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Ship won the plunder – the largest trophy of them all – with its sword-wielding, swashbuckling buccaneers and air canon that caused the unprepared to jump every time.

But the eight runners-up gave the Pirate Ship a run for its booty: Jay's Diner, Chick-fil-A, a boat embodying the spirit of Nottely Marina itself, an Ice Cream cruiser, a Yellow Submarine, the Red Coats, a fearsome Viking ship and a lovable *Frozen* theme complete with a waving duo of Anna and Elsa.

The Chick-fil-A boat made waves by tossing out little beach balls and thermal sandwich holsters, announcing that the restaurant would be "coming next month to Blairsville," and advising those in the crowd to "EAT MOR CHIKIN."

Boats from DNR and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 23, with Commander Mike Hall and Vice Com-



mander John Nixon, made sure that safety was a top priority for contestants and parade-goers alike.

The Farwells of Cumming spent the Fourth of July holiday at their second home in Morganton, and they came to the parade to take part in the family-friendly environment at Nottely Marina.

"We're having a blast,"

said Matt Farwell, who was with his wife, Beth, and their two young children, Luke and Ella. "We're just out enjoying and having a great time."

Luke and Ella's favorite boats were *Frozen*, Chick-fil-A and the eventual winner, the Pirate Ship.

The skies opened wide toward the end of the parade, drenching those on land and

on the lake, but spirits remained high as several Doucettes loaded up and took to the waters to hand deliver trophies to participants.

Coincidentally, the winning Pirate Ship was one of Nottely Marina's very own rentals – the craft was decorated so completely and convincingly that the Doucettes only learned after the judging that they owned the boat that took top honors.

"They came yesterday, got all their dimensions, measured it – I didn't know what they were doing with it – and came early this morning, took it out, decorated it, and brought it back," said Moriah Doucette, who is married to Carleen's grandson, Shane. "They rent with us every year, and every year they try to decorate, and this year they topped it. They did a fantastic job."

All in all, the parade was a safe, fun and adventure-filled contest for the Fourth of July weekend.



Happy Birthday Lowell!



When you see Lowell around town, be sure to join us in wishing him a very Happy Birthday! The staff at the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* certainly wish him the happiest of birthdays. Photo/Not by Lowell Nicholson

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thing that, I don't know how to describe it, but it's part of a life, I guess, and it's part of my life now."

A slideshow capturing moments of Cummings' career played throughout dinner, portraying the many roles Cummings has embodied over the years.

There were pictures of Cummings with his family and with 4-H youngsters – pictures at the Farmers Market, as well as his time spent as president of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.

Proof of the many lives Cummings has touched in his career was evident throughout the room, as friends of Cummings stood and delivered words attesting to his character and their years of friendship.

County agents and representatives of cooperative extensions from all over Georgia were in attendance, as well as farmers and former 4-H students.

"4-H has turned out to influence my life in more ways than I could have imagined," said Olivia Browning, who became involved with the Union County 4-H Shotgun Team when she was in high school thanks to the encouragement of Cummings and her mother.

Browning went on to graduate from UGA and work fulltime with the 4-H program at the state level.

"It has really affected my life in many, many ways," said Browning. "In some ways, all I can say is thank you for getting me on this track. I oftentimes tell people that I wouldn't be homeless in a ditch somewhere if it wasn't for 4-H, but I would certainly be in a much different place in my life than I am now."

Robert Brewer, who has been the county agent for Towns County since 1989 and retired the same day as Cummings, also spoke to those gathered to wish Cummings well in his retirement from Extension.

"This is sort of a bitersweet day, sort of a strange and wondrous day for both Mickey and I," said Brewer. "Today, we walked into our offices as gainfully employed people, and walked out on a fixed income."

Brewer and Cummings met at a state county agent association meeting years ago, and through conversation, discovered that they were actually fourth cousins.

"Mickey has done an exceptional job in Union County, and I think everyone here would agree with that," said Brewer.

Many of Cummings' family members took turns at the microphone that night, including his sons, Will and Wade, who spoke on the love and pride they feel for their father and his accomplishments.

"Dad, you raised me right," Will Cummings said, addressing his father. "I wouldn't trade any of the opportunities you've given me for the world. I just want to say I love you. People are proud of their kids, but kids are proud of their folks, too."



Closing out the evening, Cummings thanked God first and foremost, those in attendance, his children, and especially his wife Lauren, with whom he will be celebrating 34 years of marriage in September.

"There's no way that I could have been anything special – and I'm not anything special – but really, she's been a difference in my life in many aspects, and I want to thank her publicly for what she's meant to me," said Cummings.

"And my two sons, I can't be a more proud father

than of my two boys. One is in graduate school and the other one is in accounting, and they'll be through with school soon, and when they get through with school, I'm going to get a raise."

Now retired, Cummings will be working fulltime for the Union County Farmers Market and Canning Plant.

He is also petitioning for a nomination to the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors for the Union County seat. So far, Cummings has garnered more than 300 signatures and counting in his run for nomination.