

Shop...from Page 1A

helping a child on the front

end (youth) is better than trying to help a child on the back end (prison).

"We don't just snap our fingers and all this stuff appears," Chief Carroll said. "It's a community effort and we're always telling the kids that their community cares about them. When you do something for a young person, they tend to remember it forever.

"If we can do for our kids on the front end, we're not dealing with them on the back end, and by that, I mean



they grow into responsible adults and they're passing on

the tradition of being good to the kids in the future," Chief

Carroll said.

To meet the demand of

young people unable to make it to Shop With A Cop, Neely went shopping. Not just for toys and such, but for the families. New Hope Church helped with food items, the Blairsville Cruisers helped with the gifts, and Chief Carroll made sure those less fortunate had something for Christmas.

"It means something to the kids," Chief Carroll said. "It means something to their families. And it means a whole lot to a bunch of old tough cops to put a smile on a child's face on Christmas morning."

Combined, Shop With A Cop, Shop With A Cruiser and the Sheriff's Office Give A Gift Christmas served more than 300 local children in 2014.

Mission accomplished indeed.

Gas...from Page 1A

Ridge.

"How is it that all most all stations in Blairsville have the exact price within a couple of cents and all are substantially higher than surrounding towns?" asks Ted Gaudette of Blairsville.

"Think about how much money they are making off the average worker if they are getting 20 cents or more a gallon especially in this Christmas season."

When 89.5 million Americans hit the holiday roads, they will find the cheapest gasoline since May 2009, and the lowest Christ-

mas day prices since 2008. On average, Americans are saving \$13 for a tank of gas compared to this time last year. If prices remain at these levels, households will save \$550 next year, according to the Energy Information Administration.

"Plunging pump prices have boosted disposable

income by more than 3.5 percent, which encourages Americans to travel," Jenkins said.

"AAA expects the highest number of travelers during the year-end holidays on record, which dates back to 2001," Jenkins added.

Cruiser...from Page 1A

they'll buy for mom, dad, brother, sister and all of that before they buy for themselves," said Tanner.

The excitement of the children as they made their way around the store – typically in a route from the toy department to the electronics department – truly warmed the heart.

"You need to be at Walmart when these kids go do their shopping, and seeing the look on their faces – that's the most rewarding part, is making them happy," said Tanner. "Those kids have a ball."

Blairsville Chief of Police Johnny Carroll, who is also a Cruiser, was on hand to chaperone a pair of happy children.

"They help us with Shop With A Cop moneywise, and they go with us and help us," said Chief Carroll of the Blairsville Cruisers.

And each year, the children express their appreciation for what the Cruisers have made possible for them.

"They'll send letters back through the teachers to us, telling us how much they



appreciated it," said Tanner. "They send all kind of stuff back to us. It's really rewarding to watch that."

The Cruisers start collecting money early in the year for Shop With A Cruiser. Cruise-Ins are a big source of money for the car club, and they run the first weekend each month from April through October.

The club also sells raffle tickets for a chance to win a car, and this year's 2004 Mustang Convertible sold 5,000 tickets. They also sell food at their Cruise-Ins to raise the

money necessary to give to their various causes.

Sponsors play a big role within the organization, and the Cruisers two big corporate sponsors are Walmart and O'Reilly Auto Parts.

Walmart donated refreshments for the kids and volunteers who came to shop, and everyone had a grand Christmas time.

"We just would like to tell everybody in this county and everybody who supports our club we really appreciate them," said Tanner. "We could not do this without their help."

Jeepers...from Page 1A

is a worthy cause and that's where we needed to donate to this year. They help out a lot of people. It's not like just giving it to one person because everybody benefits from the food bank, said Jan Jentzen of the Jeepers.

Founded 18 months ago, the Jeepers consists of about 60 jeep enthusiasts from Union, Fannin, and Towns counties, along with members from North Carolina, who get together for fun, fellowship, and to enjoy life in one of America's most popular SUVs, the Jeep Wrangler.

Despite being less than two years old, when it comes to getting involved in the community, the Jeepers have hit the ground running.

"Last year we bought toys and clothes for a couple of children, and every three months we give a donation of food, but this is our first time doing a donation with money, said the Jeepers' Donna Gardner.

For anyone interested in joining the Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers or just looking for additional information, you can visit the website: www.blueridgemountainjeepers.com. The group also meets the second Tuesday night of each month at Steve's (The Cookie Jar). Supper is at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The Jeepers go on a variety of trail rides from easy forest roads to the challenging Beasley O.H.V. park. Participation in all events is voluntary; we are informally organized as a non-dues-paying group with no officers. Besides trail rides we get together for picnics, parties, to go out to eat, practice target-shooting, and visit points of interest in the tri-state area.

The food pantry is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The only requirement is that you are a resident of Union County. However, the pantry will happily take donations from anyone, regardless of your address.