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continually honor their lives by ensuring that their comrades who bear the scars of war, receive the very best medical treatment available," Honaker said. "As a wounded Iraq war veteran, I am appalled that there are so many from prior wars that still have claims pending and are not properly being taken care of medically.

"It is past time to do away with all the bureaucratic red tape that stands in the way of proper treatment," Honaker said. "The future of our military is directly related to how we take care of our veterans today and from the past. We

can and we must do better than what we are doing."

On this day, the community paid tribute to their veterans with a parade the reached from School Street around the Downtown Square and back.

Vietnam Veteran and Union County native Evan Legg served as the 2014 Parade Grand Marshal. Legg served in the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division. He earned the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for Valor.

The event's Keynote Speaker U.S. Army Retired Major Gen. Jere Akin thanked the crowd for attending the

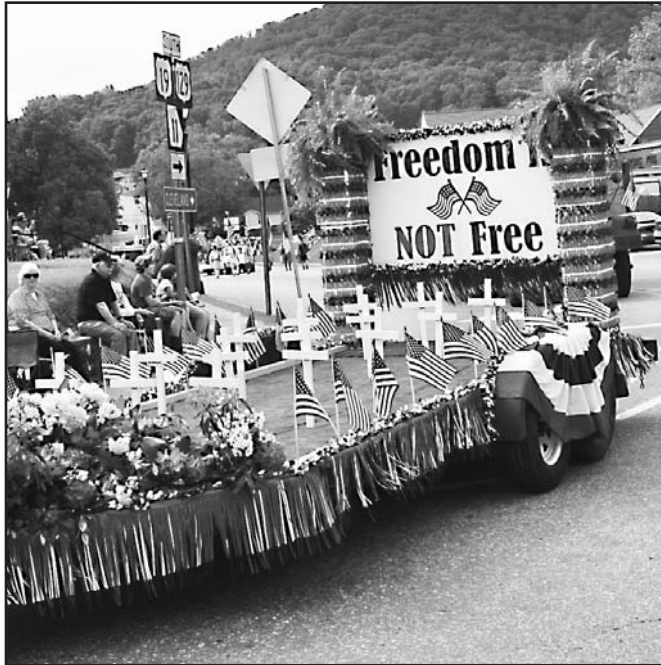


Union County's most decorated veteran U.S. Army Major (Retired) Leon Davenport attended Saturday's event with his wife Barbara. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

Memorial Day Ceremony.

"I am proud to stand before you today and I consider it to be a privilege to be a citizen of the United States of America," Akin said.

"The USA has provided me the privilege to live as a free man and make decisions that will let me live the American Dream. It lets me have the opportunity to fulfill goals that I



Strawberries...from Page 1A

Mickey and all of his people do a better job each year," said Farmers Market regular Joy Nywening, who specializes in handbags and quilts. "Next year is going to be even better, we're looking forward to the tour buses rolling in here. The way this event just keeps getting better, I feel like it's going

to be one of Blairsville's biggest tourist attractions."

With the increased success, most vendors are arriving early to set up shop. They arrived two hours before the gates were scheduled to open. "We had a good day and I was the first one in here this morning at 6 a.m.," said Harold Berry, who along with Josh Berry, are the entrepreneurs behind Raw Unfiltered Honey.

"Just about everyone was in here and set up by 7 a.m. but it's been a busy day and it's been a steady day," Harold Berry said.

Spring produce, plants, baked goods, jams and jellies, and for a special treat, the Logan Turnpike Mill was selling strawberry shortcake on their



may set for my life.

"We all are proud to be Americans," he said. "Each time I have left American soil for either military operations, or just to relax, I'm always humble when I arrive back in the United States of America.

"That's because other countries I have been in don't have the privileges and freedoms that we accept as every day rights," Akin said. "Those rights didn't come without a cost to our many men and women serving in the United States Military."

Those people have made the United States Military a key part of their lives, Akin said.

"They fought in many wars for the overall protections of our citizens and country," he said. "Many of these men and women have paid the ultimate sacrifice and never returned to their families.

"They died doing their duties in the United States Armed Forces," he said. "This of course is what this federal holiday is all about.

"This day has been

set aside by our federal government so we don't forget the sacrifices these men and women paid for to maintain our freedom as established by our Fore Fathers and our Constitution," Akin said.

"We should never forget that heavy price," Akin said.

The event paid tribute to veterans of all U.S. Military Services.

Union County's most decorated soldier, Retired U.S. Army Major Leon Davenport was on the front row with his wife Barbara.

More than 1 million Americans have fought and died on battlefields here and abroad to defend our freedom and our way of life.

Today, our troops continue to make the ultimate sacrifice. And even as we lose troops, more brave Americans are stepping forward to say, "I am ready to serve."

They follow in the footsteps of many fine Americans who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Always remember, Freedom isn't free.

MECHS ...

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ville Kiwanis Club, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Union/Towns Employer Committee, Corrugated Replacements, ETC, Shining Star, Union County Interagency Group, Jenn Bailey Memorial Scholarship, Union County and Fannin County Woodmen of the World, UCBI of Union County, Pearson Learning Systems Scholarship, Tri-State Business Women, Unity Church of the Mountains, North Georgia Technical College, Fantastic Future Award, The Insurance Mart Scholarship, UCBI of Blue Ridge, Out of the Blue Shop, Blue Ridge Adventure Wear, Morganton Eastern Star, Blue Ridge Kiwanis Club, and Young Harris College.

Mountain Education Charter High School is a collaborative effort of Elbert, Fannin, Forsyth, Gilmer, Lumpkin, Pickens, Rabun, Towns, Union, and White County School Systems.

The MECHS collaborative organization also operates sites in Habersham and Stephens Counties.

The school is an academic, self-paced, individualized, evening high school that serves students who are seeking a non-traditional school environment and who desire a Georgia high school diploma.

MECHS also serves students who need to make-up missed credit from their regular high school, enabling them to stay on academic track and graduate with their peers.

MECHS is a year-round high school that offers all Georgia required curriculum courses, as well as, a variety of vocational courses and state-mandated testing.

famous homemade biscuits.

Shelly Conlin, specializes in crocheting necklaces, trellis-yarn necklaces, woodwork, and greeting cards is another regular at the market.

"I've been coming here since it was held at the courthouse," Conlin said. "This event is doing really good compared to last year. I've been here since 6 in-the-morning and it's been very steady throughout the day."

Another vendor who arrived early was Lilah Bowles, also known as, The Sweet Bread Lady.

"This event is getting stronger each year," said Bowles, who featured sweet

bread, cakes, pies, plants, and homemade items. "I'm looking forward to next year and for the opening of the Farmers Market."

The Farmers Market opens for business with its Grand Opening on Saturday, June 7 and will be open rain or shine throughout the summer months.

The market hours are Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesdays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Treasures will be held on Thursdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Market's first event will be Saturday June 14 with the Creekside Trout Tasting.