

Bear...from Page 1A

female bear protecting cubs that were somewhere nearby.

That's when Cooper, who had escaped the bear's grasp when Voorhees arrived to help, came back into the fray. Cooper's return caused the bear to turn again, and Voorhees got up. He yelled again for Cooper to run and Cooper took off. The bear then ran over the hill and out of sight.

"By the grace of God, the bear went after the dog," Voorhees said.

The Aftermath

The marks where the bear bit and clawed Voorhees' legs are still healing from the Nov. 20 encounter. He was bleeding heavily afterwards, but said he wasn't seriously hurt. A Union General Hospital report provided by Voorhees reads: "Single superficial animal bite to the right thigh and left thigh (BEAR. R(igh)t thigh superficial abrasion; l(ef)t thigh two puncture bite wounds)." An X-ray turned up negative.

Cooper had two small cuts, but nothing else.

"It could have been a lot worse for both of us," Voorhees said.

The hospital contacted DNR as a matter of protocol, which in turn contacted Voorhees to follow up on what happened and to see how he and Cooper were doing.

DNR Regional Supervisor Scott Bardenwerper, himself a native of Blairsville in the area of Owtown, works out of the Northeast Region II Office in Gainesville. He said last month

that Voorhees and Cooper went through the proper tests to make sure they hadn't contracted anything from the bear before being cleared.

Bardenwerper said that physical encounters between humans and black bears in Georgia are very rare, especially during fall and winter, when the bears tend to be less active.

What happened between Voorhees and the bear, Bardenwerper said, was not an attack, but simply an unfortunate and dangerous encounter.

"It was most likely a sow protecting her cubs, not a bear attack," Bardenwerper said, adding that there has never been a documented bear attack in Georgia's history.

Bardenwerper said he always recommends that people stay far away from black bears when they see them in the wild but understood why Voorhees did what he did. The DNR also advises that people put away bird feeders between March and November and make sure that all food scraps, garbage and pet food are secured.

"We want to make sure the bears stay wild," Bardenwerper said.

For his part, Voorhees is not holding any grudges and has no desire to see the bear euthanized.

Following the encounter, DNR set a trap near his home in an effort to relocate the bear. The trap stayed there for weeks before Voorhees asked for it to be removed last month without catching the bear, partly because it was becoming an eyesore and because DNR officials said it was unlikely the bear

would return after the encounter, especially during the winter.

Bears had been spotted before in Voorhees' neighborhood, and Bardenwerper said there is currently a healthy population of black bears in Georgia, which inevitably leads to interactions between the animals and humans.

A story to tell

Cooper lived a good life before, but now he is treated like a king.

"Cooper gets whatever he wants," Voorhees said laughing.

As for Voorhees, who moved to Blairsville from Orlando, Florida, there are some things he wishes he would have done differently, but he doesn't regret going after the bear to save his dog.

"I wasn't scared at the time. Your emotions just take over. I was just trying to save the dog," Voorhees said. "I wasn't thinking, 'Hey, this is a stupid thing to be doing.' I just did it. But I sit back now and I say, 'What the hell was I thinking?'"

Months after the encounter, his wife Lori is just happy that her husband and dog are safe, while Voorhees still thinks about that November night nearly every day.

"There is a large part of me that realizes just how lucky I am," Voorhees said. "It quickly puts things into perspective. I have got nothing to complain about."

For the do's and don'ts of living with bears, be sure to check out www.BearWise.org.

American Cancer Society Relay For Life Kick Off #25



According to Union County Relay For Life Event Leadership Team member Allyson McGraw, the 25th Annual American Cancer Society's Global Signature Fund-raiser and Awareness Campaign will kick off with teams, sponsors, and cancer survivors at a special supper with fellowship, fun, and memories at 6 p.m. in the fellowship hall of the Mountain Presbyterian Church on the Young Harris Highway on Thursday, January 17th.

"If you have been touched by cancer in any way you have a special open invitation to participate with our community in our fight to end all cancers and to lessen the burden of cancers in our communities here in Northeast Georgia, Western North Carolina, and Eastern Tennessee," stated Mrs. McGraw. "Our Relay For Life teams have joined together for 25 years to bring HOPE for a cure, HOPE for research advances, HOPE for fewer deaths by cancer, HOPE for our survivors, HOPE for fewer rides to treatments, fewer needs for wigs, for surgeries, for drugs, for radiation, and many other burdens caused by cancer," stated McGraw.

The most special activity of our annual Relay For Life events in Union County has been our twilight Luminary Candle Ceremony that takes place at 9 p.m. Others in our community may remember our days and nights spent at the Union County High School Mike Colwell Stadium. Many may also remember the various weather-related challenges our volunteers face each year. Volunteers have some weather stories that involve heat, cold, rain, sun, winds, thunder/lightning, and some may remember snow interfering with neighboring Towns County Relay For Life event. And some may remember the tears shed as they walked the track in the wee hours waiting for the sunrise to again bring hope.

Some teams remember the struggles making scones for donations when the temperature was over 95. Some may remember trying to sleep on cots when the temp approached 35. Some may remember the survivors who checked out of the hospital so they could make their lap around the track during the opening ceremony. Others may remember our grand



The Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter of Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is comprised of services who've served our country as Commissioned Officers in the military or U.S. Public Health Service. Members may be active, inactive, reserve or retired.

The local chapter serves both Western North Carolina and North Georgia and meets on the third Wednesday of each month at different locations in our area.

For information on membership enrollment in the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter, call Joff Filion at (386) 530-0904 or email joff27@aol.com and visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.

November Union County Elementary Students of the Month



(L-R) front: Corbin Combs, Savetis Hobby, Addison Hughes, Chase Varrone, Colton Seabolt, Leighton Hunter, Lanton Boyts, Brooklyn Heritage, Gabby Perez; middle: Gunner Franklin, Charlie Wilson, Clara Atkins, Charlotte Peters, Allison Young, Harmony Arrowood, Easton Shumaker, Khloey Davis, Chaze Long, John Pawloski, Eli Cole White; back: Jaden Munn, Avery Freshette, Lacey Newton, Matthew Ortiz, Sara Peterson, Cade Dockrey, Dixie Henson, Kylie Kaser, Lila Holland, Avery Hussion, Darrell Cothren; not pictured: Amber Sims, Jahnya Wood

Senators Isakson, Perdue applaud Senate Confirmation of Yeager as U.S. Marshal

ATLANTA, GA – U.S. Senators Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and David Perdue (R-GA) applauded the Senate confirmation of Michael C. Yeager of Moreland, GA as U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Georgia on Wednesday.

"Sheriff Yeager has decades of experience in many facets of law enforcement, and his wisdom and expertise in the field will serve him well as U.S. Marshal," said Senator Isakson. "The Senate has made a wise decision, and I congratulate Sheriff Yeager on his new role and thank him for his service."

"Georgia is home to some of the most impressive law enforcement officers in the nation," said Senator Perdue. "President Trump made an excellent choice in selecting Sheriff Michael Yeager for U.S. Marshal. Congratulations to Sheriff Yeager on his confirmation. I know he will con-



Michael C. Yeager

tinue to serve Georgia and the nation well."

Yeager has served as the sheriff of Coweta County, GA since his election to the position in 1993. He has nearly four decades of law enforcement experience, beginning as a patrolman with the Newnan Police Department in 1980.

Yeager is the current chairman of the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council, serves on the Board of the Georgia Department of Community Supervision and serves as a member of the state's Immigration Enforcement Review Board. He is an active member and past president of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association and a past president of the Georgia Sheriffs' Youth Homes. Yeager currently serves as president of the Constitutional Officers Association of Georgia, which includes all current sheriffs, probate judges, tax commissioners and superior/state court clerks of Georgia. In 2006, Yeager received both the Georgia Sheriff of the Year Award and the Governor's Public Safety Award for Outstanding Contribution to Profession.

Yeager was nominated by President Trump on June 7, 2018.

Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center Employee Recognition for Exemplary Service

On November 10 Georgia Mountain REC recognized one employee for exemplary service. Clare Johnston is this year's recipient of the Dobson-McDowall-Mays Award. This award both honors the past leadership that led to the formation of the Community Council and acknowledges the qualities in our dedicated employees. Mrs. Johnston serves as Research Assistant II and among her regular duties on campus she provides support for the educational, outreach, and preservation programs. Her manner, and attention to detail made her stand out amongst her peers and the Council.

Jim Dobson, Sonny McDowall, and John Mays are the honorees of this award and were instrumental in the creation of the Community Council. Today the Council continues to work closely with GMREC, supporting its mission and providing educational opportunities to adults and children. Last year over 4000 children received standards-based enrichment through several programs in K-6. The Council also maintains a public ethno-botanical garden that highlights the uses and benefits of native plants. "The great people on the Council and the numerous volunteers



Superintendent Ray Covington and Research Assistant II Clare Johnston

work closely with those of us at UGA to promote agriculture. Great team members like Mrs. Johnston ensure the success of these programs," said Covington.

The "Experiment Station" and the Community Council would like to thank previous Superintendent Joseph Garner and the families of Dobson, McDowall, and Mays for their continued support.

Georgia Mountain REC is a part of the University of Georgia system supporting agriculture related research for over 86 years. Specialists evaluate best management practices and new varieties of forages, ornamentals, and fruit here where discoveries are shared with the public in publications and/or UGA Extension. Look for notices in the newspaper for public tours of research areas in the spring and fall.