazed how his parents never let the family go hungry in a heralded the culmination time when so many had so little. of a successful community There were no paying jobs endeavor, like the time the to speak of then, even before neighbor's barn collapsed and

school that enables children, family worked for, grew and it to the table.

Fortunately, neither the Smith family nor anyone else realized just how poor they were, as circumstances were the same for all. It also helped that the Smiths hewed closely to a spirit of optimism and Christianity that kept the light of hope shining even in dark

Indeed, everyone was generally happy in those days, and people came together as a community to help one another and to pass the time. Sometimes, they even mixed

For example, Smith community-wide rat-killing contest as a kid aimed at preserving the corn crop. After all the rats had been eliminated in the corn crib, everyone enjoyed a lovely community meal prepared that morning by the ladies while the children, men and dogs took care of

Communal meals often

together to rebuild a fourstalled log barn, which was followed by a large meal to

But Smith knew, even then, that there had to be a better way for folks to get by and make a living.

Not until he volunteered for the military and experienced more of the world did Smith become aware of the full extent of the poverty of his birthplace, which came with the realization that he wanted to return one day to raise the conditions of the atrisk children and families living in the mountains.

"It was a tough time, but in our family, it was 'all hold hands and be positive and go forward," Smith said. "Our parents always told us, 'You're wonderful people, and make sure you always exhibit that shining light – you're a special gift from God.

"My mother made us memorize poems and read the Bible, and some of the neighbors would say they could never tell (our parents) Marjorie and Grover from the children because they were always out there playing with them. So, it was a very close family."

See Wade Smith, Page 6A



Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Wade C. Smith Sr. served his country honorably from 1951 to 1980, having been involved in numerous assignments ranging from combat in Vietnam to the educational overhaul of the entire Army.

Qualifying for 2022 Election Cycle ends at noon Friday

By Shawn Jarrard North Georgia News editor@nganews.com

Qualifying for the Union County Board of Education and other elective offices began this week ahead of the May 24 General Primary Election.

School Board seats up for election are Districts 2, 4 and 5, and the qualifying fees have been set at \$130.

Office inside the Union County Courthouse at 65 Courthouse candidate-resources.

Monday, March 7, and runs through Friday, March 11, inside the courthouse. Hours to pay their fees and verify their will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and from 9 a.m. to noon on Friday.

Candidate checklists People may access a map of for qualifying and other

the School Board districts in information can be found by the Union County Registrar's visiting the Secretary of State's website at https://sos.ga.gov/

Potential candidates will Qualifying started on need to visit their respective political party representatives inside the courthouse this week paperwork is in order, after which they must submit their paperwork to the Elections

will be viewable at sos.ga.gov within minutes of qualifying, and state offices is also taking according to the Elections

Four county-level offices are up for election, including the three partisan Board of Education posts Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor if petition requirements are met for the

place this week, but instead of submitting their paperwork locally, potential candidates must do so at the State Capitol Building in Atlanta.

State-level offices up for as well as the nonpartisan election in the General Primary are Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney, District 8 State Representative and District 51 State Senator, plus two Enotah Superior Court

Qualifying for federal judgeships that will appear on the May 24 Nonpartisan Election ballot.

> Various other state-level offices will appear in the primary, including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Agriculture Commissioner, Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner, State School Superintendent, Labor Commissioner, and

Public Service Commissioner See Qualifying, Page 3A

Woody Gap Band of Steel Gala a musical success



The Woody Gap Band of Steel's talented young musicians regaled a captive audience with Caribbean-style steel drum performances on Saturday, March 5. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks North Georgia News Staff Writer

The students of Woody Gap Band of Steel brought

fun to the Union County included everyone from proud Community Center for their parents and teachers to excited Sixth Annual Gala Dinner Concert on Saturday, March 5. North Carolina, and beyond,

Guests packed the

gallons of Caribbean-themed banquet hall, and the crowd visitors from Hayesville,

See Band of Steel, Page 2A

Gun Club annual meeting draws over 300 people

By Mark Smith North Georgia News

The Union County Gun Club held its first annual meeting in two years on Thursday, March 3, at the Union County Sports Center. Last year's annual meeting was cancelled due to pandemic

A crowd of about 300 folks turned out for the meeting, which featured a healthy mix of longtime members and new signups that evening. It was an expectant occasion, with everyone anxious to hear news about the ongoing development of a dedicated local place to

After all, people have been patiently waiting for nearly five years for the county to realize the construction of

Sheriff Mack Mason was pleased with the turnout of the Union County Gun Club's annual meeting last week, as were Gun Club Board Members. Photo by Mark Smith

a modern target range, as it the legalities associated with

WEC Family Resources celebrates 30 years of service



WEC Family Resources hosted a 30th anniversary event at the end of February to commemorate the tremendous difference the organization has made in the lives of local Photo by Brittany Holbrooks mothers and families.

By Brittany Holbrooks North Georgia News Staff Writer

In a Feb. 26 banquet at Antioch Baptist Church, WEC Family Resources celebrated

and the surrounding area with nonjudgmental care given to has nevertheless grown and expectant mothers in need and their families. Although it has gone

by different names in the past

30 years of servicing Blairsville and services have changed over the years, the facility undergone needed change in its three decades of existence. In July of 1991, the

See WEC Celebration, Page 3A

safely practice shooting.

has been a long and arduous situating a gun range on U.S. process wading through all

See Gun Club Meeting, Page 2A

New Visitor Center coming to Vogel; renovations underway

North Georgia News Staff Writer

Vogel State Park has been selected to receive a \$4,274,579 "Conserve Georgia Grant" to build a new Visitor Center. The grant is being awarded as part of the 2021-2022 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

"During 2018 legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill 332 and House Resolution 238, establishing the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act," according to gadnr.org/gosp. "On Nov. 6, See Vogel Visitor Center, Page 3A



The new Visitor Center to be constructed at Vogel will likely take up several parking spaces in the main visitor parking lot, though new spots will be added elsewhere for a net gain of parking spaces. Photo by Mark Smith

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Inside Arrests Church Obits

Sports

BASEBALL 3/8 vs. Murphy 4:30 PM

SOCCER 3/8 vs. Rabun 5 & 7 PM 3/11 vs. East Hall

5:30 & 7:30 PM



Super Chef Showdown for **Hope House** March 12

See page 3A





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Band of Steel...from Page 1A

with proceeds from the show benefiting the Band of Steel.

The View Grill catered a savory dinner of salad and pasta, after which people gained access to a scrumptious desserts bar to pick up tiramisu or cheesecake courtesy of Melissa Roberts of Melissa's Custom Cakes.

Doug Roberts, Melissa's husband and Woody Gap band director, led students in a steelpan lineup that featured classic rock hits like Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" and Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl." And the fun continued from there.

Roberts said he didn't want to limit the selections to one genre, and indeed, the band branched out to covering country, classical music, disco and, of course, reggae.

Soloists performed catchy ditties and emotional tunes alike, including Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/ What a Wonderful World." One of the most popular

songs that evening came in the

band's "slow dance" lineup,

with Patsy Cline's "Crazy,"

which got young children up and dancing along with two bold slow-dancing couples who embraced as they swayed. During more energetic songs like Walter Murphy's "A Fifth of Beethoven," steel drum musicians ranging in age from middle to high school

between beats and dancing. The students donned lei garlands in different colors and floral jackets, channeling a cool West Indian vibe, and one young gentleman even sported a pair of

enjoyed themselves by showing

off tricks like spinning around

sunglasses. To keep guests entertained between songs, Roberts called out musical trivia, asking for the audience to respond with band names, songs, or both.

The band director also offered fun facts, for example,



Without a doubt, the Band of Steel is the most unique musical act in the North Georgia Mountains, and the students of Woody Gap certainly know how to have fun with it.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

that the title of Led Zeppelin's attempt at reggae, "D'yer Mak'er"-pronounced "Jamaica" stemmed from a joke and is often mispronounced.

performance of the song, Roberts explained the joke and to the island nation in the Caribbean Sea: "One person says to another, 'My wife went down to the Caribbean.' The other asks, 'D'va make 'er?" The ambience was set

just right with Mardi Gras decorations of purple, green and gold on the numbered tables, and although there was no tropical breeze or beach sunset below the patio, the mountain's clear night air was more than welcome from the open doors. Something of note that

Roberts mentioned between songs is that the Woody Gap Band of Steel owns the last set of pans created by Elliott Anthony Mannette. Mannette, a Trinidadian

metalworker-turned-musician, was the innovator of steel drum music in the 1960s. He passed away on Aug. 29, 2018, in West Virginia, aged 90.

"On the eve before he musicians.

went into the hospital, he finished building our pan. We'd been on the waitlist for two years, but it just so happens we own the last piece of history the master Before the solo made," Roberts explained, pointing to the massive rig.

Perhaps Mannette was its homophonous connection there that night in spirit to grant his approval, because the concert was a total success.

> Community involvement was seen everywhere, with near-total participation in the 50/50 raffle, wherein the winner takes home half of the earnings while the organization keeps the other half, and cheers and wild applause came after every performance - not to mention all the fun the dancers had.

Before packing up, Roberts brought attention to the Band of Steel's upcoming May 14 concert at the Union County Performing Arts Theatre.

Unlike the broader genres of Saturday night's show, the aptly named "Pan Rocks Concert" in May will exclusively feature rock music. Playing right alongside the band will be world-famous steel pan player Tracy Thornton as well as other nationally renowned

Gun Club Meeting...from Page 1A



attendees of the March 3 Gun Club annual meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

Forest Service land.

Add to that pandemic delays, a dynamic funding process, skyrocketing construction costs and supply chain issues, and it all combines to form a recipe for frustration on the part of Gun Club members, many of whom have been faithfully paying dues since the club's inception in July '17.

But at long last, as America begins to level out after the bumpy ride of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gun Club is finally at the point where the construction of a modern target range is in sight.

The target range will be 90% funded through a Georgia Department of Natural Resources grant consisting of passthrough federal monies authorized by the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act, which is based on excise taxes collected through sales of firearms, archery equipment and ammunition.

It is in this way that hunters and other firearms enthusiasts pay their own way for the construction of target range facilities.

In May 2020, President Donald Trump signed the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act into law, amending the Pittman-Robertson Act to allow states five years instead of two to generate matching funds, and reducing the local match requirement from 25% to

This is a huge benefit to Union County residents and taxpayers, who will save big time due to the updated funding model.

"We now feel the (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program should be able to process and approve the project grant amendment (increasing funding to 90%) in (four weeks or less)," Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said in the meeting.

will be waiting on the new updated intergovernmental agreement from (Assistant Chief of Game Management) Walter Lane of DNR. Once we have that document and the new grant award letter, my office is ready to put the project back out to bid.

"The timeline for that looks like mid-April at the latest, and hopefully (we will) begin construction soon thereafter."

The first bid process was derailed for a couple of reasons, including the pandemic delay, and the fact that construction materials and fuel costs rose significantly between the time of the original construction estimate and receipt of the single bid last year.

So, it was back to the drawing board, but Gun Club President Paul Clark said that this time around the county will be proactively seeking out bidders rather than simply waiting for responses after publishing the request for proposals in the legal organ.

Lane will be including a new cost estimate of \$3.4 million in the updated intergovernmental agreement, which, with a 10% local match, should leave the county on the hook for just \$340,000 in construction costs if no other funding sources come in – well under the \$600,000 originally budgeted for the project.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason is the unofficial spokesperson and political

"In the meantime, we liaison for the club, and he spoke at length in the meeting, reiterating why the county needs a target range and praising everyone who has "stuck to their guns" throughout this long, drawn-out process.

To name just a few reasons, resident firearms owners need a safe place to be able to target shoot; there needs to be a safe place to train people who want to learn to shoot; the Sheriff's Office needs a qualification range; and, hopefully, fewer people will "go out into the woods" and discharge firearms indiscriminately.

Mason also announced that, once again, the Sheriff's Office will be holding a Concealed Carry Class this summer, to last about an hour and a half. The popular class will take place sometime after July 1 to account for any updates in state laws made during the current legislative session.

This class is vitally important because it will instruct people when deadly force is called for and when it is not, and that, said Mason, can keep someone from doing something illegal and going to prison for the rest of their life.

For more information on the Concealed Carry Class, call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

Top Gun Firearms, which opened its doors in 2021 in Blairsville, donated a Radical Firearms AR-15 rifle that was raffled off at the close of the meeting.

WEC Celebration...from Page 1A

Pregnancy Center, Inc. opened its doors to women trying to navigate a crisis pregnancy, to include pregnant teens, single mothers, women in poverty and victims of assault.

The center provided a safe haven for women in need, helping them to secure material goods such as diapers, clothing and formula, along with counseling, birthing classes and even medical services like ultrasounds.

In time, the center came to be known as the Woman's Enrichment Center, and later, in an effort to involve young fathers, the organization embraced the name WEC Family Resources, embodying a ministry of the Appalachian Area Crisis Pregnancy Center, Inc.

Over the past couple of years, the center started referring clients to Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center for ultrasounds, pregnancy tests and prenatal vitamins, as WEC is a resource organization and non-medical, and center staff members help women find ${\sf OBGYNs}$.

Additionally, the center has grown over time to provide stay together and deepen their many ways.' familial commitments with life skill courses

WEC Family Resources' considerable repository of baby goods has also broadened the organization's horizons, with car seats, cribs and other costly items earnable via "points" clients collect by watching educational videos, taking birthing classes, or regularly visiting advocates.

Importantly, WEC is a ministry. Guided by Jesus' love and mercy, employees and volunteers introduce and foster faith to help relationships grow, whether the bond happens to be in WEC's lengthy history, between romantic partners or parent and child.

Becky Dyer, longtime client advocate and WEC director, summed up the center's mission in the banquet:

"The importance is sharing the love of God and the love for people without judgment," Dyer said. "We're there to help clients earn the things they stand in need of to take care of their lives, to improve their lives, to enhance everything from coaching them, and share with them to clients to washing (donated the point that they can be out items), and much, much more.

Appalachian Area Crisis birthing classes to help couples And success comes in many,

Joining Dyer for the 30th anniversary celebration was WEC Board Chair James Bradley, Pastor Bill Schakat, WEC staff and supporters, as well as former clients.

The atmosphere was suitably welcoming, and with food graciously provided by Amazing Grace Catering, the dinner gave folks an opportunity to meet in fellowship and talk about all the accomplishments and changes the center has seen in 30 years.

Time was taken to appreciate prominent figures present in person and in spirit. Many of them had their photos shared on a projector screen, with captions detailing titles and accomplishments.

Of particular note was the special recognition for Peggy Meredith, who unfortunately passed away on Feb. 20, the Sunday before the banquet.

"Peggy was with the organization for 30 years," Bradley said. "(She) did marriage counseling and ontheirown and be successful. She continued as a prayer

partner at home even after she had finished volunteering."

Multiple speakers shared the stage that night, along with a video explaining the Bright Course program WEC uses to educate clients.

"Bright Course has hundreds of classes on topics from pregnancy and parenting to life skills," according to wecfamilyresources. org. "Some specific classes address Fatherhood, Co-Parenting, Discipline and various circumstances such as Abortion, Anger Management, Debt, Domestic Violence. Pregnancy Loss and Healing from Abuse.'

Also that evening, veteran volunteer Margie Winkler offered a poignant explanation on the importance of what she does for the center.

"When we go in, the first thing we do is have a devotion and a prayer time, and that has supported me," Winkler said. "I felt like I had the support of the people that work there, and you know, when we have something going on in our lives, they're there to talk to us and to support us and to pray with us, and that's just been a source of help for me over the 12 or 13 years that I've been there.'

As to why she volunteers, Winkler read from Mark 12:29-31, saying that her "two main reasons" were explained in the

"I love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength," she said. "He has walked (with) and sometimes carried me through this journey of life and has blessed me immensely.

"What more can I do but to give back by serving Him through a ministry like the Woman's Enrichment

Winkler also said she volunteers to show love for her neighbors, the clients who turn to the center for help in dire times. And three of her fellow speakers were such neighbors who bared their souls and shared their testimonies.

Although their full names were not shared for reasons of confidentiality, the three clients moved the audience and shed tears of their own while confessing their hardships and thanking those at WEC for giving them guidance when they could find it nowhere

Before leading the parting prayer that night, Dyer said the many challenges the organization has faced in 30 years have translated to growth and success thanks to the support of volunteers and the Lord Himself.

"The joy that we get is from being able to help - it's amazing," Dyer said. "But the one thing that we remember is this is God's ministry. He's kept it running for 30 years, not us. He just uses us where He wants us."

For more information and to gain access to the resources outlined above, visit https:// wecfamilyresources.org/, call 706-745-7518 or stop by the center at 218 Jones Street in Blairsville.

Are you troubled by

someone's drinking? Al-Anon

Family Groups (for friends and

family) meet every Tuesday

at 12 noon at Sharp Memo-

rial United Methodist Church,

1114 Main Street, Room 105,

Young Harris, GA. For details

call 404-687-0467 or visit

Local Al-Anon

meetings

aa.org NT(Mar9,Z1)CA

Vogel Visitor Center...from Page 1A

the amendment with 83%

grant program will provide a dedicated funding mechanism to support parks and trails and protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water and outdoor recreation across the state of Georgia.

Only 15 of 44 eligible projects submitted from across the state were selected for the current program year, with the new Vogel Visitor Center Project being one of them.

Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Coordinator Soheila Naji said all 15 selectees will receive funding pending a fully completed second-level application, which must be finished by May 30.

The second-level application is a noncompetitive, information/ documentation gathering process on the respective projects, including, among other things, a detailed budget, project plans, implementation

2018, Georgia voters passed environmental reviews, and 50 amp, so 100-amp total: a 50,

"This newly founded Professional and Public Affairs Coordinator Kim Hatcher said a start date and timeline for the Visitor Center project will be available once the secondlevel application process is complete.

The new multimilliondollar Visitor Center will most likely be located directly across the road from the existing center, right on Lake Trahlyta. The existing historic, 1930s-era Visitor Center building will be converted into a Civilian Conservation Corps Museum.

In other news, Vogel State Park Manager Jack Becker said a total campground renovation are making the renovation as project got underway on Feb.

"We're renovating the entire campground in three phases," said Becker, adding that each phase will run about three to four months. "About two thirds of the campground is going to be full hookup. That means they're going to have sewer, power and water. Sites schedule, documentation for one through 65 are going to be

a 30, and a 20 amp.

They're going to replace all the water hydrants and all the power boxes. They're getting new picnic tables, new grills, new fire rings. The timbers that need to be replaced are being replaced, and they're getting new gravel. It's a big project."

Assistant Park Manager Emmanuel Stewart said that the layout for some of the campsites is getting changed 'to make it easier for guests to figure out."

'Currently, it's a little antiquated and a little confusing, so a lot of that is going to get streamlined and a lot neater," Stewart said, noting that they eco-friendly as can be to keep as much of the nature and habitat undisturbed as possible.

'We're also putting Wi-Fi in the campground as well," Stewart said.

The campground renovations and new Visitor Center are separate projects, however, both are being funded using Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grants.

Qualifying...from Page 1A

The Union County electorate will get a chance to County voters will be asked updating technology and vote on two federal-level offices to support or reject the more. as well: U.S. Representative continuation of the Education from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia and a U.S.

earliest day to register to mail an absentee ballot for the elections in May, and April 25

Nonpartisan Election.

Special Purpose Local Option tax to be levied on purchases of 7% rate. April 5 will be the local goods in support of the

ESPLOST is used by schools for the purposes of of political party candidates will be the last day to register building new facilities, who clear the primary round to vote in the General Primary/ renovating existing facilities, of voting.

upgrading HVAC systems, Also May 24, Union adding to aging bus fleets,

Should voters approve measure the local sales Sales Tax, a 1-cent sales and use tax will continue at its current

The 2022 General Union County School System. Election will be held on Nov. 8 and will feature the election

Super Chef Showdown to benefit Hope House March 12

After a pause last year due to covid precautions, the Super Chef Showdown benefitting Hope House of Union County will be held Saturday, March 12, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Blairsville.

Chefs from some 16 lo-

cal organizations will compete for the coveted People's Choice award recognizing the event's favorite food. Four local chefs will judge their efforts and name the winner of the Chef's Choice Award: Kevin Sharpe of the Bean Pod Shoppe in Blairsville; Adam Daniel of Young Harris Wing House; James Grubbs of Blairsville, who appeared in the first season of Netflix's American Barbecue Showdown; and Andy Comer of Hayesville, who will be opening a new restaurant in Blairsville soon.

Previously announced celebrity chef Noah Sims of Fannin County, the fourth-place finisher in season 10 of Fox Network's Masterchef in 2019, will instead be cooking for Ukranian refugees at the Polish border. Sims told Hope House personnel last Friday that he "prayed about what I need to do and was answered," offering his apologies for missing this Saturday's event.

Super Chef Showdown is a tasting event featuring specialty dishes created and cooked by local residents. Competing for the People's Choice Award, based on the most money earned from Showdown participants who vote with their dollars, will be chefs representing: All Saints Lutheran Church, Appalachian Shrine Club, Blairsville Police Department, Faith-Based In-



formation Sharing and Analysis Organization, First United Methodist Church, Full Throttle Ministries, God's Club, Goodies from the Heart, Larry Queen, Melaleuca The Wellness Company, New Union Baptist Church, Positive Pathways, Union County Sheriff's Department, Union General Hospital Rehabilitation Department, Women's Enrichment Center, and Valor Clinic.

Also this year, a Hope House Community Hero will be recognized, honoring the individual or business who has raised the most money for the 2022 Showdown. A new Showdown fea-

ture will be children's activities, including games, crafts, and face painting. Live music will be presented by South Wind, a Woodstock, GA, band. A silent auction of products and art donated and crafted by local businesses and artisans will run throughout the event.

Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children ages 6-10; children ages 5 and under will be admitted free of charge. Tickets may be purchased at nacle Bank, The Sawmill Place, the door, and all ticket holders will be eligible to compete in

door-prize drawings; winners must be present to claim their prize. Doors will open at 11:30 a.m., and tasting and voting for favorite dishes ends at 1 p.m., with prizes awarded before the event concludes at 1:30.

Celebrating its tenth anniversary, Hope House is a faith-based organization that provides assistance with the basic necessities of life to Union County residents, transients, and homeless population who are in critical need.

Hope House is funded by donations from member churches, businesses, and individuals as well as fundraisers, the largest of which is the Super Chef Showdown. The 2022 Showdown is being sponsored by the following local businesses: Bean Pod Shoppe, Brainstorm Creative Products, Coosa Creek Marketing Products, GeekTek, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Dr. Gerald Griggs, Hillcrest Clinic and Imaging, Jackson Insurance Agency, Jim's Smokin Que, Lamin-X Protective Films, Mountain Top Furniture, Northern Financial Services, Pin-

United Community Bank, and

Wynne Works Insurance.



Woman's Enrichment Center Director Becky Dyer is grateful for all the support WEC Family Resources has received over its 30-year history.

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Wade Smith...from Page 1A



Smith earned many medals and awards over the course of his highly decorated military career, including but not limited to the Purple Heart, Legion of Merit, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal and the Bronze Star.



Wade Smith as a second lieutenant at the Infantry Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia, 1961.

The Smith Family were sharecroppers during those years and eventually moved just outside of Young Harris to get into a more lucrative sharecropping position.

Financial situations began improving for others, too, when the U.S. Government suddenly required the efforts of all Americans during World War II, which translated to paying work coming to Southern Appalachia.

Up to this point, a young Smith had been applying the industriousness and values gained from his mountain home life to his personal pursuits, learning early on that the best way to improve his circumstances and, by extension, those of his family, was to seriously pursue

Smith attended school through the eighth grade prior to joining the military and credits his principal, a veteran named Mr. Crawford who lost his leg in Germany, with instilling in him both a desire to learn and a deep sense of patriotic duty.

For Crawford, it was a privilege to serve, and he made sure to impart to his students "that everybody should serve in the military." Crawford took a special interest in Smith, putting him on a path to seeking the "bigger and better world out there" available through education.

He stopped going to school after eighth grade because he became old enough to work full time for the family, but as soon as he was of military age, which was 17, Smith enlisted – a decision all his brothers made over time, though three of the seven who tried to serve were ultimately unable to qualify. Additionally, his dad attempted to join the military but was not permitted to do so due to too large a family.

Once a duly sworn member of the United States Armed Forces, Smith hit the ground running with his education and never looked back, taking courses throughout his military career and earning multiple college graduate degrees in the process.

IN THE ARMY

From the time he was about 10 years old, Smith knew he was going to, No. 1, serve in the military, and No. 2, "get a good education and serve education." And he held true to those goals, teaching for half his 30 years in the military before going on to a second career in public education.

"I was listening to Mr. Crawford again: 'If you get an education, you can do well in this world," Smith said. "He was my living model on education, and of course, mom pushed education all the time – reading the Bible and

memorizing poems. "As soon as I got out of Basic Training and was assigned to Europe, I started taking courses, because Mr. Crawford told me that's what I should do. He said, 'The military gave me this education, and you, too, can get an education in the military." And Smith advises all youth that they can

get an excellent education in the military also and a good start in life.

Smith enlisted in the U.S. Army on Feb. 1, 1951, at a recruiting office in Franklin, North Carolina. Because he was only 17, his mother had to sign for him, and afterward, he made his way by train to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

He underwent 12 weeks in Basic Training, where he served as both a squad leader and platoon sergeant. As he would do in various training posts for the rest of his military career, Smith finished top of his class

Following basic, the Army sent him to Germany for two years, where Smith formed a private drill team that earned the honor of performing a six-minute silent drill for Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower before the famous military leader returned to the U.S. to become president.

While in Europe, Smith was one of six in 3,500 soldiers attached to his regiment to earn an Expert Infantry Badge, which came with additional pay that came in handy when he would send money home to his family.

Next, Smith requested to go to Korea during the Korean War, transferring as a corporal in 1953. In fact, he was fortunate and ambitious enough during his 29-plus years in the military to have been able to request every assignment he ended up taking.

As to why he decided to volunteer for service in a combat zone, Smith said he was inspired by the many combat veterans who returned home following World War II and saw it as a way to advance in the military.

Things were "winding down" when Smith arrived, so he did not see any "hazardous, disastrous conditions in Korea at that time," though during his roughly year tour there, he did get to take part in the stabilization of the 38th Parallel separating North and South Korea.

He would return for another tour in Korea years later to command the U.S. Contingent of the United Nations Honor Guard before going on to lead Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Armor Regiment at the border.

But when he initially left Korea in '54, Smith traveled to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to serve briefly as a drill sergeant. It was around this time that Smith met his wife Pat in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and the two wedded in 1955.

After marrying the love of his life, Smith journeyed to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to earn his "wings" with the elite 82nd Airborne Division in '55, an assignment that earned him an extra \$55 a month.

Smith acquired a particular ethic of toughness in the 82nd Airborne. He had learned essentially the same message back home, that "you can do anything in the world – just get out there and go at it," and he promotes this attitude in others to this day.

He spent more than a in 1968 decade with the 82nd Airborne, becoming involved in efforts to expel communists from the Dominican Republic and serving as both a noncommissioned officer and later as a commissioned officer helping to form a new Cavalry Unit in the 82nd.

Separating his time with the 82nd Airborne was Officer Candidate School from 1959-60. He was encouraged to attend OCS by one of his commanding officers, Wilbur Teal, and he went on to graduate as a Second Lieutenant at the top of his

Smith had actually been commissioned as an armor officer, a position that typically deals with tanks and helicopters, but thanks to his outstanding

performance in OCS, he was immediately assigned as an instructor at the Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia.

It was a homecoming of sorts for Smith, who had served previously at the Infantry School as a senior noncommissioned officer, and he was well received by a grateful military that understood Smith's gifts for educating others.

He then went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for tank training at Armor School in 1962, and subsequently to Korea in 1963 for his second tour there, as mentioned above, where he commanded B. Company, 1st Battalion, 40th Armor unit on the border. Smith returned to Fort

Benning in 1964 to complete the Infantry Officer Career Course, becoming an honor graduate in the process, and in 1965, the Army sent him to Fort Bragg to assist in forming the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, which was the first cavalry unit ever assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division.

His tasks were to handle personnel and command the Headquarters Troop of the Squadron. Within months, Smith was reassigned to the Division Headquarters to command the Division Headquarters Company. Later in 1965, the

Division Commanding General relied on Smith to organize and move the Division Headquarters Company to the Dominican Republic when the communists attempted to take over that beautiful little nation. There, he retained command of the company as well as retaining command and supervision of the Division Headquarters personnel, which were left at Fort Bragg.

In 1967, he attended Jungle Warfare School in Panama, where he graduated at the top of his class once again in preparation for a tour in Vietnam from 1967-68.

Smith was part of the second element inside Vietnam in the ramp-up to full engagement, and right away. he was selected to serve with the elite 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment running retrieval

Highlights of his first six months in Vietnam included leading combat missions to assist the Marines at Chu Lai, as well as never having left a "memorial" in the field, that is, a tank or some other piece of equipment that the North Vietnamese could use either militarily or as propaganda.

Deployed to Vietnam at the same time as Smith were his brothers Lester Neville and Grover Jr. It was unusual for multiple family members to be simultaneously serving in combat, but thankfully, all three brothers survived their tours. Smith also served briefly with his brother Paul in Korea.

Smith was promoted from captain to major halfway through his yearlong tour of duty in Vietnam, and the Army moved him to 11th Armored Cav Headquarters, where he worked as a Special Intelligence officer until leaving the country

He spent the next two years in Fort Meade, Maryland, at First Army Headquarters managing units and posts for 15 Northeast states. It was there, in 1970, that the Army selected him for a special briefing on its intention to conduct a branchwide update of educational processes.

From 1970 to '71, Smith attended Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to learn how to run divisions and staff positions

While in Kansas, he earned a bachelor's degree in educational administration from Benedictine College, graduating from there in 1972. Smith would later go on to earn advanced degrees in education



being fired from a machine gun.

from Georgia State University, North Georgia University and the University of Georgia, with doctoral studies at NOVA University.

Between 1972 and 1975, Smith traveled back to Fort Benning to serve on the Combat Arms Training Board. The aim of this newly formed board was to reform and upgrade the educational process of the entire U.S. Army.

Smith was one of 41 hand-picked service members tasked with the important job and was assigned as the director of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command for a newly formed simulative systems

He had enjoyed multiple leadership positions training troops to that point, including successfully experimenting with individualized, selfpaced learning that would later become the cornerstone of Mountain Education Center, but this experience was on a different level.

His specialty was in realistic computerized simulations, and Smith helped to develop training programs, like arcade games, that effectively taught soldiers how to, for example, execute tank maneuvers and conduct other combat operations without having to set foot in a tank.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other schools and organizations became involved in Smith's program, and not only was the military saving money using simulations to train troops, but it was also starting to catch up educationally with civilian institutions of higher learning.

After developing the program, Smith transferred to Europe from '75-'78 to implement the training for squadron command units there. This assignment linked the educational process between service schools, research units

DAV Van transport to VAMC Atlanta

The DAV Van, sponsored by DAV Chapter 28, Blue Ridge, started one day a week transportation to the VAMC Atlanta every Tuesday. If you need a ride call John at 706-851-5204 to make a reservation. The van meets each Tuesday at the Veterans Conference Center in Blue Ridge.

whole career, he served in other key positions during this time as a "fixer" of sorts for the Army to create a more fluid and comprehensive educational process for commanders and

In 1978, Smith took over as Professor of Military Science at the University of Kentucky Instructor Group. This group was part of the Army's Second Reserve Officers' Training Corps Region in the Training and Doctrine Command, and Smith's job was to oversee the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at UK.

While there, he designed and started an ROTC program for nearby Kentucky State University, all the while pursuing his passion for furthering his own education with college classes in the military, which would serve him well in his second career after he left the Army in 1980.

During his busy military career, the Smiths had three children: Michael, Wade Jr. and Lynn. The retired lieutenant colonel gives abundant credit to Pat, his loving wife of more than 66 years, for raising their children as he served in various places around the world.

Smith earned a slew of ribbons and medals in recognition for his service in the Army, including the Bronze Star for actions in combat. this feature article on Wade The Bronze Star is the fourth C. Smith Sr. that covers his highest medal awarded by the United States Armed Forces for service in a combat zone.

He received a Purple Heart for being wounded in combat when his helicopter got

and the field commanders and shot down in Vietnam, resulting in a face full of shrapnel, an As he did basically his AK-47 bullet in the neck, and a week or so in the hospital before he received the opportunity to go home, though he decided to return to his unit.

Additionally, in recognition for his outstanding service during his two-year stint at the University of Kentucky, Smith received the Legion of Merit, which is the highest medal awarded during His 29 years of service

to his country featured many other assignments - back to Germany, for instance, in '57, where he ran the 8th Division Noncommissioned Officer Academy – in which the Army sent him to solve problems at various command posts.

Around the time he decided to retire to embark upon a new path, however, the Army made its intentions known that it was not done with Smith, having selected him to lead a major unit after the University of Kentucky assignment.

But by Christmas '79, he had convinced the military it was time he answered another calling - he was wanted back home to serve the educational needs of the children of this area. So, Smith officially retired from the Army in January of 1980 and returned to his beloved North Georgia Mountains.

For the second half of creation of the Mountain Education Center and extensive service as a Freemason, be sure to pick up a copy of next week's edition of the North Georgia News.



The Union County Farmers Market is now accepting Prospective Vendor Applications for the 2022 season. We do not anticipate many openings for new vendors this year.

Potential vendors can obtain a Prospective Vendor Application by visiting our website at ucfarmersmarket.com. That Prospective Vendor Application should be completed and submitted by March 18, 2022. Accepted vendors will then be invited to complete a full application. Also, please make sure to read all Farmers Market Policies.