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Museum/Grapelle Butt-Mock Home, the festival was the ideal setting to soak up as much Appalachian culture that one could handle.

With an incredible selection of homemade mountain crafts, goodies, and live music available, one would be hard pressed to find something that doesn't suit their fancy. The two-day festival dodged the raindrops both days but it was still unable to deter Mother Nature who kicked up an after-hours thundershower on Saturday and Sunday. But nothing could dampen the spirits of the vendors and attendees.

"The rains came (Saturday) night and when we came in this morning we found out that our tent had collapsed and everything was wet," said vendor Leslie Kyrouac of Treasures in the Wind located in Hayesville, NC. Kyrouac and her fiancé Danny Grojean use recycled glass bottles for wind chimes and other designs. "But luckily, (our inventory) was all yard art so it doesn't matter if it gets wet."

Kyrouac, who set up shop at the Heritage Festival for the fourth straight year also noted that when she returns in 2015, she will be known as Leslie Grojean since the duo will be tying the knot later this month. Their recycled bottle art is their passion and they will always favor the Heritage Festival and other similar, small town shows.

"We love what we do. It's our hobby gone wild" Kyrouac said. "We really like this



show and it always has a nice little crowd. It's not always about the big, huge festivals with 17,000 people. We enjoy the smaller crowds. You get to talk to people and socialize a little bit more."

Don and Joan Blaylock of Dallas concurred.

"We are always looking for these types of festivals whenever we get a long weekend like we do on Labor Day," Joan Blaylock said. "It's really something when the community gets together to put on an event like this. It really has something for everyone and we've learned a lot about the mountains too."

The Heritage Festival continues to raise money to

allow the Historical Society to preserve local culture with projects such as the old courthouse and the Mock House. With fall just around the corner, the Sorghum Festival will highlight the month of October and the Friday night concerts will also continue at the old courthouse through the end of October. The Historical Society will feature plenty of activities during the holiday season later in the year.

For more details on Historical Society events or information on volunteering or becoming a member, you can visit their website at: [www.unioncountyhistory.org](http://www.unioncountyhistory.org).

# Hall...from Page 1A

FFA programs, Cummings said.

Moon laid the ground work for local landscaping and nursery growers' industries, Cummings said.

"In 1981, Neal Moon was awarded the Georgia County Agricultural Agent Distinguished Service Award for outstanding performance in the cooperative extension service," Cummings said.

Moon comes into the Hall of Fame with numerous awards, but none that mean as much to him as his family and friends that have long supported him over the years, Cummings said.

"When I was a young County Agent, Neal Moon was the man that others and myself looked up to and talked to when we had problems. I want to thank Neal Moon for his influence on my career and my life," Cummings said. "He took me under his wing and taught me a lot."

Then of course came Mr. Peaches and Cream himself, Hoyt Hamby.

Hamby, 93, is still the premier syrup maker in Union County, a community that takes pride in its annual Sorghum Festival.

"Hoyt has been making syrup at his mill since 1949 - that's 65 years folks," Akins said.

"Hoyt has sold sorghum syrup all over Northeast Georgia. He delivered sorghum syrup on a regular route from Rome to Cartersville to Lula and into South Carolina and Canton, NC," Akins said.

"People made reservations to buy syrup from Hoyt and came from as far away as Michigan. People made yearly vacation visits from Michigan to Blairsville to purchase Hoyt Hamby's syrup," Akins said.

Hamby is a veteran with four bronze stars, a surviving member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and now, a member of the Agricultural Hall of

Fame in Union County.

The fourth and final member of the Class of 2014, is Garner Butt, known for his numerous awards for having the cleanest milk in the state.

Butt began his dairy operations on May 10, 1988. Before this day, he had raised pigs and beef cattle.

Never before had he dealt with dairy cows. He was still hopeful of his endeavors in the dairy business.

He took on the task of milking 27 cows twice a day, 365 days each year.

Over the years, Butt has taken home numerous awards from the dairy industry that include state awards for having the cleanest milk in Georgia.

By keeping calves born on his farm, his herd has expanded to 80 milk cows.

The legend of Garner Butt only continues to grow as he now is a member of the Agricultural Hall of Fame in Union County.

# Howell to retire from MRLS Dec. 1

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Donna Howell is a remarkable human being and lifetime lover of libraries.

When she retires as director of the Mountain Regional Library System Dec. 1, she will leave behind a legacy certain to be remembered for generations to come.

The MRLS comprises the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris, and public libraries in Towns County, Union County, and Fannin County. These libraries have benefited from Howell's leadership for 25 years, as she has served 15 years as assistant director, followed by the last 10 years as director.

"I've always loved libraries, since I was a little kid," said Howell. "I can't imagine my life without libraries, because I grew up very poor."

But Howell explains that things didn't start out that way. Her father, who had gone to college on the GI Bill, worked as a radiologist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in a reservation hospital, and they lived on the edge of the Cherokee reservation.

"He became disabled from injuries from WWII when I was about 4 years old, and we lost everything," said Howell. "Our home, our cars, everything. And we had to move in with my grandparents."

Her mother, a registered nurse, found employment at Andrews Hospital in Andrews, NC, and the family ended up building a house next door to Howell's grandparents.

"We had a Carnegie library in Andrews, and the librarian there was Polly Hicks," said Howell. "She was just a tiny little woman, but she was a dynamo."

Hicks appreciated the fact that Howell had read every book in the library, and any time the library received new books, Hicks would call



**Donna Howell**

the local store frequented by Howell and her family and say, "Any of the Williamses that are coming to town, I have books that Donna hasn't read."

"That was my window on the world, because honestly, we had nothing," said Howell.

As she grew older, Howell's love of the library took on a new drive. She didn't go to college straight out of high school because at that time, both her mother and father were disabled. She took care of them and began attending school at night.

"My first library job was as the bookmobile driver for the Nantahala Regional Library, and I absolutely fell in love with the job," said Howell.

Her library director at Nantahala was Martha Palmer, and she recognized Howell's potential, and encouraged her to get a library degree after finishing her bachelor's. She wrote letters of recommendation for Howell, who went on to attend Louisiana State University thanks to her continued interest in the library and the love and care of librarians who had become mentors of sorts.

"LSU made me an offer that I couldn't refuse," said Howell. "They paid all my tuition and fees, and paid me a salary to work at the library school while I was in graduate school."

Howell missed home, missed the mountains, and after graduating from LSU looked for jobs in public libraries in rural areas to no avail.

"But because I had also worked in government documents while I was at LSU, I actually interviewed with The University of Georgia," said Howell. "They were looking for a government documents and data services librarian."

So, Howell became a Bulldog for a spell and enjoyed her work, but kept her eyes open for opportunities on the home front.

"I told my boss when I went to work that my heart was in public libraries, and if a job in rural public libraries came available, that I was going to be gone," said Howell.

A friend of Howell's mother had found the assistant director job posting with the Mountain Regional Library System in the newspaper 25 years ago, and the rest is history.

"I applied thinking, well, I've worked in academic libraries so long that I'll never have a chance," said Howell. "But when I came and interviewed, it actually worked out very well. Teresa Haymore, who was the director here at that time, we just really hit it off."

And all these many years later, Howell has bittersweet feelings about leaving the library, as she retires to spend more time with family.

"It's going to be hard to walk away," said Howell. "You can retire your body - you don't ever retire your heart."

So, what's next, Donna? "I'm interested in maybe teaching some classes at the senior center, computers or something like that," said Howell.

"Maybe working some more with the Historical Society. I'd like to work over at the Reece Farm, do some things like that, some volunteer types of things, and just help out when I can."