

# Agriscience...from Page 1A

buildings of many neighboring school districts.

Coming in at a cost of more than \$4 million, the Agriscience Center was paid for with SPLOST funds, and was thus a voter-approved initiative backed by a majority of residents in the county.

The recently completed facility has been in the works for several years now, with the land having been acquired and designs approved under the guidance of former Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe, who retired at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

And Dr. Fred Rayfield, who took over as superintendent of Union County Schools in July, is excited for everyone to come out and see what the new center has to offer.

Not only will the center serve as a learning place for students, it will also be available for districtwide shows and competitions to be held year-round.

Looking back a few



This is a view from the designated grazing area located nearby the Union County Schools Agriscience Center, pictured here in the bottom right corner.

years, while waiting for construction of the main building to begin, the students of the Union County Future Farmers of America made like farmers and started taking advantage of the many acres of

land on the property. Since that time, FFA students have grown countless crops on the land, such as a highly successful yield of soybeans, and several tons of corn that they shelled and sold

at their latest Blue & Gold Auction (though they still have about five wagonloads of corn to work through).

In the past three years, they have worked together to clear the creek running through the property, and to clear the

grazing area for the cattle they plan to raise upon the land.

Moving on to the recently completed building, there is nothing but excitement awaiting students, as well as future visitors from outside the county.

The building features a big front porch with ceiling fans and plans for rocking chairs, and just inside is a brightly lit arena complete with a roomy concessions area, to be utilized during auctions or really any other function the school has in mind.

There is a wide-open central part of the building where fully mobile animal pens can be slotted or removed, so as to make space for a livestock show or perhaps even a school dance.

Many will love the animal wash racks, which will no doubt make it easy to prepare animals for auction or competition debut.

There's also a special place in the back of the main building for show hogs and market hog projects, and the air movement and environment from that area can be controlled remotely from

other locations.

Also on the property, Frank Riley with the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council not too long ago went into an open field and installed what's known as a hoop house, which can extend a crop's growing season.

All in all and after three long years, when the facility opens on Monday, the community will be able to see what a fine new asset it has at its disposal, and what a unique learning tool the Agriscience Center will be for students of the county and beyond.

As for Union County FFA Advisor John Clark Pettit, he said he's proud of how his students have bought into the vision and reality of farming and agriculture in the North Georgia Mountains.

"We've had a lot of people asking, when's this coming - is this really coming, is this really going to happen?" said Pettit. "When they finally broke ground, I felt a sense of satisfaction, because once they broke ground, everything we visualized and ran through our minds - here it is starting to happen."



Union County School's new Agriscience Center

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