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time coming and we're excited to see it come to fruition," Paris said. "GDOT has always worked with us, and we now feel fortunate to have Todd Long as our Deputy Director over GDOT. He was the area engineer here.

"We also have Russell McMurray as the chief engineer for GDOT and he was the engineer for our district," Paris

said. "We know these guys, they know our roads and they know what and where we're talking about when we bring up a road name.

"That's very important for us," Paris said. "Both of these guys have been all over Union County."

Paris said Long and McMurray understand Union County's specific road needs

and that's important in the long haul.

"I think these guys are going to work with us as much as they can," Paris said. "We want to get the Glen Gooch By-Pass reworked in a couple of years. We want some turning lanes to make some intersections safer, and traffic lights on the South end.

"GDOT's also going

to be buying right-of-way on 515 East towards Young Harris for that widening project in 2014," he said.

"We still have some other projects that we need addressed. It's important to have the right GDOT guys in place to make some of those projects happen," Paris said.

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coming in," McConnell said.

"We don't have a waiting list for smaller dogs. People can afford the smaller dogs, and, they can't afford the larger dogs," she said. "The economy has really had an impact on the number of larger dogs that we have now.

"People just can't keep up with their dietary needs," she said. Meanwhile, the weekend event on Bowling Gap Circle included face painting, bracelet design, Dance for Donations, performances by Gainesville Dance Company, and lots of fun for the whole family.

The Shelter is always looking for dedicated volunteers and had a "Volunteer Sign Up" for those looking for ways to serve their community. Volunteers are needed and welcomed at the shelter and the thrift stores as well.

Over all, the event was successful, McConnell said.

"We've had lots of folks here today, the weather is beautiful, we've had a lot of winners (raffle contests), a lot of face paintings, the Gainesville Dance Company is here and we've had four adoptions," McConnell said.

The Shelter was celebrating its 25 anniversary as a no-kill shelter. A rough estimate of pet lives saved – more than 10,000, McConnell said.

"That's based on the figures of the last seven years," McConnell said. "We've made a difference with the spay/neutering, the SPCA, working with all the rescue groups. All these efforts have really helped with population control.

"All the rescue groups have made a significant impact in the decrease of stray animals," she said. "I've noticed a significant decrease in puppies coming in, especially, the smaller breeds."



Above, Tommy Urbanluk accepts a \$50 prize for his Most Unique essay from Mountain Shelter Director Lisa McConnell. Right, Debbie Akins meets a new friend at the Shelter. Photos/Charles Duncan

On the adoption front, especially during the distressed economy, people are still coming in to find a new pet, McConnell said.

"We've had a lot of donations this year," she said. "We've had four adoptions today."

And as part of Saturday's celebration, the Shelter held an essay contest. Two youngsters, Tommy Urbanluk and Clayton Strickland took top prizes in the essay event.

Tommy, who was excited to win, won Most Unique for his essay, *A Letter To My Dog*, and Clayton won Most Elaborate for his essay, *If My Dog Could Read*.

"It's just like the essay, I don't need to write a letter to my dog to tell him how much I love him, he knows that already," Tommy said. "I thought about it, and I realized

I don't need to tell my dog I love him, because he already knows everything about me."

All-in-all, the celebration was all about the Union and Towns county communities.

"The reason we did this is, this Shelter has come a long way thanks to all the donors, volunteers, and great staff," McConnell said. "If we hadn't had all those factors, this Shelter couldn't be the way it is. I'm trying to get people to get out here to see the Shelter, to see how happy the animals are, how clean the facility is, and how healthy the animals are.

"Everything here is because the public donated to this Shelter," she said. "This Shelter belongs to the people of Union and Towns counties."



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The units visit libraries, technical colleges, local schools, public housing, veteran's events, and other locations our services are requested. The mobile training centers also will be available at job fairs allowing job seekers a place to search for job openings and submit resumes and applications, Thomas said.

They also will be capable of conducting testing for individuals, such as the TABE, and instructing them on using skill enhancing software like the Mavis Beacon Typing Test and resume writing programs, Thomas said.

The training units also will be used in Rapid Response scenarios to provide a convenient place for employees to access unemployment insurance and search for future employment.

Vehicles can be parked on site at business locations as needed to provide easy access, Thomas said.

The purpose of Georgia Mountains Workforce Development



is to assist eligible youth and adults in the Georgia Mountains region with the educational and retraining skills necessary to enter today's workforce, Thomas said.

"Eligible individuals in need of training may receive financial support with tuition, books, required supplies and supportive services while enrolled in Occupational Skills Training. Middle and High

school age students are also eligible to receive tutoring and GED assistance," Thomas said. "Available programs include Adult and Dislocated Worker, On the Job Training, and Youth assistance."

Thomas asks locals to please contact Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Workforce Development at (770)538-2727 for more details about the mobile training units.

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only 5 percent of the population, then you can build a momentum that will change society.

Concerned citizens of Towns and Union counties, along with SAFE, feel like this is a serious problem and that people need education about.

Many children can be protected from the malicious individuals that prey on innocent children if people are paying attention and spot the signs of abusers and act on them to the proper authorities, Langley said.

"This is a serious problem in our society and if we don't step up and fight this thing it is going to get worse," Langley said. "Right now one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted by the time they reach 18 years of age. Over 90 percent of them will know their abuser and live in fear of telling anyone while 30 to 40 percent of these victims are abused by family.

"Something that amazes me

is the fact that there is an estimated 39 million survivors of child abuse in America compared to 12 million cancer survivors," Langley said. "These are just some of the reasons why we are working with this initiative. If we can educate the people out there in the community, then we can stop the abuse."

Training is now available to teach adults to recognize the affects of child sexual abuse and to respond to that child's needs promptly and correctly.

There are several trained adults available to hold the two and a half hour course, but all that is needed is the place and opportunity, Langley said.

"We can come to a place of business or to a private residence it just doesn't matter," he said. "What is important is that people as a group step up and be willing to go through this training and then act on what they have learned.

"Just think of it this way; one of the next four little girls you meet is already

or will be a victim of sexual abuse and one of the next six little boys will be a victim of sexual abuse," Langley said. "It is something that hits close to home and people need to be aware of how much of a problem this really is."

If you would like to have an instructor come and talk to your group about this very important issue then please contact the Office of the District Attorney at (706) 439-6027.

The training is free as of now and the benefits could be life saving. Many of these abused kids commit suicide so your support and willingness to get involved could save the life of total stranger, a family member or the kid down the street.

It's time to wake up and try and stop this terrible transgression within our society before it destroys one more young life.

You can volunteer now to host an educational seminar. Lets all join the fight to help our little ones be more protected.