

## Olver...from Page 1A

An excellent student and volunteer over the course of his high school career, Olver was a natural candidate for DAR Good Citizen, possessing the sought-after traits of dependability, service, leadership and patriotism.

As part of his Good Citizen nomination, Olver submitted what ended up being a winning essay, writing on the topic "Our American Heritage and Our Responsibility for Preserving It" while exploring themes of civic engagement and togetherness. He earned \$150 for his winning entry.

"I just talked about how we should all be trying to do our part in spreading positive energy to everyone you interact with, but also going out of your way to do things for others," Olver said. "A lot of times, we just focus on making ourselves happy and trying to keep ourselves on top."

"I think if we try to take a step back and everyone tries to help others out and do what they can for people in need, then it really is going to be able to change the way that people see each other, and it will help out the less fortunate for sure."

For Olver, it is important to take the Good Citizen title seriously, and he hopes to live up

to it as he continues to volunteer and help the community on his way to college.

"I want to be able to model that honor," Olver said. "I want to make sure that I am living as a good citizen and doing things for the good of the community. I volunteer twice a week with a food shelter here and do things like that."

"I want to be intentional about trying to make Blairsville and Union County a better place where I can represent that title and portray it well."

The senior was nominated by High School Counselor and Dual Enrollment Coordinator Dr. Jill Olson, who recommended him because of his dedication to the community and school.

"He is very humble and gives back to the community in many ways," Olson said. "He does it through his church and through mentoring and other work he does in the Forest Service. He went and spoke to the Middle School the other day about a little survival class."

"He is a very giving young man, and I feel that he is a great role model for other students and his peers. It is nice to see that in the community."

Olver plans to attend Western Carolina University to pursue a degree in natural

resource management, followed by certification as a Wildland Firefighter, with an ultimate desire to work in the U.S. Forest Service, in which he has already completed two summers of service.

"I have always loved the outdoors," Olver said. "I will be able to protect forests and stuff for generations to come."

"I know for me personally, just being able to live in this area and the beautiful mountains are my favorite part of this community. Being able to protect that is an incredible way to give back to the community."

Currently, Olver is dual-enrolled in college and high school, all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. He is a member of the Youth Conservation Corps, works as a waiter at Sicily's Pizza, and owns and operates Olver Lawn Care and Maintenance.

Additionally, he has been busy developing additional skills as a Camp Counselor, Bushcraft Instructor, UCHS Soccer team member, Youth Mentor, in Flying Lessons and more.

The Old Unicoi Trail Chapter DAR serves Towns, Union and Fannin counties, and can be contacted at oldunicoitrail@gmail.com.

## Masonic Lodge...from Page 1A

and was very well received by the public.

"We decided to do it again as a fundraiser for the Masons so that we can continue our work and support the lodge. It is a pretty good turnout today, and we hope that we get a lot more people that come by and enjoy it and help us out."

The family-friendly event serves as one of the primary fundraisers for the local Masons, which they use to fund various lodge activities and community service endeavors each year.

"We do a lot of charity work and give back to the community as good as we can," Tackett said. "Charity is something that we really enjoy doing, and there are plenty of places that we give to. We help underprivileged kids and give scholarship money and doing anything in the community we can."

Alongside the food, the event also featured live music and craft vendors selling

handmade goods.

Attendee Terry Elms of North Carolina said he had been looking forward to the event and expressed appreciation for the fraternal order and its members' dedication to and work in the area, including encouraging young men to become better people.

"The food is wonderful," Elms said. "We heard about this through a friend that had come when they first had it, and we didn't want to miss out on it this year. These guys help many people, and I have heard some people complain about the costs of eating."

"It is a fundraiser, though, and every bit of money has to pay off the event and be able to be put back for donations. Of course it would be a little more pricy than most places, but it is for a great cause, and the food is just fantastic. I hope they continue to have this."

Lonny White of McDonough felt relieved to be



in a place where COVID had not shut everything down and prevented community events and gatherings.

"I have been itching for some good seafood lately, and I am glad that this was happening," White said. "We came up here for the (Memory Lane Classic Car Show) over in Hiwassee but heard about this and decided it sounded better than some of the food they had up there."

"My family and I have been enjoying the weekend up here so far, and this place is so great. I can't believe how much is going on around here, especially because COVID still has all the events and things closed. I'm glad to feel at least slightly normal before having to go home."

## Jones...from Page 1A

worked for Kim managing her shop, Lavender's Blue Boutique, in Blue Ridge. The young woman was on her way to the Mayfields' house when the accident occurred.

"If Sydnie's life saves others, she would be so proud," Mayfield said previously, speaking on the potential for a traffic signal there. "She was nothing short of amazing. She was one of a kind."

House Resolution 282's stated purpose is "honoring the life and memory of Ms. Sydnie Grace Jones and dedicating an intersection in her memory." The resolution reads as follows:

"The State of Georgia lost one of its most promising young citizens with the tragic passing of Ms. Sydnie Grace Jones. Ms. Jones was born on May 3, 2001, in Blue Ridge, Georgia, the beloved daughter of Anthony Jones and Melinda Joy Rogers Jones.

"A graduate of Fannin

County High School, Ms. Jones was a member of the school's soccer and volleyball teams and enjoyed skateboarding. She loved spending time with friends and watching rooftop sunsets from her family home.

"Ms. Jones attended The Ridge Community Church and was an active member of the First Baptist Church of Blue Ridge youth group.

"She had an eye for fashion and enjoyed shopping at thrift clothing stores and putting together unique and stylish outfits with her finds.

"A compassionate and generous young woman, Ms. Jones will long be remembered for her love of family and friendship, and this loyal daughter, granddaughter, and friend will be missed by all who had the great fortune of knowing her.

"It is abundantly fitting and proper that this remarkable and distinguished Georgian be recognized appropriately by

dedicating an intersection in her memory.

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA that the intersection of State Route 515 and State Route 325 in Union County is dedicated as the Sydnie Grace Jones Memorial Intersection.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation is authorized and directed to erect and maintain appropriate signs dedicating the Sydnie Grace Jones Memorial Intersection.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the family of Ms. Sydnie Grace Jones and to the Department of Transportation."

## Union County Schools receives Divergent Award for Excellence in Implementation of Literacy in a Digital Age



Union County Schools was recently recognized as a recipient of the Divergent Award for Excellence in Implementation of Literacy in a Digital Age. The Divergent Award recognizes PK-12 schools, community programs, and university programs in their implementation of literacy practices that embrace the ideals of equity, diversity, access, and creativity while positioning learning opportunities for all, given by the Initiative for Literacy in a Digital Age.

Following the sudden announcement of the closure of schools in March 2020, Dr. Crystal Beach, alongside a team of dedicated educators, worked diligently to ensure that Union County Schools' students could continue to learn while at home.

A few of the ways the district has used digital spaces to advocate for its youth in or-

der to create equitable literacy learning opportunities include Chromebooks for all students for digital access, virtual professional development for all teachers that focused on best literacy practices, digital diagnostic literacy tools to help with RTI implementation, many online reading subscriptions to create a community of readers, tools to help all students with digital literacy practices (such as headphones and amplification tools), online learning communities for virtual and face-to-face students to engage in literacy practices, and discussions across the district about building student-created projects that strengthen literacy skills through multimodal ways (such as creating electronic portfolios, videos, or offering digital feedback to enhance cross-disciplinary literacy connections).

These activities and the many other ways literacy is developed within digital spaces at all grade levels are especially important for the students of Union County. Union County is a district that works with all stakeholders to overcome obstacles so many

in the community might face that can affect success in education. For these reasons and many more, UCS humbly accepts this prestigious award as it further supports the district's vision and belief of Success for ALL and Union United.

The Initiative for Literacy in a Digital Age, established in 2014, recognizes the importance of literacy in a digital age, those who diverge from traditional pedagogies and research approaches, and the indelible contributions of educators and scholars who have dedicated their careers to the theoretical and practical study of 21st-century literacies.

"We received a record number of nominees for the 2022 class. The educators, librarians, community organizers, college and career leaders, and students honored by this recognition are paving the way for equity, diversity, inclusivity, and access to texts and tools for all learners," shared Dr. Shelbie Witte, founding director of the Initiative. Honorees of these awards will be sharing their work as part of the Literacy in a Digital Age lecture series in April 2022. N(May521)CA