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be enough Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars to complete the cannery project.

"We had originally planned for additional room at the Farmers Market for a future cannery and felt it would be a perfect fit to build it there," Paris said. "We had a chance to use SPLOST dollars to benefit a great number

of people in our community."

Another cost saving venture, the county purchased cannery equipment from Dawson County for \$12,500 after that county decided to close its canning plant. That equipment purchase saved the county more than \$300,000.

"Two pieces of approximately 50 different pieces of equipment purchased were worth much more than the total cost of the entire venture," Paris said.

James Thompson of the Appalachian Regional Commission said that government officials found it hard to resist providing funding for the project because of the poten-

tial community impact.

"There is a real interest nationwide in expanding home gardening and canning in rural communities," Thompson said. "Hard times make it even more inviting to either grow or purchase vegetables and then can them for home use during the winter months."

"There are so few counties in Georgia that are still able to provide this type of service in their communities," Thompson said. "That alone makes this an attractive project for grant funding."

It also helps perpetuate the farming industry in Union County, as evidenced by the grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who also paid a visit to the

county on this historic day.

The historic cannery still in operation last year, attracted more than 250 different users at the facility, who canned more than 15,000 jars of food items. That helped bring in about \$5,000 in revenue to help offset operations costs.

At the end of the ceremonies, Patrick Fix and Bethany Brown provided those out-of-town government officials with a demonstration of just how the cannery works. The officials didn't go home empty handed either, as each took home a freshly canned pint jar of homemade apple sauce. "We think the cannery is a great addition to an already very successful Farmers Market," Cummings said. "This is a great day in Union County."



The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce helped open the new Union County Canning Plant last week. Everyone agreed, it is a welcomed addition to the county. Photo/Charles Duncan

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Union County Farmers Market.

"I thank you on behalf of my Dad, and our family really appreciates this honor," David Miller said. "Thank you."

Paul Paris could very well be called the "father of the Pepper Plant."

It was Paris who was instrumental in luring the Joseph C. Campbell Co. to Blairsville. It was one of the first industries to call Union County home.

Paris, the father of Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, also helped establish the 100 Bushel Corn Club following World War II.

The 100 Bushel Corn Club in Blairsville was established along with the help of Bruce Hunt and Dick Paris. It helped improve the productivity of farmers in Union and Towns counties.

A banquet was held for several years to celebrate the farmers in both counties to honor 100 Bushel growers.

At the Sixth Annual event on Jan. 15, 1954, held at the Dining Hall at Young Harris College, 235 farmers from Union and Towns counties were honored for their achievements in agriculture, according to a copy of the program provided by Mary Carol Paris Akins.

Paul Paris also was instrumental in helping establish the "Pepper Plant" as an industry in Union County, serving as the first president.

The plant established a market for farmers to sell red bell peppers to the Joseph Campbell Co. without having to leave the county. This industry thrived for many years and was a huge economic benefit for those farmers participating in raising and selling peppers. It also was very helpful since the company provided the plants at no cost to farmers so the only risk was labor and fertilizer.

And for many, during the pepper harvest season, it provided gainful employment as the pepper was processed here for shipment. These jobs aided in the purchase of back to school clothes for many Union County youth, and many groceries also were put on the table.

Paul Paris' other accomplishments included helping establish the Rural Rehabilitation Program; helping organize a coop at the old Union Hardware building to buy fertilizer and help farmers market their potatoes and beans; was featured in "Progressive Farmer" magazine, a statewide publication, for the establishment of "cottonless farming" in Union County; participated in the Annual Farmer's Meeting and Market Day in Blairsville; "Man of the Year in Agriculture" in Union County in 1950 for his contributions to farming.

The Paris family accept-

ed the award on behalf of Paul Paris.

Bonnell Stone is known as the "father of forestry" in the state of Georgia. One of his greatest accomplishments happened right here in Union County, including inspiring the donation of land that is now today known as Vogel State Park.

It was Stone who worked to get Highway 129 built across Neal's Gap. That roadway, which opened in 1925, replaced the Old Logan Turnpike across Tesnatee Gap and into Cleveland. Highway 129 also connected Gainesville and Atlanta and opened up a major trade route for mountain farmers, benefiting the region's agricultural pursuits.

Stone also served as chairman of the Blairsville Public Schools Board, president of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, playing a major role in the Appalachian Scenic Highway Association, was president of the Union County Good Roads Association and the Southern Good Roads Association. He also was a member of the National Council of Outdoor Recreation and the National Conference of State Parks. Stone also was a founding member of the Georgia Forestry Association and served on the state forestry board. Stone also spent two terms in the Georgia Legislature, representing Union County.

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Union County is the third lowest in the 13-county region," Paris said. "We're experiencing three new expansions, Laminex, Southern Polyurethane and Advanced Digital Cable.

"I feel like the path that we're on will put us in the lead of all other rural counties when the economy does finally complete its rebound."

Paris also spoke about Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax projects.

"The Farmers Market we are in this evening has been a huge hit and as you can see, the cannery has been completed," Paris said. "The newly expanded and renovated library has been a wonderful addition to our county and the Horse Arena has been very successful. The renovated civic center has been constantly in use."

Paris praised the county's two crown jewels, Meeks Park and the Union County Community Center, as well as the fact that Union County has the fifth lowest tax rate among Georgia's 159 counties.

"Meeks Park continues to be improved daily and most would agree that there is no better county park in the state," Paris said. "We added 30 acres of property to the park with SPLOST proceeds and two new bridges. We added more than a mile of walking trails that have been an improvement to an already great park."

Paris also talked about additions to Fire Station 1, which will include a training facility and operations center for emergencies.

"We will let bids on this project probably prior to year's end and we hope to have that facility completed by spring or early summer," Paris said. "We also purchased and paid for five new fire engines for each of our main volunteer stations."

"We have more than 80 dedicated volunteer firefighters throughout the county," he said. "They volunteer their services to make our community a much safer place to live and enjoy life."

The commissioner also spoke about the almost \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant received

from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for expansion of the Union County Senior Center.

"We had to compete with counties and cities all over Georgia for those grant dollars," Paris said. "We'll hopefully begin work on that project in the spring."

"There is not another small rural county in Georgia and I would argue, anywhere, that can compare with Union County, Georgia and what we are accomplishing," Paris said. "These accomplishments were made possible by all of you. You are a key part of our success. You have helped organize one of the finest group of elected officials and county employees anywhere."

"You voted for our SPLOST, which has provided funding for county improvements, and you come together to volunteer, to donate, and to

contribute to any charitable need in our community," Paris said. "We have a network of churches in our community that are second to none. You, the people that make up Union County, help make this community's quality of life, second to none."

Paris also praised the city of Blairsville for the accomplishments that the city has achieved with its share of the SPLOST proceeds. "Let's not forget the city of Blairsville's accomplishments with the same SPLOST," Paris said. "They remodeled City Hall, paved city streets, and just completed a new sewer expansion, which will be key to our economic growth."

"They have greatly improved the airport and hope to begin construction of a new terminal area this year or early next year," Paris said.