

# Fairgrounds hosting inaugural New Year's Fireworks Show

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

New Year's Eve is rapidly approaching, so naturally, many people in the community will be looking for a way to ring in the new year with family and friends.

Fortunately, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is hosting a brand-new fireworks show in Hiwassee that will be free for the public to attend.

Guests will be able to buy hot chocolate, barbecue and hotdogs as they wait for the after-dark show to begin, and Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said she hopes people show up early to get a good spot.

Though the Fairgrounds is no stranger to fireworks, with its annual Fourth of July Extravaganza, "this is the first time we have had a fireworks show on New Year's Eve," Thomason said.

"The weather the way it is looking right now, we don't know what we will do, but we will have to get a rain date if we don't get to have (the show)," Thomason said, noting a chance of rain later in the week. "Since we can't have anything indoors right now, we are doing more outdoors."

"We will have a few vendors that will come and set up in front of the office, and we will have the Blairsville Cruisers that are going to come and do a cruise-in there in the (Pioneer Village) from 4-7 p.m."

Food vendors and other activities will be set up at 5:30 p.m., with the fireworks ready to go around 8:45 p.m.

"We will shoot the fireworks out of the ballfield so people can park in the parking lot and see them," Thomason said. "I want to give a big shout-out to all the sponsors we have gotten for the event. The event is free, and we want everyone to come out and have fun with their families."

"We have always talked about something going on for New Year's, and there needs to be because there are so many people in the county during the holidays. We have 57 campsites that weekend and a lot of people in the area, and I think there needs to be something going on."

For more information and to check out other upcoming events, visit GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.

People hoping for a late-night celebration should look no further than the Sand Bar & Grill in Hiwassee, which is hosting its annual New Year's Eve Party with live music and

fun times for adults, according to owner Manny Carrion.

"We have got a DJ from 4-7 p.m., then we have the Southern Vantage Band from 7-11 p.m.," Carrion said. "The DJ will come back on at 11 and take us into the New Year with a champagne toast at midnight."

"We will have music and dancing with a full menu, and we want people to come out and enjoy our open-air venue and have a good time. Believe it or not, with COVID-19, we are actually up in guests because everybody wants to go to an open-air establishment to hang out."

"Things have been really good for us as one of the only open establishments in the North Georgia area, and we are happy to have all these people coming to enjoy our establishment."

Other venues such as Brasstown Valley and The Ridges Resort are hosting RSVP-only New Year's events and galas.

The Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce will continue to stay updated with upcoming events at GoLakeChatuge.com.

For Union County, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is updating its list of local events at VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.



## New CG Auxiliary Flotilla 23 officers sworn in online

The U.S. Coast Guard is still not allowing face to face meetings due to Covid 19, so officers were sworn in at the meeting online on November 11, 2020. Div. 2 Commander (DCDR) Jim McMenamin, swore in for 2021, Bob Poindexter as Flotilla Commander, and Polly Royster as Flotilla Vice Commander. Then our other FSO's (Flotilla Staff Officers) were sworn in at the December online meeting and 2020 awards were announced.

We won't be having a Change Of Watch in December as usual, but we hope to have a face to face social in 2021 to formalize awards and recognition.

We recently saw that recreational boating accident rates have increased 28 percent from last year and fatality and injury rates have increased 32% and 16%, respectively. Sales of recreational boats of all types have also increased, led by 5 to 10% increases across new power boat sales and there was a jump in PWC (Personal Water Craft) sales of more than 270% from June to July.



Sworn in at the Fl.23 November online meeting were Bob Poindexter (r) as Flotilla Commander, and Polly Royster as Flotilla Vice Commander.

With people home because of Covid-19 the increase in boating, no doubt impacted the number of mishaps, but is not responsible for all of them.

The increased activity on the water, especially by new boaters, is all the more

reason why we need our local Auxiliary Flotilla 23 members out there teaching these new boaters the skills they need, inspecting the vessels and patrolling the waters. We hope this will be possible in the early part of the coming new year. NT(Dec30.G1)SH

## Snow...from Page 1A



This snow angel visited the Old Courthouse on the historic Downtown Blairsville Square over the weekend. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Students were surely glad to have gotten a White Christmas to end 2020, even though it didn't count as a snow day. Pictured here: Union County Schools Bus Yard. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Of course, the county's hardworking road crews and first responders kept at it.

Sheriff's Deputies kept patrolling, E-911 workers kept dispatching, and Union General ambulances kept responding, so that everything ran about as smoothly as it always does – just with snow and hazardous road conditions.

The Union County Road Department stayed busy over much of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the weekend, laying a salt/gravel mixture to give people traction and make it harder for ice melted from sun exposure to refreeze.

Georgia Department of Transportation workers did a great job maintaining ice-free state roads over the weekend as well, which is crucial to keeping Blood Mountain open for potential emergency transports.

At 25 degrees, the temperature on Christmas didn't get much higher than the low from Dec. 24, so the road remained blanketed with snow and ice for a large part of Dec. 25. It got even colder Christmas night, hitting 13 degrees and ensuring continued black ice conditions early Saturday.

"A lot of people travel and visit during Christmas," Union County Emergency Management Agency Director David Dyer said. "The snow and ice always make that difficult due to hazardous roads."

"Fortunately, it came later that evening, when most people were settled and not traveling as much. There were also trees down, power outages, along with the hazardous road conditions. Crews were out responding to these."

"It was difficult work due to the cold, the road conditions, and it being a holiday."

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris updated people on road conditions via Facebook, saying Christmas Eve that roadways looked pretty bad, but that "the report is that Santa

will get the gifts delivered on time." And it looks like the Jolly Old Elf did.

All told, it was a welcome end for 2020, in a year that has brought much hardship for

many in terms of health and the economy. Families were able to make pictures and play in the snow, giving area residents plenty of positive moments to fill the holidays ahead of 2021.