

# Neighborhood recyclers honored with Community Center luncheon

By Mark Smith  
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Union County Government hosted a luncheon at the Community Center on Wednesday, Nov. 14, to recognize neighborhood recycling center volunteers who take ownership of local roads to keep them trash-free.

Keeping trash under control in Union County is no small undertaking, nor is taking in and separating aluminum, glass and the various plastics that make up a great deal of trash today.

“Whereas maybe all the

public doesn’t realize that your job is so important, it really is,” said Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris. “And the recycling in our community – we’re blessed that we still have a lot of people that believe in that and do a lot of it. Thank you all for being here to help with that.”

Paris introduced North Georgia Resource Management Authority Director Leslie George, who made a special trip to Blairsville to attend the luncheon, where about 35 volunteers gathered.

“Thank you so much for being here,” said George. “It

really is a pleasure to be able to say thank you. Some of you have been with us from the beginning, when Lamar came up with the idea of the neighborhood recycling program, and it really is highly effective.

“The recycling totals in Union County have really gone up this year. I’m having to move a load about every three weeks, whereas before it could be every five to six weeks. So, the numbers have improved. I know we always want it to be more, but the numbers are improving.

“This has been a really hard year for recycling. Any-

one who watches things on a national stage knows that China is no longer taking our materials. And about 70 percent of the recyclable materials were sent overseas to China.

“That didn’t affect us personally, because the majority of our materials either go down to Atlanta or they go over to Rome. The plastics are made into polar fleece in clothing, and carpets. The steel stays locally and goes into materials that are manufactured in south Georgia. Aluminum stays pretty local.

“So, we haven’t had a problem moving our materials, per se, but I have to tell you they have tightened so much. I have to take pictures of loads many times before I send them out to prove that they are quality loads that don’t have a lot of bad materials in them.”

George said that the person who manages the processing center in Atlanta is always complimentary about loads from Union County because they are so clean and well separated.

If the No.1 and No. 2 plastics are not well separated, she said, the material has to go to a landfill. “And that’s not our goal,” said George. “Our goal is, everything we take, we guarantee it gets made into a new product.”

Generally, No.1 plastics are clear and pliable: water and soft drink bottles, peanut



Leslie George is the executive director of the North Georgia Resource Management Authority. Photo by Mark Smith

butter jars and cooking oil bottles. No. 2 plastics are more rigid and opaque or solid in color: milk jugs and non-food containers like detergent and bleach bottles.

More information can be found at [www.unioncountygov.com](http://www.unioncountygov.com).

“I don’t know how much you’re having to separate yourselves, but your loads are coming in really clean, which means I’m able to market them,” said George. “And I really do appreciate that.”

“Thank you so much for all that you do and the fact that you create a load that I am able

to market and be assured it gets made into another product.”

George said that both the Document Destruction Day and the Electronics Recycling Day are set for April 6, 2019, and that hopefully it will be held at the college again, where they were able to generate \$1,000 for the Humane Society this year.

As for trash on the roads, George said word of mouth seems to work the best, and that no slogans or campaigns have ever made much difference, because lots of people don’t think about the impact of trash, and some just don’t care.



Union County neighborhood recycling volunteers in an appreciation luncheon on Nov. 14.

## Primary School...from Page 1A



First-graders showing off their new Kinsa Smart Thermometers at the Union County Primary School last week.

Thermometers for use by students and families, free of charge.

In 2013, the Kinsa Smart Thermometer became the first ever FDA-cleared smartphone-connected thermometer, allowing parents and schools to track recent trends in a variety of illnesses – all anonymously, of course.

Union County Primary School Nurse Leigh Ann Hartley explained the thermometer in layman’s terms.

“You can enter all of your symptoms and your temperature, and it will give you tips on how to treat the symptoms you’re reporting,” said Hartley of the Kinsa app. “As the school nurse, I have access to the app.

“I can’t see who reports what, it’s all anonymous, but I can send out texts that say something like, ‘We’ve seen an increase in the flu,’ or, ‘We’ve had a stomach bug going around this week, be on the lookout at home.’”

The app also allows parents to access these anonymous schoolwide reports so they can make better decisions on whether to keep their sick child at home or take them to a doctor.

“For schools like Union County Primary, parents and school staff can join a private group on the Kinsa app to see anonymous and aggregated information on what illnesses

and symptoms are going around,” said Nita Nehru, Kinsa’s FLUency Director.

Parents can also ask anonymous questions through the app. For example, they can ask if anyone has witnessed similar symptoms as what their child is experiencing.

“It’s really good for the parents to be able to see and ask what’s going on at their school,” Hartley said. “The app can also separate (symptoms and illnesses) by grade. We need parent involvement, because the more they report, the more the school and other parents know what’s going on.”

Out of more than 11,000 applicants, Union County Primary School was one of the 500 schools chosen for Kinsa’s free Smart Thermometers.

The deadline to apply for the free thermometers has passed, but they can still be purchased at most pharmacies, as well as online for around \$19.99. The smartphone app is a free download from Google Play or the Apple App Store.

“Unfortunately, some parents didn’t apply because they thought it another way for Big Brother to watch them, but everything is completely anonymous,” said Hartley, trying to alleviate any fears regarding the app. “The thermometers aren’t numbered in any way, so there’s no way to know who has what thermometer.

“But before the deadline, we gave out about 250 thermometers, and we only gave one per family, so that’s hundreds of families that will benefit from this program.”

According to Nehru, there were several factors that went into their decision to choose Union County Primary School, but the enthusiasm of Hartley was what put UCPS over the top.

“We wanted to make sure the school was truly passionate about using this program to its entirety to help reduce the spread of illness in their community,” Nehru said. “Leigh Ann struck us as someone who wanted this program for all of the right reasons.

“Another factor is parent involvement, and based on the numbers that she provided, she was able to get about 250 families to sign up, and that’s absolutely incredible. That’s about 40-percent of the school’s community.”

For additional information, people may contact Leigh Ann Hartley at the Union County Primary School.

“Everybody that has used (the Kinsa Smart Thermometer) loved it,” Hartley added. “I can’t stress enough that everything is anonymous. If they already have it, I encourage them to enter their symptoms so we can keep track. If they don’t, I highly recommend getting one.”



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