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Young Zeke Burkhead sang "God Bless America" in the memorial service, a song taught to him by Martha Cone in the Child Enrichment Center of First United Methodist Church. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

the start of the service, they were greeted with a bright and lively slideshow of pictures highlighting many joyous moments of Martha captured throughout the course of her life.

Cone was a native of Blairsville and graduated from Union County High in 1956, after which she attended Young Harris College.

She taught elementary school in Marietta, but put her career on hold in 1960, when she married Mickey Cone and soon after had her first child, Scott Cone, followed by son Todd and daughter Mary Neil.

In 1970, Martha began college once more, driving to and from Dahlonega each

day in order to further her education as well as take care of her children.

Before long, Cone had earned her bachelor's degree, which reignited her teaching career. She taught at Union County Elementary for 20 years, during which time she attained her master's degree in education before retiring from the school system.

"After a short rest, if you will, she became the director of the CEC 20 years ago," said Scott Cone, who eulogized his mother. "She's been the director there ever since, and what a blessing that was for her and each and every one of the parents and the children. She loved every one of you."

Loving, kind, genuine, patient – those are just a few of the words that Scott and First United Methodist Rev. Mark Burgess used to describe Martha during the memorial service.

Those who knew Martha understood that smiling was, for her, an everyday affair.

And those in attendance last Thursday smiled, too, when Scott further described his mother as a "servant-leader," both in the observance of her Christian faith and as a member of her community.

Cone was in the middle

of her second elected term on the Blairsville City Council when she passed, and the council rescheduled its regular monthly meeting from May 2 to May 9 in light of her untimely death.

Ever an active and passionate voice in city meetings, Cone will certainly be remembered as a highly participatory council member.

She left her mark not only on the hearts of the many children she educated over the years, but in the policies that she helped to craft as a key stakeholder in her own hometown.

"We've lost a great community leader, a person who loved her community," said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley. "She loved her church, she loved her job at the church as the director of the CEC. She loved every new set of kids that came to her every year."

Added the mayor: "I'll miss her from being on the council, all of us will."

Cone's seat on the council will remain vacant until the city can hold a special election, the date for which the council will decide shortly.

This is an election year for the City of Blairsville, and it's likely that the special election will take place alongside the regular election in November.

The memorial service for Martha Cone came together with the help of JoAnn Strickland, Jean Rogers, Barry and Lynn Varian, Nick Frechette, Jeff Bauman, young Zeke Burkhead, Keith DeFoor and Rev. Mark Burgess.

Martha was preceded in death by her husband Mickey, and is survived by:

Daughter and son-in-law Mary Neil and Jeff Edge; son and daughter-in-law Scott and Cathy Cone; son Todd Cone; grandchildren Jeb Edge, Mary Kate Martin, Hannah Edge, Kayley Huhl, Miller Cone and JoAnna Cone; sister Mary Ruth Cook; sister and brother-in-law Claudene and Ted Smith; brother and sister-in-law Melvin and Trisha Cook.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations be made to The Gideons International at P.O. Box 521, Blairsville, Georgia 30514.



Many moments from Cone's life were on full display that Thursday, and everyone marveled at the joy she exuded. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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