

# Vogel...from Page 1A

next year.”  
 Many visitors gave that Saturday, from children to grandparents, all in the name of making children’s Christmas wishes come true.

“I think there are a lot of people who are very privileged, and then there are people who are not so privileged, and we that can do it should do it,” said Janet Cornwell of Blairsville, who donated two gifts and attended the lighting with her husband, daughter and two grandchildren.

Those looking to head up to the ball field where the program and tree lighting took place had two options – walk up the hill or take festive tractor hayrides in trailers decorated with pine branches and lights.

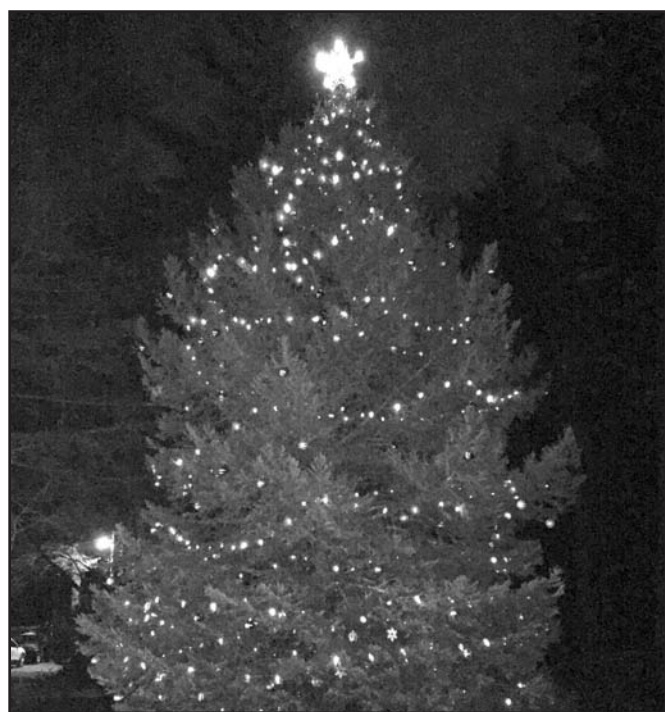
Volunteers from the various churches were stationed throughout the program area, from parking all the way to the entrance of the program and the various tents set up to serve refreshments and entertainment before and after the Christmas program.

As to how many attended the event, volunteers handed out all of their 520 candles to be used in a singing by candlelight, and the guests just kept on filing in, with estimates of more than 800 in attendance on Saturday.

Guests brought folding chairs to sit around fires to keep themselves warm, and churches provided hot cider, hot chocolate and cookies as comforting refreshments.

Also present was Santa Claus, taking pictures with children who had plenty of Christmas requests, and volunteers painted children’s faces as well, adding to the merriment of the evening.

The program featured tons of Christmas music



entertainment, from Alan Kendall, Justin Terry, the family group Children of the Promise, as well as Cheri and Mike Young.

One of the more solemn moments was when guests were invited to light their candles and sing “Silent Night” along with all of the singers that evening.

The park was decorated by church volunteers as well as volunteers with the Vogel chapter of the Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites.

Jennifer Jones, assistant manager of Vogel State Park, welcomed everyone during the program, thanking them for attending, and Doug Merck recited the Christmas story for all who would hear.

Children took the stage at one point to join in the singing, and all told, the evening was festive and bright, especially after the lighting

of the Christmas tree, which was decorated with the help of several bucket lift trucks volunteered by the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

“We haven’t had weather like this before, so God was good with that,” said Janet Hill of the beautiful December air that evening.

Hill has organized the event since its beginning, and appreciates every one of the people who come together to make the annual Christmas program possible.

“The artists and singers, they were just all terrific,” said Hill. “It was just a great program, I thought.”

As they do every year, program organizers surveyed the crowd to determine that the youngest to attend this year was three weeks old, the oldest was 83 years old, and the person who came from the farthest away was from Colorado.

# Farabees...from Page 1A

– I’m just sorry Ann wasn’t here to receive the honor with me,” said Maurice Farabee, 93, of his wife, who passed away in 2001.

The Farabees moved from Florida to Blairsville in 1977, after Maurice retired from the FBI and Ann from teaching grade school, though the two had had a second home in Union County for several years before moving here full time.

Even prior to calling Blairsville home, Ann and Maurice did important work with the Historical Society, and when the time came to preserve and restore the old courthouse, the two went above and beyond to raise money and fight for the history of Union County.

Back before the courthouse was restored, some in the county wanted to tear it down and put an intersection in its place – the building had been condemned, and the current Union County Courthouse was commissioned and built because of the terrible state of the nearly 100-year-old building.

The Farabees, however, had different plans.

Selling namesake ceiling tiles in the old courtroom and memorial bricks in the walkway around the courthouse, among other fundraisers, Ann and Maurice were instrumental in raising more than \$1 million toward restoring the courthouse, including the upstairs courtroom and the replacement of the clock and bell tower atop the building.

Originally built in 1899, the Historic Courthouse – thanks to the many hours, days, months and years of time volunteered by the Farabees – was returned to much of its former glory when the courtroom was finished in 1998 and the tower in 2000.

Maurice, a U.S. Army Air Corps pilot during World War II, went high in the sky



again in 2000, this time in the bucket of a 150-ton crane to install the weathervane atop the bell tower.

And in March of 2002, the Farabees were honored by then Georgia Gov. Roy Barnes with the Governor’s Award in the Humanities, for their “exemplary achievements that have fostered an understanding of our cultural traditions and values in Georgia, and have thus strengthened community, character and citizenship in our state,” read a letter from the governor to Maurice.

One of Bud Akins’ last acts during his tenure as Historical Society president was to present the Farabees with this award as “Preservationists of the 20th Century” – Alan Denmon was announced as the society’s new president in the annual Christmas dinner last week.

Akins has been involved with the Historical Society for decades, and was on the Historic Courthouse restoration committee, so he knew firsthand the amount of work put in by the Farabees.

“This award has never been given out before, and I doubt it will ever be given out again, because we don’t have anybody that’s ever done what they’ve done,” said Akins of the Farabees. “Maurice and Ann volunteered to come in here, and they didn’t get any pay for what they did for 10 years, and they were here every day just like it was a job.”

The Farabees’ award will hang in the C.R. Collins Lobby of the Historic Union County Courthouse, a fitting reminder in the years to come of the achievements and hard work of Ann and Maurice Farabee.

# Jimmy...from Page 1A

of service during the annual Christmas dinner for Hiawassee employees.

“Jimmy was well known for his love of the city, his appreciation of his fellow officers and camaraderie with his coworkers,” said Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis. “Jimmy will be missed by all who knew and loved him.”

“All city employees would like to express their sympathies to Jimmy’s family. While no words can take away the pain of this loss, we stand with the family at this difficult time and we are united in our grief. As mayor, I have ordered that the Hiawassee city flags be flown at half-staff for a week in memory of Jimmy.”

Friday, Dec. 18, will be

the annual Hiawassee Shop With a Cop, during which time Chief Wright usually gathers his hoard of volunteers and heads to the Blairsville Walmart to take underprivileged children of the county Christmas shopping.

Shop With a Cop has always been one of Chief Wright’s favorite times of the year, because he loved to see the smiles on children’s faces after receiving such special treatment.

But they’ll have to do it without him this year.

“This year’s event will be dedicated to Jimmy’s memory,” said Mayor Mathis. “No one has worked harder than our Chief during the holiday season to bring joy to homes across Towns County,

and he will be remembered in this worthy program.”

Hiawassee City Councilwoman Janet Allen has served on the city council for eight years, but she has known Chief Wright much longer than that. The chief used to stop in to the restaurant she and her husband ran in Downtown Hiawassee 20 years ago.

“We’ve been very fortunate and blessed to have Jimmy serve,” said Allen, who considered Jimmy a personal friend. “He’s been extremely faithful, dedicated and hard-working, and he did an excellent job. He was a good man, and the community and the city have lost a tremendous asset.”

Towns County Sheriff

Chris Clinton said he will never forget the chief he worked with for many years in law enforcement, adding that he, too, had the privilege of calling Chief Wright a friend.

“He was a very generous, kind-hearted man,” said Sheriff Clinton. “He’d do anything in the world to help somebody, and I know he’s going to be greatly missed by the police department, by the community as a whole, and certainly by us at the sheriff’s office. We always had a friend in Jimmy Wright. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We will miss him.”

Funeral arrangements for the larger-than-life police chief were still pending as of press time Monday.

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