

Duck Derby...from Page 1A

funding for it. But if we can affect just one young person's life, we've accomplished our mission. These kids are our future."

Chief Baxter related a story or two about kids who benefitted from the program coming back as adults to thank

officers for what they did. He said people stop them daily to thank them for their service or buy them breakfast or lunch, most times anonymously.

Derby tickets are only \$10. Last year, the department capped the number of tickets at 1,200 and sold out. This

year, there will be 1,500 tickets available.

"If anybody wants to buy a ticket, they can stop by anytime during the week," Baxter said. "Or if they see a Blairsville PD officer out, he'll have tickets anywhere they see him. If they want to call the office here at 706-835-1692 and can't get here, we'll make arrangements to get them tickets."

Meeks Park...from Page 1A

COVID-19 best practices.

This year, the event featured some changes with fewer vendors and activities going on around the park and college.

Chamber President Steve Rowe said he was thankful that the show was able to go on and that people were maintaining their distance to stay safe. The chamber also hosted a Facebook Live event for people unable to attend in person, and the stream garnered hundreds of views.

"On the other side last year, we had the Nursing Home, and they can't be here this year," Rowe said. "That is one of the reasons we have the Facebook Live feed going on, and for people that don't feel comfortable being here. We have all of our warning signs out and our social distancing going on."

To Rowe and so many others, the fireworks are tradition that bring people together every year.

"This is a community event and people are coming out to celebrate the Fourth of July and Independence Day," Rowe said. "With everything going on, to tell you the truth about it, it is more important to have this going on. On a normal year, having this adds a lot to the economy."

"People usually stay overnight, and it adds a lot, but the main reason is seeing all the families together. They are staying in their little family pods, not a lot of roaming around, but that is what it is all about, everybody being happy and having a good time."



People made sure to socially distance and stick with their family groups during the Meeks Park Fireworks sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

As night settled in, Rowe began the countdown, and 9-year-old Ethan Wessinger pressed the button to set off the fireworks.

Attendees of the show were thankful Saturday to be in an area where they could see fireworks and celebrate America's independence.

Union County local Jack Erickson thought the event was a success with families being together in and around their cars.

"I am really glad that this area had some fireworks," Erickson said. "We were worried that fireworks would just be canceled for the year and we would have to miss out. I think it is wonderful that this is going on, and I'm sure there is some risk of the virus, but it is up to families to keep themselves safe."

"People get to stay in their cars and watch the show. After being sheltered for those few weeks, it is nice to have

something normal happening. I know things like this are usually more active and have more going on, but having fireworks is enough for me."

Pam Brock of Newton County was glad to spend time with her family and bring her grandkids to see the fireworks as well.

"I think it is a good time," Brock said. "The kids loved the fireworks and had a good time. We stayed in our little area, and nobody has come by or anything. I think a lot of people were worried about how the virus might be a problem, but people are staying safe."

"I love this country, and I think it is the best in the world. Hard times happen, but we will get through them. Some places didn't have fireworks tonight, and I feel bad for them, but that is okay. No matter how we celebrate, we are all Americans and a part of this great country. Today has shown us how united we can be."

Eagle Scout...from Page 1A

"It goes way deeper and way further," he said, referring to stories he'd heard of prospective employers literally creating jobs for Eagle Scouts when there were no openings, just to get them in the door.

"So, it unlocks many doors that you never would think that it would unlock. Ever. I've heard countless examples," Bruce said.

Troop 101 Scoutmaster Chris Payne said only about 4-6 percent of Boy Scouts go on to earn their Eagle Scout rank. And as Bruce tells it, there's a whole lot more to becoming an Eagle Scout than people realize.

Bruce said a Scout must earn 13 Eagle-required and nine non-Eagle required merit badges to qualify. Merit badges have to do with various types of Scout proficiency.

For rank advancement, he said, a Scout must demonstrate his Scout knowledge. The ranks are Scout, Tenderfoot, First Class and Second Class.

"Then you go to Star, Life and Eagle," Bruce said, adding that the capstone of the Eagle Scout project, the whole point of which "is to lead."

In order to lead, a Scout must use all the skills and knowledge he has acquired throughout his entire Boy Scout experience, which happens over a period of several years, Bruce said.

The Eagle Scout candidate must first decide on what project he wants to tackle. Complicated paperwork must then be filled out and submitted for approval at both the Troop and District levels. Upon approval, the candidate must raise funds for the project.

Once funding for the project is secured, the candidate must plan his project out, develop a timeline, then acquire materials and volunteers. Finally, the candidate acts as the project manager to bring his project to fruition.

Jeremy Bruce is Michael's father and a Troop 101 Scout Leader. He said Michael started Scouting in 2010, joining a Cub Scout Pack in Canton in the first grade. About five years later, he said, the family moved up to Blairsville, where Michael crossed over to Boy Scouts.

Michael told his father he knew he wanted to become an Eagle Scout after he transitioned into Boy Scouts about five years ago. His continued motivation has come from fellow Scouts working on their Eagle Scout ranks.

"It's a great sense of accomplishment to see where you came from," Bruce said.

"I was in Cub Scouts before I ever came into Boy Scouts. It's cool to see how far I came from there. I worked my way up all the way."

And both father and son had great things to say about a 12-day Boy Scout trip last summer to the Philmont Scout Ranch located in the mountains of northern New Mexico, near Cimarron, and not too far east of Taos Ski Valley.

That said, the Bruces and Scoutmaster Payne want people to know that Scouting

is not just about hiking and camping. Today's Boy Scouts learn valuable life skills like public speaking, teamworking and leadership.

"We are very proud of the program that we're putting on here and the quality of Scouts that we have coming out," Jeremy Bruce said. "There's a good likelihood four to five Eagle Scouts will come out of Troop 101 this year," which is a great record for the Blairsville troop, and significantly higher than the national average.

Arrest...from Page 1A

has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

The Sheriff's Office receives tips on child endangerment from various partnering entities, including the FBI, GBI and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Furthermore, Pilote represents Union County on the GBI's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, which is part of a national

network of 61 coordinated task forces "representing over 4,500 federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies," according to www.icactaskforce.org.

"We always welcome outside assistance, and we're always pleased to work with other agencies," Pilote said. "Everybody we've ever worked with has always been great. They assist us, and we assist them every way we can."