

Blairsville American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 appoints Chaplain and Historian



Dan Wickersham, commander, Blairsville American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 recently appointed a new

Chaplain and historian for the Post. The new Chaplain, Richard Hoibraten, serves following the decision by former Chaplain Phil Gatlin to step down for health and other personal reasons. The Reverend Hoibraten served in the U.S. Navy beginning in 1969, first as an electrician on board ship and then in aviation. He later joined the Seebes where he spent his career until being called to ministry. He attended Emory's Can-

dlar School of Theology and served as a Methodist pastor in central Georgia. He had discovered Union County in the 1980s, but currently lives in Towns County. He is married to a Methodist pastor serving in Baton Rouge, LA. They have several grandchildren and great grandchildren. Rev. Hoibraten also serves as Chaplain for the local Seebes veterans' unit and other organizations in the area. Chaplain Gatlin had been noted for his efforts to visit and serve especially older veterans in area senior

centers. He will remain active with the Post and assist Chaplain Hoibraten. Marcus Tuschel replaces Jack Payne, who recently resigned the position, as the Post historian. Tuschel served in the U.S. Army from 1957 to 1963. Besides serving in the National Guard in Wisconsin and California he also served with the Sixteenth Infantry Combat Support Group in Germany. Later he served with the Army Rangers and then Special Forces where he saw duty in eight different nations. He arrived in Union County in 2004 and serves with the House of Prayer and Blairsville First Baptist Church in a variety of capacities.

veterans' organizations worldwide and devotes itself to mutual helpfulness, mentoring youth, advocating patriotic honor, promoting strong national security, and continued

devotion to fellow service members and veterans. For more information contact the Post at ALPOST121@gmail.com. The website is LEGIONPOST121.org.

Quilts of Valor ...from Page 1A



Veteran James Lewis of Hiwassee is a World War II veteran who served in the U.S. Navy and Air Force Reserve. Here he is getting his Quilt of Valor at the Union County Farmers Market Saturday. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Perry of Blairsville, Navy; and Todd McCarley, formerly of Blairsville, Navy.

QOV Liaison Susan Young of Murphy opened the occasion, remarking on the importance of honoring veterans and letting them know that the community cares about them and appreciates their service.

"Quilts of Valor is a national group, and our quilters guild here in Blairsville, the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild, has been doing this since 2012," Young said. "We stitch them together with fabrics of red, white, blue and gold."

Added Young, "We have lots of folks with lots of skills that put these quilts together specifically for our veterans. We love y'all, and especially during this week and Veterans Week, we wanted to honor our

veterans. "We know that the debt that we owe our veterans is beyond repayment, but we come here today to thank you all for your honorable service."

The Quilts of Valor Foundation was started in 2003 by Catherine Roberts, and since then, volunteers nationwide have made 260,805 and counting Quilts of Valor that go to combat zone veterans and those currently serving.

Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild members have themselves awarded over 800 Quilts of Valor to local veterans and injured active-duty troops in Germany and Afghanistan, and to Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in the U.S.

"Veterans, it is our honor to give you this quilt," Local Guild Member Anna Stone

said Saturday. "First, we honor you for your service. We highly respect that you left all you held dear and stood in harm's way to protect our country."

"Secondly, our quilters understand that freedom is not free. The cost of our freedom is the dedication of lives of our service members, and our quilts are meant to say thank you for all you have endured to keep us free."

"Finally, this quilt was meant to comfort you and to let you know that your quilt was stitched with love and prayer and healing thoughts. We hope that when you need a hug, you will wrap up in this quilt and let it provide you with that hug, warmth and comfort."

Veterans who received a quilt that day were appreciative of the award and thankful to the quilters who put in the time to hand stitch each quilt.

"It is probably the best thing that has happened for years in my life," Clair Reed said. "I came to a not so good environment when I got back from Vietnam, and I didn't talk about it and I didn't deal with it."

"This is truly an honor for me. That is why I moved to Georgia, is the people - it is the people, and I am thankful for what they have done for me."

Those who know a combat veteran can nominate him or her for a Quilt of Valor by visiting QOVF.org and clicking the "Learn How To" dropdown box for more information.

People who would like to find out how to assist the local guild with its sacred mission of honoring veterans can visit www.mistymountainquiltguild.org.

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