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less of school colors. "In a situation like this, there is no rivalry," said Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong. "Everybody is there to have a good time. There is not a Towns County/Union County - we're there for kids, and there is no county line."

Becky Tracy is the parent mentor for special education services at Union County Schools, and she organized the Union County end of the local games that occurred on Thursday, May 12, in Frank McClure Memorial Stadium at Towns County Schools.

"This lets them know about their special abilities, and not their disabilities," said Tracy. "Everybody out here is the same right now, they're just having a good time. It doesn't matter if they win a Gold or if they win a Bronze, they're out here having a good time."

This year's games opened with the singing of the national anthem by seniors Katie Dyer and Sydney Davenport, as well as a recitation by all of the Special Olympics motto: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Nearly 100 athletes competed that day between both counties, including adults from the Master's Program of

Avita Community Partners. The athletes took part in a variety of sporting events, including the softball throw, the soccer distance kick, the 25-meter walk and the 50-meter run. Every athlete competed in two events and won either Gold, Silver or Bronze medals for each event.

Joining in on the team effort were teachers and paraprofessionals from both counties, including Coach Jeannie Ledford and her Cross Country team, as well as community volunteers from the Young Harris College soccer program.

Cheers erupted from the stands all throughout the games, as Towns County classes filled seats to root for the athletes.

Dr. Fred Lodge, pastor of First Baptist Church of Blairsville, has been involved with Special Olympics for four years now, though this was his first spring event.

"This is one of the highlights of my year," said Dr. Lodge, who emceed the event and considered himself the chief cheerleader of the athletes. "I'll do just about anything in order to be here. These kids are very precious. Many of them attend my church, so I love them dearly."

Towns County High School senior Shea Under-

wood was one of the many students helping out with the Special Olympics. An athlete himself, Underwood said he was happy to be there to support all of the day's competitors.

"It's really humbling just to see the spirit and the enthusiasm that these kids show," said Underwood. "Despite their situations and the things that they're going through, it's just really humbling to see that these kids are so competitive - it's extremely uplifting."

Dean Grey, one of two assistant coaches to attend the event from the Young Harris College men's soccer team, coordinated the soccer kick.

"The kids are having a great time - this always puts smiles on their faces," said Grey, who has two children in Towns County Pre-K. "Any opportunity we get to come down and help out the local community here we're going to do it."

Tonia Weaver with Avita brought 21 adult athletes from the Master's Program, who with the kids made the day special for everyone.

"They love to compete," said Weaver, who cheered right alongside the athletes as competitors from both counties won in games and in life throughout the day.

Local healthcare professionals help Union students



Union County Students wait for annual physical exams

Physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners gathered at the Union County High School gymnasium Tuesday afternoon, April 26th, to conduct the required annual physical exams for students in the schools' athletic programs.

The medical staff from Union General Hospital has been providing this service

to the community for over 20 years. They take time from their busy practices to help ensure local students are able to participate in sports. Almost 300 students between the middle school and high school were seen.

A special thank you to all of the participating healthcare professionals this year! The participating providers

were: Dr. Steven Efirid, Dr. David Breedlove, Dr. Tom Karisny and Dr. Debora Quigley. Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners participating were Tom Swartz, PA; David Zollinger, PA-C; Leslie Hughes, NP; Judy Gainer, FNP; Jill Nielson, FNP; Callie Gordon, FNP; Jaclyn Hughes, FNP-C; Ella Schiff, FNP, PNP; Katie Storms, NP-C.

Union County Fire Station 4 annual open house

Union County Fire Station 4 hosted its annual open house on Saturday May, 7th. Over 120 guests visited station 4 and were given tours of our remodeled and updated station. The new kitchen and sleeping quarters along with our new engine purchased in December '15 were shown off to the public.

A bounce house was there to entertain the kids and the kids at heart. All the guests were treated to grilled hot dogs and hamburgers and all of the fixins'.

Door prizes were given and many walked away with some neat gifts to take home.

The volunteer members at station 4 appreciated all of the support of our guests. A special thank you to Chief David Dyer and Battalion Chief Richard Jones for supporting our station in many ways and by attending our



Union County Fire Station 4 Open House

open house.

Station 4 members also want to thank the many businesses who supported our open house through donations of door prizes and or food for our guests. Thanks to all who attended and made the event a success: Rhodes Paint and Body Shop; Shook Auto Service; Happy Goat Trading; Farm Fresh Processing; Mountain Shelter; Roses Auto Accessories; Asiano Restaurant; O'Reilly's Auto Parts; Food City; Mike's Seafood; Great Greek Gyro Wrap; Ingle's; The Wine Shop; Michaellee's Italian Restaurant; Restaurant Lorene; Auto Zone; Fatz;



Hotdogs and smiles

Home Depot; NAPA Auto Parts; Monet's Restaurant; and PawPaws Barbecue.