

Fireworks...from Page 1A

we're only down to four spots left at the Technical College. Meeks Park sold out in two days.

"As soon as we announced that we were having (the fireworks), we had people calling for parking. We were extremely happy to see the response that we got."

Passes cost \$50 and are good for one parking spot at the park or the college up until the show begins at 9:30 p.m. Reserved parking at Meeks

Park includes a box lunch and a goody bag. Kona Ice will be served on the college side of the highway, Rowe said.

"We're trying to make July 4th as close (as possible) to what it was in previous years, but with the uncertainty of even knowing if we were going to have it, we had to wait until the last minute to plan," he said.

Rowe added that while no rain date has been confirmed for Saturday's fireworks, he has no doubt the event will be

rescheduled in the event of a washout.

The show is being largely funded with twin donations of \$7,000 made by both Blairsville City Hall and Union County Government, which are helping the chamber to offset the usual raffle ticket revenues lost due to COVID-19.

WoodmenLife has kicked in \$1,000 as well, and the rest of the cost is being covered by premium parking package purchasers.

To assist with the overflow Saturday night, or to simply offer an alternative

vantage point, the nearby First United Methodist Church of Union County will open its gates to spectators at 7 p.m.

"We're not having any of the, as I like to call them, 'extracurricular activities' this year," Pastor Don Landen said. "We are going to have the parking but limit it to half the spaces. We will have our field open where people like to gather and picnic."

The church building will be off-limits, though portable toilets will be available, Landen added.

Also Saturday, the Nottely Marina will host its annual Fourth of July Boat Parade at noon.

Located at 86 Doucette Circle, the Nottely Marina Boat Parade affords local mariners the opportunity to showcase their artistic ingenuity by

decorating boats in a variety of themes ranging from patriotic or clever to downright hilarious.

Early in the morning, boats begin to embark for the marina from all over Lake Nottely, eventually cruising into the cove alongside US 129 North. Each entry is judged, with winners receiving trophies in a wide array of categories.

Unfortunately, Union County received a bitter dose of Independence Day news when the Suches Fire Department announced the cancelation of its annual fireworks display at Woody Gap School.

Having begun decades ago as a few locals firing bottle rockets at the General Store, the Suches community's July 4 celebration has gained a reputation as one of the premier summertime events in northeast Georgia.

Overall, even with a limited slate of activities, Rowe remains optimistic about the upcoming holiday weekend, as well as the future of tourism in Union County and the surrounding areas.

But in the short term, he still urges everyone to continue erring on the side of caution to help put the virus in the rearview mirror.

"We want everyone to come out and be smart and be safe," he said. "We're going to see how this and other outdoor events go and see how comfortable everyone is."

"From what I can tell, nobody wants to fly, so they're coming to the mountains. We're covered up in Union County, and talking to the local businesses, they're all in agreement."

Nelms...from Page 1A

miles of electric lines."

For his part, Board President Ray Cook said he and his fellow directors were "very grateful for Jeremy's leadership over the last four years."

"He and the employees have done an outstanding job serving our membership, and we know without a doubt this exceptional service will continue," Cook said. "Jeremy leaves the EMC in very good fiscal health and a great position for growth."

"We wish Jeremy and his family the best in this next phase of their lives, and we sincerely thank him for his service and dedication to BRMEMC."

The board will begin its search for a new general manager later this summer.

"Having the opportunity to work alongside some of the finest co-workers I've ever met has been both rewarding and gratifying," Nelms said last week. "I have made wonderful

friendships over the last four years, and I know the EMC, its board and employees will continue to succeed and prosper for the benefit of the membership."

"I thank the board for allowing me the opportunity to pursue and grow my career at BRMEMC over these last four years."

In his new position, Nelms will be replacing longtime Flint Energies CEO Bob Ray, which Flint announced in a June 25 press release wherein Nelms also addressed his new EMC.

"I am honored to be named CEO of Flint Energies and look forward to working with the board of directors and employees as we work to fulfill the mission of providing superior service for the Flint membership," he said. "Flint Energies has an outstanding reputation for vision, innovation, and leadership in the local community, state of Georgia,

and nationally.

"That is a legacy that I plan to continue during my career of service to our members. My family and I look forward to the opportunity to become a part of the Flint Family."

Also last week, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Nominating Committee met June 25 to nominate members of the co-op "to serve a three-year term as director from their respective counties."

The three seats up for grabs during the election at this year's Annual Meeting on Sept. 24 are those held by Jeff Ledford of Clay County, North Carolina, Bert Rogers of Towns County and Danny Henson of Union County.

Both Ledford and Rogers were the sole candidates to submit nomination paperwork for their respective counties, while Henson will face four challengers in Union County: Jason Hughes, Patrick Solomon, Agustin Abalo and Michael Desparte.

Payne...from Page 1A

was erected by his ancestor John Payne, he decided to team up with the Union County Historical Society to both give back to his community and honor his family history.

His project included the installation of a sturdy informational plaque to replace a paper copy affixed to the front of the cabin after it originally moved there from the Young Cane District; the placement of a new plaque explaining the historical significance of apple trees planted at the cabin; the application of stucco on the Mock House Annex to match its historical namesake; and work to fix up an old produce wagon that once belonged to James Johnson Collins.

Thomas' father is Blairsville Troop 101 Scoutmaster Chris Payne, whose own father and brothers moved the family cabin piece by piece in the early 1990s to be reassembled as part of the Mountain Life Museum to serve as a humble reminder of days gone by.

Scoutmaster Payne is very proud of his son for the work he's put into his project. Upon successful advancement by a BSA Board of Review on July 11, Thomas Payne will have earned the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout as a member of Troop 101.

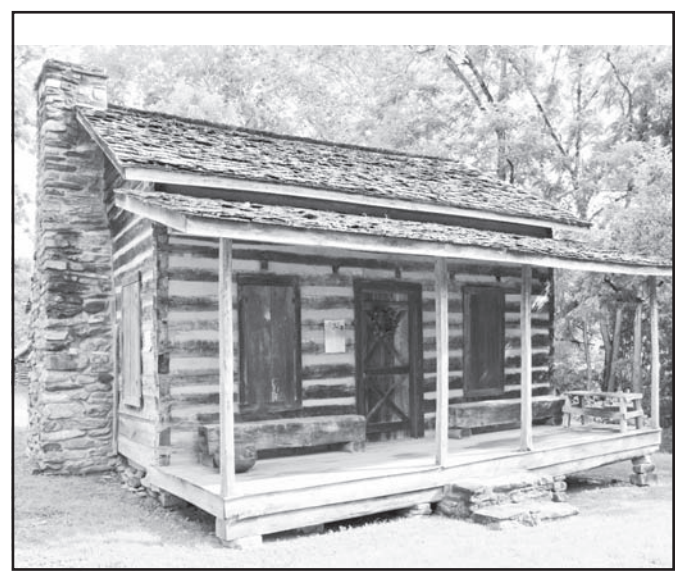
"The Boy Scouts of America is a great organization that teaches kids like me purposeful life skills like time management and learning how to do hard work, and I think it's a great program that prepares kids for the future," Payne said.

Payne's two favorite things about being in scouts is connecting with the great outdoors and the making of lifelong friends, with whom he hikes, camps, backpacks and more. Last year, he served as a crew leader for a 14-day outdoor adventure in Philmont, New Mexico, leading a group of boys.

Fellow scout Evan Bryan, 16, helped Payne complete his Eagle Scout project, and he concurred with his friend's assessment of the Boy Scouts, saying he appreciated the fellowship experienced by the young men as they build character together in the program.

Blairsville Troop 101 has been preparing youths like Payne and Bryan for the future for 60 years now. The troop officially began in 1960 after the Boy Scouts of America approved the charter application filed by Historical Society member and past president Bud Akins.

"A project like this teaches Boy Scouts how to take a job on and get it done," Akins said, praising the efforts of the Boy Scouts while adding that other scouts have partnered with the Historical Society to complete projects.



1861 John Payne Cabin

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Historical Society President Judy Carpenter said local scouts undertaking community service projects with the society has helped the nonprofit organization to save money, which is especially important right now, as fundraising efforts toward preservation have been dramatically impacted by COVID-19.

"It's important for the youth to learn about the history of our county and the

preservation that we do for the history of our county," Carpenter said. "They're the upcoming generation, and they'll need to possibly one day take our place."

John Wesley Payne — who was actually one of the last people to live in the cabin as a child — helped apply the stucco for the project, and Mountain Graphics in Hiawassee provided the plaques for free.

Correction:

In an article titled "Sheriff's Office seizes 70 plants, stolen property and more in pot bust" that appeared in the June 24 edition of the newspaper, the North Georgia News reported that the June 16

bust occurred at a residence off Patterson Lane.

This information was incorrect. The pot bust actually occurred at a residence off Patterson Place.