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feature of North Georgia Symphony Orchestra's Fall programs.

The annual concert is presented by the Union County Historical Society.

"It's been a good year for us," said Historical Society President Bud Akins. "This is always the best way to end the year."

Admission to the concert was free.

For Wilson Anderson, that answered the question of why every seat in the house was full.

"I think people enjoy free stuff," Anderson said. "It made an impact on my presence here tonight, and I'm sure it did for other folks as well. In today's economy, free is a real bargain."

Of course, there's never an admission charge for concerts presented by the Union County Historical Society in the Old Courthouse. Musicians donate their time and



Laurin Smith leads the North Georgia Symphony Orchestra on Friday night at the Historic Union County Courthouse during the Annual Christmas Concert. The Historical Society sponsors the annual event. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

talents, though voluntary gifts to the maintenance fund are always welcomed and appreciated.

The orchestra played Vivaldi's *Guitar Concerto*, with harp substituting for guitar, and Mahler's beautiful *Adagio*, which also featured the harp. The orchestra's major selection for the concert was Holst's *St. Paul Suite*, with *Greensleeves* running through the Finale.

"It's beautiful music," said Alice Harmon. "I love music and I couldn't resist being here this evening. It's like sitting at the feet of God and listening to the angels have a jam session. It's music to soothe the soul."

The orchestra began in 2002 as a community and school orchestra at North Georgia College and State University.

In the summer of 2006, the community portion of the orchestra, along with a few college students, formed an ensemble known as North

Georgia Sweet Strings and played for assisted living/nursing home facilities in the North Georgia area and for events in Dahlonega.

In spring 2007, the group decided to separate from the school and become a private organization with the goal of growing into an organization with community support, community players, professional players and local college students to add orchestral music to an area where bluegrass, old-time and other musical traditions already had a firm foothold.

The group also wanted to provide an orchestra and ensemble for local students interested in classical music.

Playing as The Appalachian Chamber Orchestra from The North Georgia Chamber Symphony, Inc., the reconstituted organization holds concerts in Blairsville and Dahlonega, and Windstream Communications films the Blairsville event, broadcasting it on the cable network

and creating a DVD for sale.

Smith, who started the orchestra and has been its director and conductor ever since, studied extensively in the New York area with Masao Kawasaki and Itzhak Perlman.

Since returning to his native Georgia, he has shared that knowledge with the members of the group and his students.

An accomplished violinist, Smith performs regularly with symphony orchestras and chamber music ensembles in the area.

Current members performing regularly with the group include Bob Christmas (concertmaster), Barbara Spruell, first violin; Betty Florence, Laura Chambless and Jason Belcher, second violin; Paula Jean Redditt, third violin; Rebecca Gerstenlauer, viola; Nancy Mack and Jan Hill, cello.

The orchestra also is comprised of professional musicians.

Chamber's First Annual Tour of Trees held at Union County Community Center

By Janice Boling
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The First Tour of Trees at the Union County Community Center opened Saturday, December 1st and will run through January 4, 2013. With 24 trees decorated by local businesses and 4 more by local interior designer Marcie Culpepper, the tour is a Christmas spirit feast for the eyes.

Children, teens, and adults enjoyed touring the building full of Christmas trees. With everything from peacocks to the Grinch, the trees incorporated traditional ornaments, lights, tinsel, balloons, whimsical decorations, and beautifully wrapped presents.

Visitors enjoyed complementary sugar cookies, carrot cake, and hot apple cider during the opening tour. Chamber President Cindy Williams said, "The First Tour of Trees open house was a great success with over 165 people in attendance. We look for it to be even better next year."

During the Tour of Trees open house, many stopped in for lunch at the View Grill, shoppers picked up gifts and stocking stuffers at the Tourism Pro Gift Shop, and others gathered in the ballroom to watch the Georgia Alabama game on the big screen. The day was not only filled with ohs and ahs over beautiful, creative Christmas trees, but also with lots of cheering as football fans cheered for their favorite teams.

The First Annual Tour of Trees, brought to you by the Tourism Committee of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, was fun for all. Everyone is welcome, so stop by and see the trees, they will be up until January 4th. For more information, please contact the Chamber of Commerce at (706) 745-5789 or visit www.VisitBlairsvilleGa.com.



Tour of Trees at UCC



Kids admire a Christmas tree ornament



Sugar cookies and carrot cake come with a smile



Tour of trees is a great family outing