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winning in the courtroom to winning on the field, we go beyond being a class, we go beyond being friends. We are a family.”

Those chosen to represent their class during graduation echoed the sentiment that the closeness of family and success go hand in hand.

Rachel Todd, UCHS 2015 Valedictorian and STAR Student, spoke on the importance of individuals moving on from graduation to leave their marks in the world, using the metaphor of a box to illustrate the walls of high school and familiarity.

“There are people who are better than us always, but I encourage you to look to your new set of challenges square in the face and give them that come-and-get-me grin,” said Todd. “Use these upcoming obstacles to learn from and to mold yourselves into the wonderful people who don’t



fit into boxes – people you’re proud to be. We hold the power to reinvent humanity, you guys, if we let ourselves. So, keep our old spirit alive, stay driven, find what you’re passionate about, and go for it with every atom of your being.”

Salutatorian Katherine Sanchez addressed the crowd and her peers to share how she finds comfort in the future through her faith.

“Our class is so diverse

and talented, I just know that we all have something incredible waiting for us,” said Sanchez. “I know that the future, the unknown, is terrifying and exciting. However, I want to call attention to one important aspect of the future, which makes it far less uncertain: God is already there.”

In a moment of levity, Tyler Odom, one of three seniors selected to deliver the Class Challenge to his cohorts, challenged individual

students to accomplish greatness – Valedictorian Todd to one day become the nation’s president, and Will Stone to build the Iron Man suit.

“I could stand here all night and challenge people individually, but we want to graduate tonight, too,” said Odom. “So, without further ado, I present to you the Class of 2015 Challenge. Members of the Class of 2015, I challenge you all to settle for nothing less than your absolute best. Do not settle for mediocrity when exceptional is in your grasp. Do not give up on your dreams, but continue to push forward and pursue those dreams.”

The evening ended with a viewing of the class video in a blacked out stadium, followed by a marvelous fireworks display that could not hope to rival the bright futures of the departing Class of 2015.

## Parade...from Page 1A

in fine patriotic form, and the Union County High School Band played the fight songs of each of the branches of the United States Armed Forces.

The Boy Scouts of America participated in both the parade and the Memorial Day service that followed at the Union County War Memorial.

Local posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Vietnam Veterans of America helped to organize the parade.

“Memorial Day is in remembrance of all of our fallen soldiers,” said Bob Spaulding of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service. “We want to make sure we don’t forget about the sacrifices that are made by those veterans, and them doing it for our country. We want to make sure that everybody remembers that and takes the time out, not just to have a cookout, but to come out and remember what it’s for.”

Spaulding is the chairman of the Parade Committee, and has been helping Union County to organize its Memorial Day Parade since he started working in the area 12 years ago with the state’s Veterans Service.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason led the parade in his patrol car, which followed a path from the old high school through Downtown Blairsville and out to Highway 515, where it turned at the post office to make its way back to the Veterans Memorial Drive.

All in all, about 25 intersections were shut down to accommodate the parade, blocked off by the Sheriff’s office, Blairsville Police Department, the fire department, road department and City of Blairsville’s maintenance crews.

“It’s very humbling to see the people who come out and support the veterans,” said Sheriff Mason. “It’s very important we keep a strong military in this nation. We will cease to be free if we don’t.”



## Jubilee...from Page 1A

a late frost, and the late frost wiped out all the strawberries and we had no strawberries at all,” said Cummings. “So, it was my idea to move it to later in the month, hence the Memorial Day Weekend, and this year we had very few strawberries because everybody sold out early because we’re at the tail end of strawberry season.”

Typically, strawberry plants start to bear fruit around the first or second week of May, according to Cummings, and the weather last year saw strawberries growing into the first week of June.

Moving forward, Cummings may decide to adjust the date of the Jubilee in May, but despite a lower than average strawberry yield, there was plenty for area residents to enjoy at the Farmers Market on

Saturday.

More than 40 vendors showed up to showcase their wares, from crafts to other homemade goods and home-grown fruits and vegetables.

Brenda Hull cooked her famous grilled pimento cheese sandwiches at the food booth, and many enjoyed her unique grit sticks.

Students from the Union County FFA were on hand to sell leftover flowers from their greenhouse this school year, and Logan Turnpike Mill prepared strawberry shortcake late into the day, being one of the last vendors to still have any semblance of strawberries left.

“This is just a specialty thing we do for the strawberry festival here,” said Cecilia Holland of Logan Turnpike. “The strawberries this year

that we’re using are from Mercier Orchard in Blue Ridge. Got them yesterday out of the field, cut them up, put them in a cooler and we’re dishing them up today. We’re celebrating our veterans and strawberries, and we’ve got to have both.”

Looking ahead to opening day, the Farmers Market will feature a big presence by the Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen’s Association, which gave out more than 500 free samples during last year’s Beef Day event.

“We’re going to hold our Beef Day on the first day, and they’re going to be here with samples of locally raised beef that people can try, different recipes and that sort of thing, so I’m looking forward to that,” said Cummings of June 6. “We’ll have a big turnout that day.”

## Annual Reece Society Meeting on Saturday

Members and friends are cordially invited to attend the Reece Society’s 12th annual meeting on Saturday, May 30, in the pavilion of the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center near Vogel State Park.

The meeting begins at 10 a.m. The general meeting will consist of a few reports, along with the election of directors for the 2015-2016 membership year.

Winners of this year’s Bettie Sellers Poetry Contest will be announced, and the

winning poem will be read. Lunch will once again be catered by Sodexo of Young Harris College.

Professor Ted Olson is the keynote speaker for the 2015 annual meeting. A great admirer of Byron Reece, Prof. Olson is a member of the Appalachian Studies Department at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tenn. He is a well-published poet with two volumes in print, *Breathing in Darkness and Revelations*.

Following lunch, attendees of the meeting will be in-

ited to participate in the dedication of the Sellers Memorial Amphitheater, located on Wolf Creek below the corn crib.

This intimate setting, consisting of 31 stone seats and a performance area, was constructed in honor of Dr. Bettie Sellers, former poet laureate of Georgia, a Reece scholar, and a faithful member of the Byron Herbert Reece Society.

Set along the sterling waters of Wolf Creek, the historic enclave is a tribute to Reece, his family and Appalachia.