

Events...from Page 1A

a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

There will be no charge for admission to the exhibits on both of those days.

It's just the beginning of the holiday frenzy.

On Monday, the Annual Tour of Trees kicks off at the Union County Community Center. Blairsville-Union County Chamber President

Cindy Williams invites everyone to come enjoy more than 30 trees and wreaths decorated by local businesses.

"The Tour of Trees is brought to you by the Tourism Committee of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce," Williams said. "It's sponsored in part by the Northeast Georgia Board of Realtors."

The Tour of Trees continues through Dec. 28th, Williams said.

The holiday fun continues beginning Thursday, Dec. 5th and lasting through Saturday, Dec. 7th, as the Annual Jingle Bell Buys will be in full swing.

For three days only during normal store business hours you can save 50 percent on select items or Buy One, Get One Free promotions at 32 Union County businesses. Participating businesses include retailers, restaurants, service businesses and more. Contact the Chamber at (706) 745-5789 to sign up and receive this year's coupons.

Whether you are a newcomer to the area, ready to dis-

cover all that Union County has to offer, or a long-time resident who believes in supporting the businesses that make our local economy strong, this event is for you, Williams said.

The Christmas Season activities also include the first Holly Jolly Christmas Event from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Union County Community Center. The event includes musical performances, crafts for the kids, train rides, face painting, storytelling and refreshments.

"Folks can come tour the beautifully decorated trees and wreaths as part of this event," Williams said. "Please bring non-perishable items to donate to the Union County Food Pantry and/or unwrapped toys for the Toys for Kids program sponsored by the Veterans Organizations."

The holiday season has something for everyone.

Come out to the Union County Farmers Market on Dec. 6th and Dec. 7th for the Annual Kris Kringle Market. Admission and parking to the event is free.

The fun begins at 4 p.m.

on Dec. 6th as more than 60 vendors with produce, crafts, handmade gifts, and delicious food creations are there for your holiday enjoyment. There's also music, an area for the kids to enjoy, chestnuts roasting over an open fire, Christmas Caroling, and, of course, Santa Claus.

Kris Kringle Market is scheduled from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 6th, and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 7th.

On Dec. 14th, make time to attend the annual Christmas Tree lighting at Vogel State Park. The fun begins with hayrides at 4 p.m., special music and activities are scheduled for 4:30 p.m. The Faith in Our Community Christmas program begins at 5:30 p.m. and lasts until 6:45 p.m.

There will be hot chocolate, hot cider, bonfires, cookies, and yes, Santa Claus is coming back to Union County to attend the event.

Also, bring an unwrapped gift for a child 12 years old or younger for the Union County Sheriff's Office Give-A-Gift toy drive (no toy guns or knives please).

Parade.... from Page 1A

ville," said Union County Historical Society President Bud Akins.

The annual event is a main attraction as locals and visitors alike head to Downtown to celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season.

"It's an exciting time to be in Blairsville," Mayor Jim Conley said. "The children are all hyped up and ready for this event. It's a chance for them to get a good look at Santa Claus and a chance to have

a sit down with him and let him know what they want for Christmas."

The Historical Society Christmas includes an Open House on Dec. 7th at the Butt-Mock House, also known as the Mountain Life Museum, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Included in the Open House, will be a tour of the Payne Cabin, built in 1861, which represents Union County life in the mid-1800s.

It also includes Pictures

with Santa at the Historic Courthouse on Dec. 7th from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you're in line by 1 p.m., you will see Santa and his elves.

On Dec. 17th, come out and enjoy Old Time Christmas Caroling on The Square at 6 p.m., and on Dec. 20th, a special Christmas Concert, featuring Bill Graff. That takes place at 7 p.m.

Admission to the events in the Historic Courthouse is free.

Firewise.... from Page 1A

initiatives, the Firewise program, and the Ready-Set-Go evacuation plan. The importance of these programs should not be understated, especially considering the recent crop of wildfires in western states such as Colorado.

Danny Lewis, the executive director of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, stressed the importance of being knowledgeable about fire safety.

"We could go up in flames just like any of those counties," he said. "Towns County is the only county in the state that I know of that has become a Firewise county."

Though the area has gotten a lot of rain in the past year, it's especially susceptible to fires because it's a heavily wooded region.

Because of this, Towns County representatives from the Georgia Forestry Commission and the RC&D Council had come to the meeting to encourage the other 12 counties to become Firewise.

"We're the prettiest region in the state of Georgia," said Lewis. "So this is something that's really important."

Communities have been working toward fire adaptation for decades.

Recently, the Resource Conservation and Development Council for Georgia, a nonprofit organization, has administered the grant for the Fire Adapted program.

RC&D Council Executive Director Frank Riley went recently with Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd to the Backyards & Beyond Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah to discuss Fire Adapted communities.

"We're actually leading the country as far as our efforts here," he said. "We're trying to keep our citizens safe by making them think about wildfires."

And it's working.

Riley said that they have cut their wildfire costs by 75 percent since they started the Firewise program. That's a

lot.

Chief Floyd was one of the people who got up to speak about the dangers of wildfire.

He stressed that even though some people may think something along the lines of "it'll never happen here," wildfires can spring up anywhere.

One happened in Tennessee around March and spread to about 50 homes.

He spoke about the three P's – prevention, prevention, prevention.

"It's a lot cheaper to prevent fires than it is to suppress them," he said to those gathered at the meeting.

He showed them the Fire Adapted PowerPoint so that they understood.

"It's not difficult to do," Chief Floyd said.

A Fire Adapted community is one that understands that it's at risk from a fire and

takes action to prevent a wildfire rather than react to one, thereby allowing all residents to feel and be safe in their environment.

Such actions as building homes with fire resistant materials, locating a community's resident safety zone, and speaking with one's insurance agent about wildfire coverage, can all help to prevent loss of property and life.

Riley thought that the meeting was a success. Afterward, he talked to representatives from White, Rabun, Union, Dawson, and Lumpkin counties, which are all trying to get involved.

Firewise is spreading like wildfire through the Georgia Mountains region, and Riley is happy with the progress.

"It's easy, it's free, and it's a good thing," he said.

Understanding the Affordable Care Act

On Thursday, December 5, there will be a presentation of the facts of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). It will be held at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center, 165 Welborn Street, Blairsville at 5 p.m. The presenter will be Mr. Rodney Sisk, Fannin Regional Hospital's Chief Financial Officer.

There will be time for questions and refreshments after the presentation. Please spread the word, come and bring friends. This is a chance for the community to get the facts about something that has been mischaracterized for a very long time. N(Nov27,Z14)CA