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announcing the winner of the Second Zell Miller Appalachian Hero Award, an honor bestowed upon the individual for his contributions to Georgia and the Appalachian region.

"It was one of those cat-got-your-tongue moments," Paris said. "People were clapping and I was stunned. To say it caught me off guard is an understatement."

The award, presented

by the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions, recognizes significant contributions to the North Georgia Mountains region.

The winner of the first Zell Miller Appalachian Hero Award was none other than the former Georgia governor and United States senator, Zell Miller, making the honor mean that much more to Paris.

"It's an honor to receive

any award for recognition on a regional or statewide basis," Paris said. "It makes it even more special when that award is named after Zell Miller."

"It's really unbelievable," he said. "To receive this award, knowing that Zell received the first award, makes this one of the most special awards I've ever received."

Paris said receiving the award is a humbling experience.

"They didn't know whether they had surprised me or not, but, I was in total shock," Paris said. "Certainly, I haven't done anything heroic. But I have tried to be a real advocate for the Mountains and the state of Georgia, and certainly for Union County."

"It truly was a humbling experience," he said. "I'm honored to be a part of this award's legacy."

Spring Arts & Crafts draws a crowd

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
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Blairsville's Downtown Spring Arts and Crafts Festival brought in more than 50 vendors and hundreds of visitors from around the Southeast to Blairsville's Mock House on Saturday and Sunday.

Two days of art exhibits, crafts, jewelry, herbal health, hats, clothing, good food, and perfect weather highlighted the annual event, which has something for everyone, is beginning to become quite a hit, and word of our local secret is beginning



The crowds at the Spring Arts & Crafts festival came early and often to the annual event held each year during Memorial Day Weekend. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

to spread like wildfire across the region.

Just ask the Barlow family from Woodstock, who prior to this weekend, knew nothing of the festival, and wound up leaving as one of its biggest fans.

"We were in town for Memorial Day Weekend and we passed it on Saturday and decided to stop by, and as you can see, we're back again on Sunday. We hope to be here again next year. We didn't even know about this, it's really neat."

What ever your taste in food, there was plenty of local delicacies on hand including My Pop-Pop's Nuts, enough free samples of cinnamon glazed nuts to fill up anyone.

One of the more popular booths at the festival were the bottle cap necklaces.

The inside of bottle caps were painted with everything from your favorite band to your favorite college or professional sports team.

Others were simply a cross or a peace symbol, whatever suits your personal taste.

Cindy Brockway and her magnetic jewelry booth were on hand to custom design magnetic bracelets, earrings, or necklaces.

If you didn't see it, she would make it for you in a matter of minutes. According to Brockway, magnetic jewelry can relieve symptoms of al-

lergies, asthma, diabetes, migraines, and many more.

"We have a variety of styles, colors, themes and materials that range from from whimsical and novelty to inspirational, traditional, or even unusual," Brockway said.

Susan Williams from Cleveland, of The Laughing Cabin Company, had their woodwork and paintings on display.

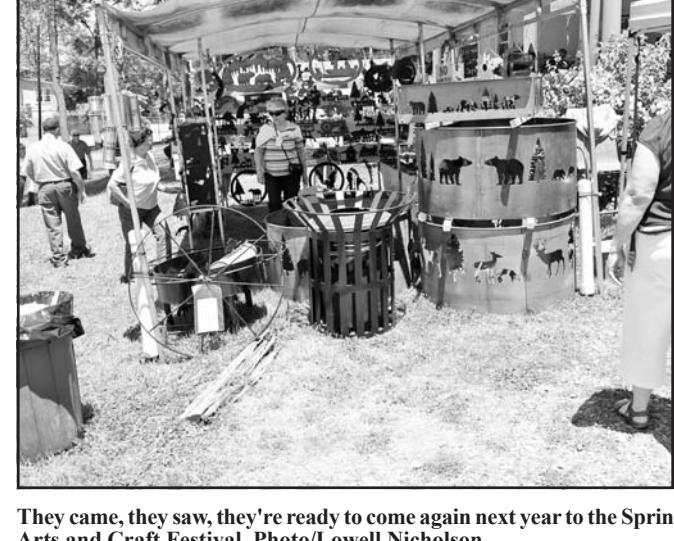
"We have gifts for that special someone in your life," Williams said. "I have someone in my life and that's my inspiration."

No matter your taste, there were plenty of local artists on hand to suit your fancy.

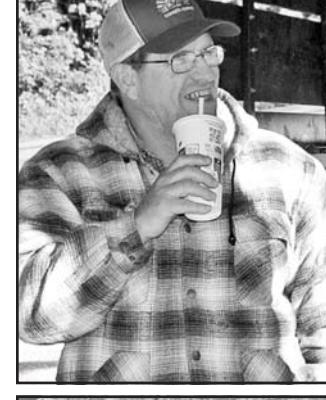
The Downtown Spring Arts and Crafts Festival is becoming quite a phenomenon and one of the many highlights of Blairsville's Memorial Day Weekend.

The Strawberry Jubilee at the Union County Farmers Market was a big success as well on Saturday.

Hundreds flocked to enjoy strawberry shortcake and good prices on strawberries. It was a big weekend for Blairsville and Union County.



They came, they saw, they're ready to come again next year to the Spring Arts and Craft Festival. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Strawberry Jubilee Photos/by Lowell Nicholson