

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, November 17, 2021

UCFD welcomes new fire engine with 'Push-In'

By Shawn Jarrard
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Structure fires at homes and businesses. Car wrecks. Wildland and swift water rescues. Natural disasters. Medical emergencies and more. You name it, the Union County Fire Department answers the call.

Assisting firefighters in their lifesaving endeavors are the many pieces of equipment that make their job possible: fire hoses and appliances, self-contained breathing apparatus, extrication equipment, rescue tools, fire suppression foam, and of course, the all-important firetruck.

And Fire Station No. 1 celebrated the recent acquisition of a brand-new fire engine by holding a traditional "Push-In Ceremony" on Tuesday, Nov.

9, wherein firefighters pushed the 16-ton Engine 1 into the bay at UCFD headquarters on Shoe Factory Road.

Also known as a "fire apparatus" in department lingo, the new truck is a 2021 Pierce Saber FR custom cab, the first ever "custom" truck ordered by Union County Fire built to the department's specifications.

The Fire Department's internally derived strategic plan calls for the replacement of the main Station 1 engine every five years, if possible, as this truck is the most important in the fleet; it responds to all car wrecks and fires, causing it to rack up many miles in a short period of time.

Compared with the International-brand engine the Pierce Saber is replacing, the back of the new truck is virtually identical, featuring a

1,500-gallon-per-minute pump and 1,000-gallon water tank.

It's the front of the Saber that makes all the difference, with more maneuverability and greater horsepower to better climb steep mountain roads.

Additionally, the Saber cab is much larger with extra seats to carry four instead of two firefighters, and the more traditional box design offers better visibility and, in the event of a rollover or wreck, is safer for firefighters than the commercial cab of the former Engine 1.

Fire Chief David Dyer said the old Engine 1 will remain in service as a back-up truck at Station 1 for the time being, to become the main engine at Station 13 when it is constructed.

Station 13 will be built
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UCFD Station 1 Firefighters teamed up to push their brand-new 33,000-pound Engine 1 into the bay at headquarters Nov. 9. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Student-led Veterans Day program outstanding in 2021



Veterans with The American Legion Post 121 demonstrating the various U.S. service flags in the Nov. 11 school Veterans Day service, which was moved from Mike Colwell Stadium to the Fine Arts Center due to weather concerns. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Schools Ninth Annual Veterans Day Program, held on Nov. 11 at the Fine Arts Center, was a heartwarming show of respect

and appreciation for all that American military veterans do for this country.

In many parts of America, military veterans not only go unappreciated but are also not respected. Not true in Blairsville, Union County,

Georgia. The School District's Veterans Day event started with a full breakfast in the High School cafeteria beginning at 0800 hours. That's 8 a.m. to the uninitiated.
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Relay For Life honors cancer survivors with Fashion Show

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

While cancer is a formidable diagnosis, survivors not only have the chance to find plentiful support in Union County's Relay For Life organization, but they can also learn how to fight the devastating disease in style.

On the evening of Saturday, Nov. 6, the Fourth Annual Relay For Life Survivors in Fashion Show graced the Haralson Memorial Civic Center, with the idea being "to honor our survivors, to show them that there's life after cancer," according to one organizer.

Essentially, the event acts as a fundraiser that celebrates survivors who have beaten



Young cancer survivor Mary Nicole Graphman sporting her very best unicorn getup during the Union County Relay For Life "Survivors in Fashion" show Nov. 6. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

MedLink offers rural health services to Suches residents

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Despite the dreary weather on Nov. 11, there was nothing but smiles during the 12:30 p.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the new MedLink Georgia clinic at 56 Firewater Lane in Suches.

MedLink staff, including the outreach team, worked much of the morning to make sure the building was in top condition and ready for tours and new patients.

Founded in 1976, MedLink is a nonprofit 501(c)

(3) dedicated to providing medical care for patients in rural Appalachian neighborhoods spanning Northeast Georgia and the Carolinas.

Running the corporation on a local level is a Board of Directors, of which 50% are patients and residents of the county in which a given clinic is located.

"We're a community health center," CEO Dave Ward said. "What that means is we're more than a doctor's office ... Everybody deserves quality health care."

Currently, the new community health center is

capable of handling primary care, pediatrics, basic dentistry, and possibly mental health services along with pharmacy, and looking to the future, MedLink maintains an admirable number of aspirations.

While the clinic already offers a broad range of services, a long-term goal is to expand services as they're needed. For example, Ward plans to implement telehealth services that have proved invaluable elsewhere during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MedLink is committed
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County working to find short-term hauler for trash Commercial dumping rates to increase

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Government will be partnering with Republic Services Inc. to haul commercial garbage at the Transfer Station. Unfortunately, the company can't start until Dec. 1, potentially causing the county to miss the 45-day re-opening window it was hoping to meet this week.

Commercial dumping has been closed to the public since Oct. 4 for safety renovations and a transition of operations to the county from out-of-contract Waste Management, which
See Transfer Station, Page 2A



Workers finishing up new paving on the commercial side of the Transfer Station late last month. All renovations have been completed, with the county now waiting to secure landfill hauling before it can re-open the facility. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Hemphill swears into council; City Attorney Barrett to retire



Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley with City Council Members Rhonda Mahan, Kayla Hemphill, Tony Dyer, Mary Ruth Cook and Buddy Moore at City Hall Nov. 9. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Newly elected Blairsville City Councilwoman Kayla Hemphill was officially sworn into office by Mayor Jim

Conley at the Nov. 9 regular city meeting, which was moved to the second Tuesday of the month due to the Nov. 2 election.

Hemphill won the election to fill the remainder of deceased Councilwoman Betty

Easter's term through 2023, garnering 54% of the vote.

Blairsville-native Hemphill is a first-grade special education teacher at Union County Primary School who also coaches girls basketball at
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Transfer Station...from Page 1A

has decided to run only the Transfer Station's residential side, per County Manager Larry Garrett.

After learning earlier this year that Waste Management would be shutting down and pulling out, the Commissioner's

Office asked the company to give the county more time to prepare for the transition, but to no avail, Garrett said.

Since closing, the county has spoken with various companies about getting the service restored as quickly as possible.

"We're ready, we're just waiting on other companies to do what's necessary," Garrett said. "They're struggling, with the economy and all, about getting trailers and having people to work."

"One company was trying to get us to wait until the first of the year because he was looking for a driver. So, every company's got problems, and we're having to work through those issues. Employees, trailers, trucks – this is what we're dealing with."

"We have not dealt with just one company; we have dealt with probably four or five companies to find what we could get done the quickest. And (Republic) is the only company that could commit to the timeframe we were asking for and at the best price."

All renovations have now taken place at the county-owned facility, and the equipment needed to run the scale house is installed, but Garrett said negotiations to haul the trash out of the county – the last remaining hurdle to opening back up – were still ongoing at press time.

To make its target of re-opening for commercial dumping by mid-November, the county is trying to bridge the two-week gap between now and Dec. 1 by finding a company to temporarily haul trash to the Republic landfill in Calhoun, a goal that had not been accomplished by press time.

Negotiations in recent

weeks regarding hauling solutions have run the gamut from hiring a landfill operator to both haul and accept the trash, to separately acquiring trailers, an independent hauler and an agreement with a landfill for dumping purposes.

Garrett said the Commissioner's Office found the solution most favorable to the county by going with the former option, that is, hiring one company to do both hauling and accepting, and the county is hoping to sign an official agreement with Republic very soon.

Factoring in the expenses necessary to offer commercial garbage services at the Transfer Station, including personnel, equipment, utilities, etc., the new price to cross the scales has been tentatively set at \$57 per ton, up from \$46 per ton when Waste Management operated the site.

The price for local commercial dumping has been low for years, according to Garrett, who said the new rate is in line with what neighboring counties charge and may be adjusted over time after the county gets the site operational.

Also going up will be the rate for individuals dropping off household trash

like couches, fridges and other items. Whereas before it cost residents \$10 to drop off up to 400 pounds of trash, now it will cost upwards of \$20 for the same weight.

One way Waste Management was able to keep costs down was by using the Transfer Station as a drop-off point for trash from area businesses and nearby counties, Garrett said, and running the separate spot for bagged garbage also helped the company offset costs on the commercial side.

It's possible that Waste Management abandoned commercial hauling here because it was losing money, but this point is unclear, as the company previously deferred all questions about the situation to the owner of the site, or Union County Government.

Garrett said he understands the price increase for commercial dumping is not ideal, though it will be better for local garbage services than continuing to haul to the Mineral Bluff Transfer Station, which charges \$57.50 per ton and requires additional fuel, time and vehicle wear-and-tear.

But this is the cheapest option so far given all the costs that go into operating

the county-owned commercial site that Waste Management turned over in October, Garrett said, adding that the county considered multiple options, including hiring another third party to maintain operations.

"I anticipate that the local haulers may have to adjust their rates some, but they're adjusting their rates according to the economy, the gas price, and all that," Garrett said.

On the plus side, Garrett said having local control at the Transfer Station will make it the direct responsibility of the county to maintain, and "our goal will be to make it as nice of a place as we possibly can."

"We will keep the trash picked up and keep everything running as smooth as possible," Garrett said.

The county has already hired several workers formerly employed by Waste Management on the commercial side, and Garrett said everyone is trained up and ready to go as soon as the county can get hauling squared away, at the latest by Dec. 1.

Final costs to renovate the station for re-opening will be known once all invoices are in, Garrett said, to be paid for via Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax collections.

City of Blairsville...from Page 1A

Union County Middle. She is the daughter of the late Debbie Phillips, who served on the Blairsville City Council from 2002 until her death in 2010.

"Welcome, Kayla," said Mayor Conley, speaking for the entire City Council, to a hearty round of applause from attendees.

Moving along, Conley announced that City Attorney David Barrett had decided to retire, tentatively in January.

"He's also said he would stay with us until we could find an attorney," Conley said.

Barrett said he knew of no one in Blairsville interested in the job. Two other attorneys who represent local governments nearby were mentioned, but they would have to travel from the Atlanta area if selected, which would incur travel time expense plus their fee.

The council tabled the issue and will revisit it at the December monthly meeting.

In other business, the council considered a proposal for ordinance codification services.

As explained by City Clerk Kaye McCann, a company named Municode submitted a proposal to review all of the city's ordinances for compliance with state jurisdiction, then put

them on the City of Blairsville website for public perusal, as well as publish a hard copy book for City Hall.

McCann said out of the roughly 500 cities and towns in Georgia, nearly 400 use Municode services, including neighboring communities. A great many Georgia counties utilize Municode as well, and McCann said she feels the service would benefit City Hall operations.

The cost of the service would be an initial one-time fee of \$8,950 plus \$950 per year. The council voted to approve the proposal, with Councilman Tony Dyer, the sole vote against the measure, thinking it an unnecessary expense.

Also discussed was the issue of occupational tax certificate renewal, specifically regarding a business within the city failing to pay for their annual certificate renewal in the current year.

The council decided that any business not paid up for the year would not be issued a certificate for the following year until they had paid for both the current year and the following year up front.

Next, the council approved a resolution

to authorize acceptance of a Georgia Department of Transportation contract for American Rescue Plan Act funding through the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Rescue Grant Program associated with Blairsville Airport expenditures.

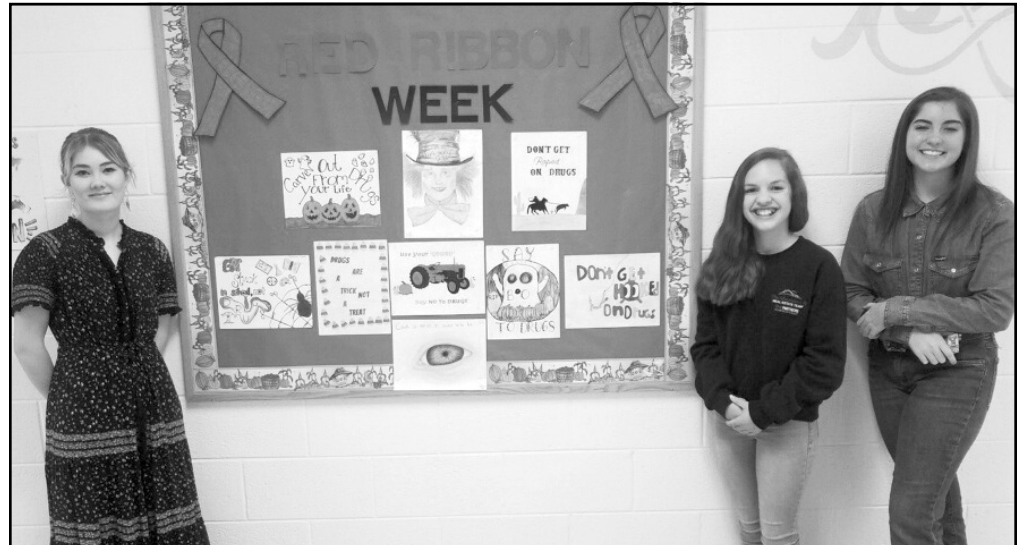
The council also authorized the mayor and city clerk to execute the 2021-26 Airport Consultant Master Agreement naming Croy Engineering as the engineering consultant. Croy, of Marietta, has been the consulting engineering firm for the Blairsville Airport since August of 2016.

Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Steve Rowe said participation in the annual Tour of Trees event, which starts on Dec. 1 and runs through Dec. 31 at the Union County Community Center, has been "unreal" and that there are only a few trees left to decorate.

Rowe also announced that the annual chamber-sponsored Holly Jolly Christmas and Breakfast with Santa event will take place on Saturday, Dec. 4.

The Blairsville City Council and Mayor Conley meet the first Tuesday of every month at 6 p.m. inside City Hall in Downtown Blairsville.

UCMS students Red Ribbon Week logo competition winners



Union County Middle School students completed in a Red Ribbon Week logo competition. The winners are as follows (L-R): 1st place-Eleanor Hanes ("Drugs will drive you mad."); 2nd place-Kaden Lariscy ("Carve out drugs from your life."); 3rd place-Jonah Collins ("Don't get roped on drugs.") NNov17,21/CA

Former First Lady Shirley Miller, 1954, donates instrument to Young Harris College



Dr. Keith DeFoor, Cynthia DeFoor, former First Lady Shirley Miller, 1954, Dr. Drew Van Horn, and Jeffrey Bauman with the Kayagum that Miller donated to the College.

Young Harris College recently welcomed former First Lady Shirley Miller, 1954, to campus to thank her for donating her family's Kayagum (Korean zither) to the College. She met with YHC President Dr. Drew Van Horn, Dean of the Division of Fine Arts Dr. Keith DeFoor, Chair of the Department of Music and Professor of Music Jeffrey Bauman, and Instructor of Music Cynthia DeFoor.

In 1997, the Kayagum

was presented to her late husband, Governor Zell B. Miller, 1951, by the Chairman of the Korea-United States Economic Council, P.H. Koo, so this donation is very important to YHC.

The Kayagum is a 12-stringed instrument with movable bridges and is the most preferred and representative of all Korean stringed instruments. The strings, made of wound raw silk, run from pegs beneath the top end of the

instrument over a low fixed bridge curved to match the body, across individual movable bridges made from hard wood, to looped cords.

"The Kayagum is special. We value it, and our students are going to benefit from it," said Dr. DeFoor, who noted that the Kayagum will be used in the College's World Music course.

"I'm so happy that it will be used," said Miller. "Nothing could make me happier."

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New Engine...from Page 1A

in the north end of Union on land donated in 2016 by the developer of Hidden Harbor subdivision off Murphy Highway. The county is aiming to erect the new station by 2023 using American Rescue Plan funds provided by the federal government for public safety infrastructure in the wake of COVID-19.

Funding for the new Engine 1 came by way of Special Purpose Local Option

Sales Tax collections, totaling about \$500,000 to order and outfit the truck.

SPLOST is a major source of funding for public safety infrastructure and equipment, having gone into the purchase of the county's first ever ladder truck in 2018, as well as the former Engine 1 in 2016.

"The best thing to happen to the county is having SPLOST funds to be able to do important things for public safety," Sole



The new fire engine features several important upgrades, including added safety for firefighters, extra cab space, greater maneuverability, more horsepower, and an American Flag-painted grill. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Commissioner Lamar Paris said. "And certainly, the Fire Department is right up there at the top, and we appreciate everything they do."

"We appreciate the public for supporting SPLOST and continuing to do that, and I hope they realize that we're spending that money on projects that are great for the

county and for public safety to make this a more livable place with a higher quality of life."

Chief Dyer, too, is appreciative of voters for supporting the county's multiple SPLOST referendums that have passed over the years.

"The way I describe it, it's like a two-income family," Dyer said. "You've got your budget and you've got SPLOST — if you lose one or the other, it's just like you losing your husband's income or your wife's income."

If we don't have both, it's very difficult for us to do our job."

All told, the Fire Department's 12 stations house 19 fire engines/tankers, including the new addition to the fleet, which Station 1 firefighters trained on last month prior to putting it officially in service about two weeks ago.

"We're always going to provide the same protection that we always have, it's just we have a more reliable vehicle to get there," Dyer said. "The new

truck) has a few more capabilities and is safer for our firefighters."

"It's designed for the future so that, when we get to the point of replacing this new truck, we can put it out into another station somewhere where we can haul more firefighters on it. There's a lot of advantages to it."

"Plus, it's good to replace your equipment every once in a while so that you're not riding around in 20 or 30-year-old trucks like we used to."



Firefighters Austin Denton and Travis Gibson showing off the spacious interior of the new Engine 1 at UCFD headquarters last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

MedLink...from Page 1A



The nurses at the MedLink Suches are particularly proud of this artwork, entitled "Southern Spirit" by Nurse Leigh Anne Keranen. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

to being flexible for the public, with staff dedicated to seeing patients any time. Scheduled appointments are still the norm, but MedLink is more than capable of handling walk-ins, and a patient's insurance status does not affect the care they receive.

"We have a federal poverty guideline scale that we follow," Ward said. "We're a federally qualified health center, so we do receive some grant money from Health and Human Services to help subsidize our operation and make sure we can be that safety-net provider to everybody."

Present with Ward were other important figures involved with MedLink. Christine Blomberg, Director of Marketing and Outreach, was there to begin making connections with interested locals. She was quick to remind people that the clinic is taking new patients.

"If anyone needs us for lifesaving, we're here," Blomberg said with a smile.

MedLink Board Member Al Stone was happy to answer questions, too, greeting newcomers and familiar faces with similar gusto.

He followed Certified

Family Nurse Practitioner Melissa Pruitt inside to help with tours, and most guests were quick to stop at the colorful display of refreshments supplied by Bootlegger's Cafe and Catering.

Roger Belanger, 88, found refuge there from the cold and drizzling rain outside. He was a patient of the former Suches Clinic operated by Union General Health System, which closed in March 2020 at the onset of the pandemic.

"I remember the previous clinic that was here and how important it was to this community," Belanger said. "I felt very badly when it had to close. I'm very pleased that it's going to be open again."

Belanger has been personally impacted by the clinic's opening, as he conceded that one of the downsides of living in Suches is the taxing nature of having to travel so far for medical help.

"Now we can get it here," he said, joining the dozens of other folks who appreciated the magnitude of the clinic's opening in such a rural part of North Georgia.

MedLink has been seeing patients in Suches since October. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 706-521-3113.

Veterans Day 2021 celebrated at Union County Nursing Home



Wolf Scouts Pack 101 Cub Scouts brought each Veteran a homemade "Care Package"

Veterans Day began at 9 AM for the residents living at Union County Nursing Home when the Mountain Area Support Alliance dropped of "goodie bags" for the 15 Veterans currently living there. A United States Flag and a bag of homemade cookies were among the treats put together for this special group.

As the day progressed, many staff members said thank you to these Veterans and took time to listen to stories from their time spent in the military. At 2:30 that afternoon, a special gathering was held in the dining room where Olivia Bragg, Activities staff member, introduced each Veteran and gave a heartfelt dialogue on what Veterans Day meant

to her. Cristal Burnette, Nursing Home Administrator, also thanked the special group and talked a little about her experience in the US Navy. Amy Rubright, Union County Nursing Home LPN, also joined the group long enough to show her respect as a fellow Airforce Veteran.

The event was highlighted when the Wolf Scouts from our local Pack 101 Cub Scouts brought each Veteran a homemade "Care Package" with lots of wonderful surprises inside! The Cub Scouts lined up outside the windows and gave a special salute to the Veterans, who were thrilled to see the children showing their respect and saluted them or waved to them in return.

The Union County Nursing Home is blessed to have such a caring and devoted staff of CNA's who made sure that the Veterans were able to attend this special program. We greatly appreciate the hard work and care that you give all of our residents every day!

At present, our facility has 15 residents and 4 staff members who have collectively served in the US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, and US Marine Corps. These Veterans served in wars spanning from WWII to Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and while we enjoyed celebrating them on this special day, it is a reminder to all of us to remember them and thank them often for this well deserved recognition. .NNov17.214JCA

District 2 Public Health urges flu and COVID-19 vaccinations

New data shows that COVID-19 cases continue to decrease from their peak in mid-August. The total percentage of case positives over the last two weeks has declined since it peaked this past summer.

While COVID-19 cases continue to decline, we are entering peak flu and holiday travel season. With the arrival of flu season, District 2 Public Health encourages residents living within District 2 to get vaccinated now against COVID-19 and flu to protect themselves and their families from the spread of both respiratory viruses and continue to ease the burden off the

hospital system.

"We cannot predict the severity of each flu season; however, flu vaccination remains the best way for people to protect themselves, their families and communities from the flu," said Zachary Taylor, District 2 Public Health Director. "Residents who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and anyone who needs a booster shot, now is a good time to get a COVID-19 vaccination."

There is no harm in getting both flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time; they can be administered in one visit. Children 5-18 are now eligible

to receive their COVID-19 vaccine. While Adults 18 and older have been eligible to receive the COVID-19 series since January 2021, a booster dose is available for specific groups of adults who have completed the two-dose series at least six months ago.

Any resident who has questions about getting flu or COVID-19 vaccines should speak with their health care provider.

Anyone who wishes to be vaccinated may visit any District 2 Health Department. Appointments are not required. For more information about influenza or COVID-19 visit phdistrict2.org.

Veterans Day...from Page 1A

In his remarks at the breakfast, Superintendent John Hill said, "The most important thing we do in our children's education is teach them to respect and be thankful for our armed service members. "So, we're very thankful

that you came here today. We're so thankful for your service. And we appreciate you all very much. God bless all of you."

Local U.S. Army combat veteran Chuck Honaker said, a few minutes later, "You know, you thank us, but every year



2021 Quilt of Valor recipients for the Union County Schools Veterans Day program were David Harris, Phillip Hardin, Amanda Mull, Justin Byers, Chad Berry, Tom Berry and Barry Stinson. Photo by Mark Smith

and juniors Denver Bradley and Tanner McGee.

Quilt recipients were Barry Stinson; Tom Berry and son Chad Berry, the latter of whom is a School Resource Officer at Union County; Coach Justin Byers; Amanda Mull; Phillip Hardin; and U.S. Army Capt. David Harris.

High School Senior Katelynn Rash did an outstanding job as keynote speaker for the Veterans Day event, adding just a touch of humor to her opening statement.

"Before we begin, I have a solemn duty as a Marine Corps brat to wish the Marines a happy belated 246th birthday. So, congratulations," she said to a boisterous round of applause and a chorus of "Oorah!" from the Marine Corps veterans in the audience.

The Marine Corps birthday was Nov. 10, the previous day. "Veterans Day should be one of the most important days of the year," Rash began. "In a turbulent time, when some see it easy to lose hope in our country, or to lose sight of the great sacrifices wars have made, we must push beyond the negativity and focus on what we can do to live out our freedoms that were not so easily or simply attained.

"In every part of our country, we should give a proper 'thank you' to veterans this year. Here in Union County, we pay it forward, all the time understanding that we can never fully repay.

"How can we pay it forward, you ask? I believe first and foremost that we should express gratitude by showing veterans that we still love our liberties. Liberties that many of us take for granted.

"Even though my dad retired from the Marines in 2008, he continues the legacy of what he has said to me many times: 'Katelynn, don't waste your freedoms,'" Rash continued.

"If not for a veteran, we would not have the full extent of liberty at our fingertips: our First Amendment rights: our ability to assemble; to refuse and resist; to reflect; to educate. All these have been protected by the actions of veterans, past, present and to come.

"I ask you all here today, as my dad would say, do not waste your freedoms."

Rash read the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, then quickly covered the major conflicts America has experienced since its founding in 1776.

"We must never cave to terrorist threats," she said. "And as a nation, we must stand up to tyrants, dictators, pirates, despots and many more unjust enemies just as we have in the past. Freedom is not free. I realize this statement has been (overused). But have we ever thought about its meaning?"

"I am proud to be an American, and I am proud of our veterans. Today, I encourage you all: do not take your freedoms for granted. And thank you, veterans, for all that you've done for this country," Rash said in closing to a very loud and prolonged applause.

The combined Union County Middle/High School Band and Chorus did a superb job, performing that day "The Star-Spangled Banner," "God Bless the USA," "Armed Forces Medley," "Thank You Soldiers," "America the Beautiful," "Amazing Grace," and "Stars and Stripes Forever."

As an added bonus this year, Pam Greene of the Old Union Trail Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented Union County Georgia Public Schools with the DAR Youth Citizenship Award.

The award was accepted by the keynote speaker on behalf of the entire student body for the honor, service, courage, leadership, and patriotism they exhibited in the marshaling of this Veterans Day event.

Hill and Assistant Superintendent Dr. David Murphy presented retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Art McCann – who now serves as School Safety Coordinator – with a framed James Dietz print entitled "Sky Soldiers in Contact" for his personal contributions to Union County Schools. The gift was a complete surprise to McCann.

Constance Moore read the closing monologue for an outstanding 2021 student-led Veterans Day presentation in honor of the many veterans here in Union County and around the world, where they'll never be forgotten.

Relay For Life...from Page 1A

cancer or are in the process of doing so, allowing each of participant to show off their truly unique fashion sense.

Marvelous models were Doris Burdo, seven-year survivor; Frank Burdo, 10 years; Mary Nicole Graphman, six years; Deana Holbrook, eight years; Rod Burley, 25 years; Nadine Michaels, 19 years; current survivor Carla Lynch; Katie Strals, 24 years; and Cindy Neely, 11 years.

Survivors were introduced by the two main emcees for the event, Judy Carpenter and Helen Winn, with music provided by The Acoustic Overflow from The Well at First United Methodist Church at the beginning of the fashion show and during an intermission for outfit changes.

In total, Union County Relay raised \$3,724 that night to go toward the fight against cancer, and event organizers are incredibly grateful for everyone who participated in and contributed toward the show.

Fundraising efforts included raffles for surprise bags, door prizes, and in one case, an entire gift basket. Mason jars decorated with purple ribbons were left on each table so guests could give whatever amount they were comfortable with to the cause.

Food donors included Ingles with green beans, Mike's Seafood with potato salad, Foodland Grocery with coleslaw, and Chick-fil-A with chicken tenders and a variety of sauces.

Clothing sponsors over the years have included stores like Alexander's, American



Cindy Neely was a surprise model at the Nov. 6 Relay For Life fashion event, showcasing her swimwear for any beachgoing picnic occasion. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Cowboy, and Carter & Cash, and although Budget Blinds does not sell clothing, it should be noted that they have supported the fashion show since its inception in 2016.

For this year's fundraiser, the ladies went to Carter & Cash while the men went to the Cowboy Store, with each survivor getting to put together their own outfit – and some even came up with two.

As was the case with most events across the country last year, the Relay For Life Survivors in Fashion Show had to be canceled in 2020. This year, it made a comeback, and organizers were pleasantly surprised with the amount of support they garnered.

And though Union County Relay For Life Team

Leader Mia Crowe has a very capable group of volunteers, they always need more help, she said, and would love for more folks to join.

Crowe mentioned that her team fundraises using a variety of community events year-round, including the pancake breakfast at LongHorn Steakhouse and the big annual Relay For Life in May.

Volunteers are so dedicated to their cause that they begin preparations for the relay in January and continue fine-tuning the marathon until the week of the event to ensure that it's the best it possibly can be for survivors and supporters alike.

For more information, visit the Union County Relay For Life Facebook page.