

Dyer ...from Page 1A

"He always took up for us. He backed his officers really well. I've got the utmost respect for him."

"I look forward to Bear being the chief. I've known Bear all my life, and I think Bear will continue to run the

police department very, very well. If there's any change, it'll be positive change. I think Blairsville will continue to have quality police officers.

"The chief is the ultimate boss, and if decisions need to be made or things need to be done and Bear's not here, then I'll be the one that has to do that. Bear and I work really well together. We think alike, so it'll be an easy process for both of us.

"I appreciate the city giving me the chance to be the assistant chief. It's an honor to be an assistant chief, and I look forward to doing it. I'll work hard doing whatever I have to do to make things better here."



Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer with retired Chief Johnny Carroll and Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter in the Jan. 11 retirement reception for Carroll. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Whitener ...from Page 1A

The crash resulted in the death of three of Whitener's friends – Robert Atkinson, Renea Greiner and Michelle Seay.

All three women worked together at RiverStone Medical Campus in Blue Ridge, where Atkinson served as a pharmacist prior to opening Our Hometown Pharmacy in Blairsville.

According to Whitener, the four of them had decided on a whim to go out that evening to look at Christmas lights around the area.

When it came time to land about a half hour later, something must have gone wrong, though Whitener said she doesn't remember.

"He was walking me through all the steps of how to land, and he was flipping all these switches," said Whitener of Atkinson, who was operating the plane. "I don't remember how we landed, how we hit or anything. I mean, we could see the runway because it was lit up, and that's the last thing I remember."

Continued Whitener, "I just know we were coming in to land, and then the next thing I know, I was hollering and I could see the rescuers in the

woods."

She told Channel 2 that she next remembered waking up at the hospital in Gainesville following her emergency surgeries, and that it took a couple of days for her to feel anything in her legs.

While at Northeast Georgia Medical, Whitener learned that all of her friends had perished in the accident.

"It was really emotional," said Whitener in the Channel 2 interview. "Those were my best friends."

Since those frightening early days after the crash, Whitener said she has regained feeling all the way down to the insides of her ankles, and she is optimistic that she'll walk again.

And for the support of seemingly countless individuals, many of whom have been complete strangers, she and her family are thankful.

"For everybody to rally behind me, people I don't even know, that's more than what words can express," said Whitener. "I'm very hopeful. If I survived a plane crash and made it this far, I'm surviving."

Whitener told Channel 2 that, as she battles to get better every day, she's also working to overcome survivor's guilt with the help of family and friends, including the loved ones of those lost.

"They told me not to feel that way," said Whitener. "So, that made me feel a lot better just communicating with them."



Junior and Brittany Whitener at the Shepherd Center, as Brittany stands with the help of a special machine. Photo/Facebook

People who would like to assist Whitener as she recovers from her injuries can visit her GoFundMe page for updates and how to contribute. The easiest way to find the page is to use Google to search for "Help Nurse Brittany Whitener."

"All funds collected will go directly to Brittany's husband Junior Whitener to cover her medical and living expenses during her recovery," according to the page. "Any

amount helps. Please keep Brittany in your thoughts and prayers. Thank you so much for any help you can give, even if it's just sharing this on your social media accounts."

Folks can also support the Whiteners by attending a special Benefit Dinner & Auction on Saturday, Feb. 16, at 3 p.m. inside the Haralson Memorial Civic Center at 165 Wellborn Street in Blairsville, hosted by Blue Ridge Motorsports Park.

Chamber Awards ...from Page 1A

done if you were not at the helm," said Deibert to Wadle. "So, we want to thank you with your very own plaque and your very own gavel."

Moving on, Deibert introduced the chamber's 2019 Board Officers: Treasurer Tony Dyer, Secretary Daniel Liberatore, Chair-elect Chris Collins, and Immediate Past Chair Chris Wadle.

"And, as mentioned, I will be the chairman of the Board of Directors for 2019 and 2020," said Deibert. "The 2017 through 2019 Board of Directors are: Jason Karnes, Jeff Davis, David Murphy, Cory Paine, and our brand-new folks to come to the Board of Directors – I'm so excited to have them – Buck Levins, Dana Nelson, Jody Atkins, Michael Gay and Kitty Mauzy."

Deibert then introduced the "ex officio" board members: Chamber President Steve Rowe, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Development Authority Director Mitch Griggs and Downtown Development Authority Program Manager Darren Harper.

Mayor Conley conducted the swearing-in ceremony for the new board members following those introductions.

Ambassadors of the Quarter for 2018 were: Kitty Mauzy, Deanna Myers, Pam Scruggs and Alysia Hargus. Deanna Myers was named Ambassador of the Year for 2018.

Businesses of the Quarter for 2018 were: SERVPRO, Unity Alpacas, Coosa Creek Embroidery and Patrick Construction. SERVPRO was named Business of the Year for 2018.

Kitty Mauzy introduced



Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce Immediate Past Chair Chris Wadle presenting Jody Swanson with a commemorative gavel for his years of service on the Chamber Board of Directors. Photo by Mark Smith

Ginny Gurley, who was given special recognition as someone who embodies the spirit of Union County.

"I just love what I do," said Gurley. "I'm a happy person, and I love the Lord. I

think Union County is the best place in this whole world to live. I've been here since 1980, and I would never move anywhere else. It's a wonderful county. It has so much to offer."

Military Ball set for March 2nd

Military Ball, all services and civilian guests of the Navy Seabees, hosted by NSVA Island X-3, Blairsville, GA at North Georgia Technical College, Blairsville, GA on Saturday, March 2 with Social Hour beginning at 1730, dinner, ceremony and dancing to

follow. Attire: Military - Dinner Dress; Civilian - Black Tie optional; Ladies - Evening Wear. Ticket Sales POC: Ed Crenshaw at (706) 379-3472; cecbret@windstream.net; Keith Hunter at (904) 733-8698. NT(1m30Z3)CA

Naftzger

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the lamb after he missed a court appearance, and a judge subsequently issued a bench warrant for his arrest, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Previously, Naftzger's bail was set by a local judge at \$30,000 based on his alleged crimes, and he was unable to bond out for a year and a half following his initial arrest in 2017, according to Osborn.