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faired pretty well.

While the tomatoes and fruits weren't grown locally, Farmers Market rules allow for fruits not available for harvest to be sold. The rules also were amended for 2013 to allow for tomatoes from an outside source to be sold here until local tomatoes are ready for the harvest. The end date for out-of-town tomatoes is July 4th.

The offerings on the opening weekend included collard greens, potatoes, lettuce, and broccoli. Cabbage will be available June 15th.

Also, a key reminder is that the Union County Canning Plant opens July 9th at 6:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, food offerings were plentiful as well at the Market.

Sales for sausage biscuits, funnel cakes, fried pies, homemade ice cream and sweet tea were at a premium.

The Union County Farmers Market is unique in the sense that it's not just about produce.

There are 67 vendor booths at the Market, and only 30 or a little over, are selling produce. The others are selling flowers, honey, jewelry, lotions and creams, handbags, unique items, and stuffed toys.

The word Market has never meant so much to so



From the treats at Logan Turnpike Mill to the jams and jellies made by the Blairsville Maid, Saturday's Farmers Market grand opening had a lot to offer. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

many people in one community.

It's also an attraction that brings folks in from other communities. They come to get a deal at the Union County Farmers Market and spend money in Blairsville restaurants, buy gas, and stop in other local shops in town.

Bottom line, they're spending money here, and it's better than them spending their money elsewhere.

How local was Saturday's crowd? It was a strong mix of locals and tourists.

The 10th Annual Scottish Festival at Meeks Park offered the influx of tourists.

Sue Mangus, of Tifton, was in town for the Scottish Festival and Highlands Games. She heard about the Farmers Market experience and decided to see what all the fuss was about.

"I heard about it while we were eating at a restaurant," she said. "You don't expect to see a Market like this in a small town, but, it's quite impressive. They could probably use a lot more parking here. I don't think it would hurt."

"This is definitely a wonderful place to visit," she said. "It's like a village within a village."

Market Manager Mickey Cummings was all smiles on Saturday.

"Unbelievable," he said. "The experience just keeps getting better. It's hard to tell how many people are here or were here without a car-counter, but you look out there in the parking lot and it's full."

"Last year when it was full, we'd have about 3,000 or 4,000 people here," Cum-



mings said. "It's a better start than last year. There's a lot of folks in town for the Scottish Festival, and there's a couple of other events as well. I think people are making the rounds."

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris calls the Farmers Market "a social phenomenon."

"Everybody's out, people are excited, everybody likes to just come out, see each other and talk," Paris said. "The Market is like a big gathering place. I was surprised to see this many people when I got here."

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to practice escaping from a simulated house fire. The Fire Safety House uses electronically operated smoke detectors and a non-toxic smoke in a simulated bedroom to create a realistic environment where children can practice escaping from a house in the event of a fire.

Additional features of the Fire Safety House is to teach kitchen safety, home heating safety and reporting an emergency.

"We appreciate everyone coming out to join us today," said Union County Fire Chief/EMA Director Charles Worden. "The weather cooperated, there's been a great crowd and we've had a lot of fun. We've had a lot of demonstrations, with our fire trucks, we've simulated a house fire. We hope we've done our part to educate the people that depend on us."

Chief Worden said open houses allow locals the opportunity to get to know their firefighters that protect their communities.

"They get a chance to see what we spend their money on," Chief Worden said. "It's also a time for them to sit down and break bread with us."

The families that came out enjoyed a hamburger and hot dog with all the fixings. There also were a variety of cold beverages to choose from. From Mountain Dew to Diet Coke to an old fashioned orange drink, there were plenty of fluids.

A firefighter boot was placed at each dinner table to allow locals to chip in and help raise funds for the volunteer department.

Over at Station 4, on Moccasin Road, Union County Fire & Rescue's Lt. David Dyer said the annual event was all about getting to know the many volunteers who dedicate their time to protect public safety interests, including the lives of their friends and neighbors.

The department has 80



An ATV train ride at Fire Station 3 on Waldroup Road. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

volunteers, with 14 of those volunteers located at Station 4.

"I think everything has gone fine today, there are a good number of people out today," Lt. Dyer said. "We really appreciate the public support, we appreciate all the support that the public gives us."

"In turn, we're giving them something back today and hopefully, they won't need to see us on a professional basis," Dyer said. "We had a large crowd today, we had enough drinks, enough chips and enough hot dogs and hamburgers to go around. It's always a good feeling to see this much local support."

For the most part, the firefighters are just regular folks with one exception. They've gone through many hours of intensive training to learn how to prevent a disaster in their community.

They've dedicated themselves to public service because they want to make a difference in the community where they live.

Lt. Dyer said that one of the most important things offered at the Open House event is a demonstration of how to put out a fire with a fire extinguisher. Well, it's best to recognize what a fire extinguisher will do, and what a water hose will do. Folks who depend on

Station 4 got a glimpse of both. "We had a lot of kids out here today, I think they had a great time," he said.

Lt. Dyer praised the station's chefs, who rotated duties as situations occurred that called them away.

"I think they did a pretty good job," Lt. Dyer said.

Lt. Dyer said the Fire Station 4 Open House is an annual event.

"We want the public to come see all of our equipment, ask any kind of question and we try to help people out with smoke detectors," he said. "Overall, it's been a great day."

"The biggest part of open house is education," Dyer said. "It's teaching people who we are, where we are and gives us a chance to show them what their donations buy. It also gives them a chance to identify with their firefighters up close and in person."

It also gave locals a chance to meet members of the Georgia Forestry Commission up close and in person.

"We do a lot of work with the fire department," GFC Ranger Tony Harkins said. "One of the main things we like to promote is our Firewise Program. Firewise communities help us, they help the fire department too. It's all about educating communities."

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square," Mayor Conley said. "The EMC is working with us at their own expense to remove those lines from the courthouse grounds and put them on the property behind City Hall. All the utilities will be behind City Hall, and that's going to have a pleasing effect on the square."

"In order to do that, we have to give some clearance, and that's why the trees are coming down behind City Hall," the mayor said.

Janet Hartman, program director for the Downtown Development Authority, said not to worry about the lack of trees behind City Hall.

"When the Streetscape is complete, there will be fresh landscapes installed behind City Hall," she said. "It will be more controlled landscaping with the development."

"I think it's important to let folks know why some

trees were coming down," Hartman said. "There's a reason for it, and when this project is done, I don't think anyone will have any regrets. Long-term, it'll be a positive."

Mayor Conley asks residents to continue to utilize patience when traveling around the Downtown Square.

"We haven't had a whole lot of traffic backed up during the construction," he said. "I appreciate everyone's patience during the process. You're not going to please everyone. Some folks I'm sure have gotten upset, but for the most part, people understand what we're trying to do."

The long awaited city project began in early April.

Streetscape, a revamping of the Downtown Square, is becoming a reality.

Hartman, and Russell Swafford, vice president of Johnson Landscapes, spoke

in early April with property owners, business owners and concerned citizens at the Historic Union County Courthouse to let folks know what to expect.

The project is slated to continue until the fall, weather permitting Hartman said.

There is the potential for some Saturday work, Swafford said. The construction of 8-foot brick sidewalks, and concrete stamped walkways, is part of the \$429,000 project funded by a Transportation Grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation.

"It's hard to say how long it's going to last," Mayor Conley said. "When you're digging up asphalt and concrete, you never know what you're going to dig up."

The project is slated to be completed in about 120 days, that's sometime in September, Mayor Conley said.