

Relay...from Page 1A



Union General Hospital sponsored this Relay For Life Yard Sale at the Blairsville Civic Center on Saturday, Feb. 18.

McGraw, one of the Union County Relay organizers. "I think the sponsorship money is ahead of where we were last year."

Union County Relay will be doing a Memorial Program on March 26 at the United Community Bank, another important sponsor of Relay For Life.

"That's where people have donated monies in particular as a memorial, and we invite their families to come and have a ceremony," said McGraw. "It's a good time for the families to get back together and remember their loved one."

The Memorial Program actually predates Relay in Union County, but it has become a part of Relay and its fight to end cancer.

There will be another team meeting on March 9 at 5:30 p.m. at the Blairsville Civic Center.

"We always want more teams, and if people just want to volunteer to help in some way, that's fine - we'll find a

job for them," said McGraw. "If they have the desire to want to help people fighting cancer, we'll find them a job."

Added McGraw: "We're making progress. We have lots of survivors, and we always celebrate our survivors. We celebrate our caregivers, and we always want to honor and remember those who fought the good fight."

"That's the whole gist of what Relay is, and it's just a time for us to do the things that need to be done in our community to help folks during this terrible time that they still have to face."

Each of the monthly team meetings has an educational portion, talking about the importance of mammograms, prostate exams, quitting smoking, etc., and the public is encouraged to attend.

For more information about the American Cancer Society Relay For Life, call 1-800-234-2345, or visit the website at www.cancer.org. McGraw can be contacted at (706) 835-8384.

Mock Trial...from Page 1A

The following students earned awards throughout the day:

Sophomore Lulu Morris, Round 2 Outstanding Attorney; sophomore Sahory Salazar, Round 2 Outstanding Attorney; junior Vatsal Trivedi, Round 2 Outstanding Witness; junior Steven Normyle, Championship Round Outstanding Attorney; sophomore Alex Bailey, Championship Round Outstanding Witness; and Senior Nick Atkinson, Championship Round Outstanding Witness.

The team would like to thank the following individuals for their support this season: Wesley Williams,

attorney; Rex and Andrea Schuette; David Barrett, attorney; Lawrence Sorgen, attorney; Robert and Lisa Atkinson; and Peggy Caldwell.

"We'd like to let all our supporters know how much we appreciate them," said teacher coach Amy Payne. "Whether it's through donations, attending our competitions, or simply through encouraging words, it's all valuable, and our students appreciate it."

"We're also grateful to have a school and community that is so supportive of what we do. Our courthouse staff is so generous with their time and facilities, and we are so grateful to them."

As one of the Top Eight teams in the state, UCHS now advances to the State Finals Competition on Saturday, March 4, at the Gwinnett Justice Center in Lawrenceville.

The following information is from the Georgia Mock Trial Competition website:

"Since 1988, teams from many of Georgia's public and private high schools, as well as several homeschool associations, have participated in the Georgia High School Mock Trial Competition."

"Coached by volunteer attorneys and teachers... students work together to prepare their presentations from case materials provided by the High School Mock Trial Committee."

"In the competition phase, students play the roles of attorneys and witnesses based on the witness statements and evidence provided in the case materials."

"Professional attorneys or judges serve as the Presiding Judges and Evaluators (jury)."

"Teams are evaluated on their ability to make a logical, cohesive and persuasive presentation, rather than on the legal merits of the case."

"Adding to the authenticity of the competition, teams compete in actual courtrooms across the state, beginning with the Regional Competitions. The Top Three teams from each region advance to the District Competitions to vie for a spot at the State Finals Competition in Lawrenceville."

Perren...from Page 1A

Southeast runs through. Our fiber that we get up here, is just as good as you could get in Downtown Atlanta."

Perren is currently serving on the board of directors for the North Georgia Network as well. According to Perren, he saw that position as an opportunity to benefit the members of the EMC in this area in hopes of reaching an agreement to expand the fiber optic reach within the community.

"I want the North Georgia Network and the EMC to continue to expand the opportunities to tie into the fiber," said Perren. "Also, I want to use it as a tool to attract businesses to come up here."

Perren added that the BRMEMC is hoping to expand the reach of fiber optic internet in the near future, and will continue to work with North Georgia Network to move toward doing so.

In terms of transparency, many members in the past have felt isolated from the BRMEMC Board of Directors, which led to mistrust from the membership. According to Perren, however, the board will once again be hosting town halls throughout the year to encourage open communication between the board and the members.

"One thing that we're doing is, we're going to have the town hall meetings again this year," said Perren. "We're going to go out in the community and have the meetings open for everyone who wants to come in."

Added Perren: "Here's the thing, if you act secretive, then people are going to think you have something to hide. But if you say, here it is, and lay it out, that's a whole lot better."

Specific dates and times for the town hall meetings will be publicized closer to each meeting's occurrence.

On the other end of

the spectrum, Perren is a site administrator at the Mountain Education Charter High School, known by many as the "night school."

Although many are aware of the basic function of the night school for students who are unable to attend any of the county schools, the raw facts of the school and the students are widely unknown.

According to Perren, many hear night school and automatically think this school is for those who are continuously in trouble and have behavioral issues.

"We serve about 150 students," said Perren. "Many

of those students are from Towns County. This is a second chance school. Everyone has a reason to be there. Some students are there because they were homeschooled their whole lives and when they started public school they just weren't comfortable with that many kids."

"Some of them have to work in the daytime to help support their families. There are others who had dropped out of school and they need to come back, and they realize they want to graduate school."

"It's not an alternative school. It's not a school for troubled kids. It's a school for people who want to come and get a high school diploma. I'm proud to say that we have kids graduate almost every other week."

There are 15 sites for the Mountain Education Charter High School across the region that are available for those who wish to pursue a high school diploma. The location in Blairsville was the first of the 15, which was started by Wade Smith in 1993.

"We have almost 2,000 students enrolled across these 15 sites," said Perren. "These are 2,000 kids who, if they didn't have the opportunity, would be high school dropouts. This is making a huge impact on the education here in North Georgia."

"We're really proud of the Mountain Education Charter High School."

Perren is also facilities and federal programs director for Towns County Schools.



Relay For Life circa 2013, with a team from Coosa United Methodist Church.

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