

Band of Steel...from Page 1A

with proceeds from the show benefiting the Band of Steel.

The View Grill catered a savory dinner of salad and pasta, after which people gained access to a scrumptious desserts bar to pick up tiramisu or cheesecake courtesy of Melissa Roberts of Melissa's Custom Cakes.

Doug Roberts, Melissa's husband and Woody Gap band director, led students in a steelpan lineup that featured classic rock hits like Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" and Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl." And the fun continued from there.

Roberts said he didn't want to limit the selections to one genre, and indeed, the band branched out to covering country, classical music, disco and, of course, reggae.

Soloists performed catchy ditties and emotional tunes alike, including Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World."

One of the most popular songs that evening came in the band's "slow dance" lineup, with Patsy Cline's "Crazy," which got young children up and dancing along with two bold slow-dancing couples who embraced as they swayed.

During more energetic songs like Walter Murphy's "A Fifth of Beethoven," steel drum musicians ranging in age from middle to high school enjoyed themselves by showing off tricks like spinning around between beats and dancing.

The students donned lei garlands in different colors and floral jackets, channeling a cool West Indian vibe, and one young gentleman even sported a pair of sunglasses.

To keep guests entertained between songs, Roberts called out musical trivia, asking for the audience to respond with band names, songs, or both.

The band director also offered fun facts, for example,



Without a doubt, the Band of Steel is the most unique musical act in the North Georgia Mountains, and the students of Woody Gap certainly know how to have fun with it.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

that the title of Led Zeppelin's attempt at reggae, "D'yer Mak'er"—pronounced "Jamaica"—stemmed from a joke and is often mispronounced.

Before the solo performance of the song, Roberts explained the joke and its homophonous connection to the island nation in the Caribbean Sea: "One person says to another, 'My wife went down to the Caribbean.' The other asks, 'D'ya make 'er?'"

The ambience was set just right with Mardi Gras decorations of purple, green and gold on the numbered tables, and although there was no tropical breeze or beach sunset below the patio, the mountain's clear night air was more than welcome from the open doors.

Something of note that Roberts mentioned between songs is that the Woody Gap Band of Steel owns the last set of pans created by Elliott Anthony Mannelle.

Mannelle, a Trinidadian metalworker-turned-musician, was the innovator of steel drum music in the 1960s. He passed away on Aug. 29, 2018, in West Virginia, aged 90.

"On the eve before he

went into the hospital, he finished building our pan. We'd been on the waitlist for two years, but it just so happens we own the last piece of history the master made," Roberts explained, pointing to the massive rig.

Perhaps Mannelle was there that night in spirit to grant his approval, because the concert was a total success.

Community involvement was seen everywhere, with near-total participation in the 50/50 raffle, wherein the winner takes home half of the earnings while the organization keeps the other half, and cheers and wild applause came after every performance—not to mention all the fun the dancers had.

Before packing up, Roberts brought attention to the Band of Steel's upcoming May 14 concert at the Union County Performing Arts Theatre.

Unlike the broader genres of Saturday night's show, the aptly named "Pan Rocks Concert" in May will exclusively feature rock music. Playing right alongside the band will be world-famous steel pan player Tracy Thornton as well as other nationally renowned musicians.

Gun Club Meeting...from Page 1A



The Sports Center proved to be an excellent venue to accommodate the more than 300 attendees of the March 3 Gun Club annual meeting.

Photo by Mark Smith

Forest Service land.

Add to that pandemic delays, a dynamic funding process, skyrocketing construction costs and supply chain issues, and it all combines to form a recipe for frustration on the part of Gun Club members, many of whom have been faithfully paying dues since the club's inception in July '17.

But at long last, as America begins to level out after the bumpy ride of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gun Club is finally at the point where the construction of a modern target range is in sight.

The target range will be 90% funded through a Georgia Department of Natural Resources grant consisting of passthrough federal monies authorized by the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act, which is based on excise taxes collected through sales of firearms, archery equipment and ammunition.

It is in this way that hunters and other firearms enthusiasts pay their own way for the construction of target range facilities.

In May 2020, President Donald Trump signed the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act into law, amending the Pittman-Robertson Act to allow states five years instead of two to generate matching funds, and reducing the local match requirement from 25% to 10%.

This is a huge benefit to Union County residents and taxpayers, who will save big time due to the updated funding model.

"We now feel the (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program should be able to process and approve the project grant amendment (increasing funding to 90%) in (four weeks or less)," Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said in the meeting.

"In the meantime, we will be waiting on the new updated intergovernmental agreement from (Assistant Chief of Game Management) Walter Lane of DNR. Once we have that document and the new grant award letter, my office is ready to put the project back out to bid.

"The timeline for that looks like mid-April at the latest, and hopefully (we will) begin construction soon thereafter."

The first bid process was derailed for a couple of reasons, including the pandemic delay, and the fact that construction materials and fuel costs rose significantly between the time of the original construction estimate and receipt of the single bid last year.

So, it was back to the drawing board, but Gun Club President Paul Clark said that this time around the county will be proactively seeking out bidders rather than simply waiting for responses after publishing the request for proposals in the legal organ.

Lane will be including a new cost estimate of \$3.4 million in the updated intergovernmental agreement, which, with a 10% local match, should leave the county on the hook for just \$340,000 in construction costs if no other funding sources come in—well under the \$600,000 originally budgeted for the project.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason is the unofficial spokesperson and political

liaison for the club, and he spoke at length in the meeting, reiterating why the county needs a target range and praising everyone who has "stuck to their guns" throughout this long, drawn-out process.

To name just a few reasons, resident firearms owners need a safe place to be able to target shoot; there needs to be a safe place to train people who want to learn to shoot; the Sheriff's Office needs a qualification range; and, hopefully, fewer people will "go out into the woods" and discharge firearms indiscriminately.

Mason also announced that, once again, the Sheriff's Office will be holding a Concealed Carry Class this summer, to last about an hour and a half. The popular class will take place sometime after July 1 to account for any updates in state laws made during the current legislative session.

This class is vitally important because it will instruct people when deadly force is called for and when it is not, and that, said Mason, can keep someone from doing something illegal and going to prison for the rest of their life.

For more information on the Concealed Carry Class, call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

Top Gun Firearms, which opened its doors in 2021 in Blairsville, donated a Radical Firearms AR-15 rifle that was raffled off at the close of the meeting.

WEC Celebration...from Page 1A

Appalachian Area Crisis Pregnancy Center, Inc. opened its doors to women trying to navigate a crisis pregnancy, to include pregnant teens, single mothers, women in poverty and victims of assault.

The center provided a safe haven for women in need, helping them to secure material goods such as diapers, clothing and formula, along with counseling, birthing classes and even medical services like ultrasounds.

In time, the center came to be known as the Woman's Enrichment Center, and later, in an effort to involve young fathers, the organization embraced the name WEC Family Resources, embodying a ministry of the Appalachian Area Crisis Pregnancy Center, Inc.

Over the past couple of years, the center started referring clients to Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center for ultrasounds, pregnancy tests and prenatal vitamins, as WEC is a resource organization and non-medical, and center staff members help women find OBGYNs.

Additionally, the center has grown over time to provide marriage counseling and

birthing classes to help couples stay together and deepen their familial commitments with life skill courses.

WEC Family Resources' considerable repository of baby goods has also broadened the organization's horizons, with car seats, cribs and other costly items earnable via "points" clients collect by watching educational videos, taking birthing classes, or regularly visiting advocates.

Importantly, WEC is a ministry. Guided by Jesus' love and mercy, employees and volunteers introduce and foster faith to help relationships grow, whether the bond happens to be between romantic partners or parent and child.

Becky Dyer, longtime client advocate and WEC director, summed up the center's mission in the banquet:

"The importance is sharing the love of God and the love for people without judgment," Dyer said. "We're there to help clients earn the things they stand in need of to take care of their lives, to improve their lives, to enhance them, and share with them to the point that they can be out on their own and be successful.

And success comes in many, many ways."

Joining Dyer for the 30th anniversary celebration was WEC Board Chair James Bradley, Pastor Bill Schakat, WEC staff and supporters, as well as former clients.

The atmosphere was suitably welcoming, and with food graciously provided by Amazing Grace Catering, the dinner gave folks an opportunity to meet in fellowship and talk about all the accomplishments and changes the center has seen in 30 years.

Time was taken to appreciate prominent figures in WEC's lengthy history, present in person and in spirit. Many of them had their photos shared on a projector screen, with captions detailing titles and accomplishments.

Of particular note was the special recognition for Peggy Meredith, who unfortunately passed away on Feb. 20, the Sunday before the banquet.

"Peggy was with the organization for 30 years," Bradley said. "(She) did everything from coaching clients to washing (donated items), and much, much more. She continued as a prayer

partner at home even after she had finished volunteering."

Multiple speakers shared the stage that night, along with a video explaining the Bright Course program WEC uses to educate clients.

"Bright Course has hundreds of classes on topics from pregnancy and parenting to life skills," according to wecfamilyresources.org. "Some specific classes address Fatherhood, Co-Parenting, Discipline and various circumstances such as Abortion, Anger Management, Debt, Domestic Violence, Pregnancy Loss and Healing from Abuse."

Also that evening, veteran volunteer Margie Winkler offered a poignant explanation on the importance of what she does for the center.

"When we go in, the first thing we do is have a devotion and a prayer time, and that has supported me," Winkler said. "I felt like I had the support of the people that work there, and you know, when we have something going on in our lives, they're there to talk to us and to support us and to pray with us, and that's just been a source of help for me over the 12 or 13 years that I've been there."

As to why she volunteers, Winkler read from Mark 12:29-31, saying that her "two main reasons" were explained in the verses.

"I love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength," she said. "He has walked (with) and sometimes carried me through this journey of life and has blessed me immensely."

"What more can I do but to give back by serving Him through a ministry like the Woman's Enrichment Center?"

Winkler also said she volunteers to show love for her neighbors, the clients who turn to the center for help in dire times. And three of her fellow speakers were such neighbors who bared their souls and shared their testimonies.

Although their full names were not shared for reasons of confidentiality, the three clients moved the audience and shed tears of their own while confessing their hardships and thanking those at WEC for giving them guidance when they could find it nowhere else.

Before leading the parting prayer that night, Dyer said the many challenges the organization has faced in 30 years have translated to growth and success thanks to the support of volunteers and the Lord Himself.

"The joy that we get is from being able to help - it's amazing," Dyer said. "But the one thing that we remember is this is God's ministry. He's kept it running for 30 years, not us. He just uses us where He wants us."

For more information and to gain access to the resources outlined above, visit <https://wecfamilyresources.org/>, call 706-745-7518 or stop by the center at 218 Jones Street in Blairsville.



Woman's Enrichment Center Director Becky Dyer is grateful for all the support WEC Family Resources has received over its 30-year history.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Vogel Visitor Center...from Page 1A

In 2018, Georgia voters passed the amendment with 83% support.

"This newly founded grant program will provide a dedicated funding mechanism to support parks and trails and protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water and outdoor recreation across the state of Georgia."

Only 15 of 44 eligible projects submitted from across the state were selected for the current program year, with the new Vogel Visitor Center Project being one of them.

Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Coordinator Soheila Naji said all 15 selectees will receive funding pending a fully completed second-level application, which must be finished by May 30.

The second-level application is a non-competitive, information/documentation gathering process on the respective projects, including, among other things, a detailed budget, project plans, implementation schedule, documentation for

environmental reviews, and maps.

DNR Travel Marketing Professional and Public Affairs Coordinator Kim Hatcher said a start date and timeline for the Visitor Center project will be available once the second-level application process is complete.

The new multimillion-dollar Visitor Center will most likely be located directly across the road from the existing center, right on Lake Trahlyta. The existing historic, 1930s-era Visitor Center building will be converted into a Civilian Conservation Corps Museum.

In other news, Vogel State Park Manager Jack Becker said a total campground renovation project got underway on Feb. 15.

"We're renovating the entire campground in three phases," said Becker, adding that each phase will run about three to four months. "About two thirds of the campground is going to be full hookup. That means they're going to have sewer, power and water. Sites one through 65 are going to be

50 amp, so 100-amp total: a 50, a 30, and a 20 amp.

"They're going to replace all the water hydrants and all the power boxes. They're getting new picnic tables, new grills, new fire rings. The timbers that need to be replaced are being replaced, and they're getting new gravel. It's a big project."

Assistant Park Manager Emmanuel Stewart said that the layout for some of the campsites is getting changed "to make it easier for guests to figure out."

"Currently, it's a little antiquated and a little confusing, so a lot of that is going to get streamlined and a lot neater," Stewart said, noting that they are making the renovation as eco-friendly as can be to keep as much of the nature and habitat undisturbed as possible.

"We're also putting Wi-Fi in the campground as well," Stewart said.

The campground renovations and new Visitor Center are separate projects, however, both are being funded using Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grants.

Qualifying...from Page 1A

District 2. The Union County electorate will get a chance to vote on two federal-level offices as well: U.S. Representative from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia and a U.S. Senate seat.

April 5 will be the earliest day to register to mail an absentee ballot for the elections in May, and April 25 will be the last day to register to vote in the General Primary/

Nonpartisan Election.

Also May 24, Union County voters will be asked to support or reject the continuation of the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, a 1-cent sales and use tax to be levied on purchases of local goods in support of the Union County School System.

ESPLÖST is used by schools for the purposes of building new facilities, renovating existing facilities,

upgrading HVAC systems, adding to aging bus fleets, updating technology and more.

Should voters approve the measure, the local sales tax will continue at its current 7% rate.

The 2022 General Election will be held on Nov. 8 and will feature the election of political party candidates who clear the primary round of voting.

Super Chef Showdown to benefit Hope House March 12

After a pause last year due to covid precautions, the Super Chef Showdown benefiting Hope House of Union County will be held Saturday, March 12, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Blairsville.

Chefs from some 16 local organizations will compete for the coveted People's Choice award recognizing the event's favorite food. Four local chefs will judge their efforts and name the winner of the Chef's Choice Award: Kevin Sharpe of the Bean Pod Shoppe in Blairsville; Adam Daniel of Young Harris Wing House; James Grubbs of Blairsville, who appeared in the first season of Netflix's American Barbecue Showdown; and Andy Comer of Hayesville, who will be opening a new restaurant in Blairsville soon.

Previously announced celebrity chef Noah Sims of Fannin County, the fourth-place finisher in season 10 of Fox Network's Masterchef in 2019, will instead be cooking for Ukrainian refugees at the Polish border. Sims told Hope House personnel last Friday that he "prayed about what I need to do and was answered," offering his apologies for missing this Saturday's event.

Super Chef Showdown is a tasting event featuring specialty dishes created and cooked by local residents. Competing for the People's Choice Award, based on the most money earned from Showdown participants who vote with their dollars, will be chefs representing: All Saints Lutheran Church, Appalachian Shrine Club, Blairsville Police Department, Faith-Based In-



formation Sharing and Analysis Organization, First United Methodist Church, Full Throttle Ministries, God's Club, Goodies from the Heart, Larry Queen, Melaleuca The Wellness Company, New Union Baptist Church, Positive Pathways, Union County Sheriff's Department, Union General Hospital Rehabilitation Department, Women's Enrichment Center, and Valor Clinic.

Also this year, a Hope House Community Hero will be recognized, honoring the individual or business who has raised the most money for the 2022 Showdown.

A new Showdown feature will be children's activities, including games, crafts, and face painting. Live music will be presented by South Wind, a Woodstock, GA, band. A silent auction of products and art donated and crafted by local businesses and artisans will run throughout the event.

Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children ages 6-10; children ages 5 and under will be admitted free of charge. Tickets may be purchased at the door, and all ticket holders will be eligible to compete in

door-prize drawings; winners must be present to claim their prize. Doors will open at 11:30 a.m., and tasting and voting for favorite dishes ends at 1 p.m., with prizes awarded before the event concludes at 1:30.

Celebrating its tenth anniversary, Hope House is a faith-based organization that provides assistance with the basic necessities of life to Union County residents, transients, and homeless population who are in critical need.

Hope House is funded by donations from member churches, businesses, and individuals as well as fundraisers, the largest of which is the Super Chef Showdown. The 2022 Showdown is being sponsored by the following local businesses: Bean Pod Shoppe, Brainstorm Creative Products, Coosa Creek Marketing Products, GeekTek, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Dr. Gerald Griggs, Hillcrest Clinic and Imaging, Jackson Insurance Agency, Jim's Smokin Que, Lamin-X Protective Films, Mountain Top Furniture, Northern Financial Services, Pinnacle Bank, The Sawmill Place, United Community Bank, and Wynne Works Insurance.

Local Al-Anon meetings



Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups (for friends and family) meet every Tuesday at 12 noon at Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, 1114 Main Street, Room 105, Young Harris, GA. For details call 404-687-0467 or visit aa.org NT(Mar 9, 21)CA

Wade Smith...from Page 1A



Smith earned many medals and awards over the course of his highly decorated military career, including but not limited to the Purple Heart, Legion of Merit, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal and the Bronze Star.



Wade Smith as a second lieutenant at the Infantry Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia, 1961.

The Smith Family were sharecroppers during those years and eventually moved just outside of Young Harris to get into a more lucrative sharecropping position.

Financial situations began improving for others, too, when the U.S. Government suddenly required the efforts of all Americans during World War II, which translated to paying work coming to Southern Appalachia.

Up to this point, a young Smith had been applying the industriousness and values gained from his mountain home life to his personal pursuits, learning early on that the best way to improve his circumstances and, by extension, those of his family, was to seriously pursue education.

Smith attended school through the eighth grade prior to joining the military and credits his principal, a veteran named Mr. Crawford who lost his leg in Germany, with instilling in him both a desire to learn and a deep sense of patriotic duty.

For Crawford, it was a privilege to serve, and he made sure to impart to his students "that everybody should serve in the military." Crawford took a special interest in Smith, putting him on a path to seeking the "bigger and better world out there" available through education.

He stopped going to school after eighth grade because he became old enough to work full time for the family, but as soon as he was of military age, which was 17, Smith enlisted – a decision all his brothers made over time, though three of the seven who tried to serve were ultimately unable to qualify. Additionally, his dad attempted to join the military but was not permitted to do so due to too large a family.

Once a duly sworn member of the United States Armed Forces, Smith hit the ground running with his education and never looked back, taking courses throughout his military career and earning multiple college graduate degrees in the process.

IN THE ARMY

From the time he was about 10 years old, Smith knew he was going to, No. 1, serve in the military, and No. 2, "get a good education and serve education." And he held true to those goals, teaching for half his 30 years in the military before going on to a second career in public education.

"I was listening to Mr. Crawford again: 'If you get an education, you can do well in this world,'" Smith said. "He was my living model on education, and of course, mom pushed education all the time – reading the Bible and memorizing poems.

"As soon as I got out of Basic Training and was assigned to Europe, I started taking courses, because Mr. Crawford told me that's what I should do. He said, 'The military gave me this education, and you, too, can get an education in the military.'" And Smith advises all youth that they can

get an excellent education in the military also and a good start in life.

Smith enlisted in the U.S. Army on Feb. 1, 1951, at a recruiting office in Franklin, North Carolina. Because he was only 17, his mother had to sign for him, and afterward, he made his way by train to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

He underwent 12 weeks in Basic Training, where he served as both a squad leader and platoon sergeant. As he would do in various training posts for the rest of his military career, Smith finished top of his class.

Following basic, the Army sent him to Germany for two years, where Smith formed a private drill team that earned the honor of performing a six-minute silent drill for Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower before the famous military leader returned to the U.S. to become president.

While in Europe, Smith was one of six in 3,500 soldiers attached to his regiment to earn an Expert Infantry Badge, which came with additional pay that came in handy when he would send money home to his family.

Next, Smith requested to go to Korea during the Korean War, transferring as a corporal in 1953. In fact, he was fortunate and ambitious enough during his 29-plus years in the military to have been able to request every assignment he ended up taking.

As to why he decided to volunteer for service in a combat zone, Smith said he was inspired by the many combat veterans who returned home following World War II and saw it as a way to advance in the military.

Things were "winding down" when Smith arrived, so he did not see any "hazardous, disastrous conditions in Korea at that time," though during his roughly year tour there, he did get to take part in the stabilization of the 38th Parallel separating North and South Korea.

He would return for another tour in Korea years later to command the U.S. Contingent of the United Nations Honor Guard before going on to lead Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Armor Regiment at the border.

But when he initially left Korea in '54, Smith traveled to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to serve briefly as a drill sergeant. It was around this time that Smith met his wife Pat in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and the two wedded in 1955.

After marrying the love of his life, Smith journeyed to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to earn his "wings" with the elite 82nd Airborne Division in '55, an assignment that earned him an extra \$55 a month.

Smith acquired a particular ethic of toughness in the 82nd Airborne. He had learned essentially the same message back home, that "you can do anything in the world – just get out there and go at it," and he promotes this attitude in others to this day.

He spent more than a decade with the 82nd Airborne, becoming involved in efforts to expel communists from the Dominican Republic and serving as both a noncommissioned officer and later as a commissioned officer helping to form a new Cavalry Unit in the 82nd.

Separating his time with the 82nd Airborne was Officer Candidate School from 1959-60. He was encouraged to attend OCS by one of his commanding officers, Wilbur Teal, and he went on to graduate as a Second Lieutenant at the top of his class.

Smith had actually been commissioned as an armor officer, a position that typically deals with tanks and helicopters, but thanks to his outstanding

performance in OCS, he was immediately assigned as an instructor at the Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia.

It was a homecoming of sorts for Smith, who had served previously at the Infantry School as a senior noncommissioned officer, and he was well received by a grateful military that understood Smith's gifts for educating others.

He then went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for tank training at Armor School in 1962, and subsequently to Korea in 1963 for his second tour there, as mentioned above, where he commanded B. Company, 1st Battalion, 40th Armor unit on the border.

Smith returned to Fort Benning in 1964 to complete the Infantry Officer Career Course, becoming an honor graduate in the process, and in 1965, the Army sent him to Fort Bragg to assist in forming the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, which was the first cavalry unit ever assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division.

His tasks were to handle personnel and command the Headquarters Troop of the Squadron. Within months, Smith was reassigned to the Division Headquarters to command the Division Headquarters Company.

Later in 1965, the Division Commanding General relied on Smith to organize and move the Division Headquarters Company to the Dominican Republic when the communists attempted to take over that beautiful little nation. There, he retained command of the company as well as retaining command and supervision of the Division Headquarters personnel, which were left at Fort Bragg.

In 1967, he attended Jungle Warfare School in Panama, where he graduated at the top of his class once again in preparation for a tour in Vietnam from 1967-68.

Smith was part of the second element inside Vietnam in the ramp-up to full engagement, and right away, he was selected to serve with the elite 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment running retrieval missions.

Highlights of his first six months in Vietnam included leading combat missions to assist the Marines at Chu Lai, as well as never having left a "memorial" in the field, that is, a tank or some other piece of equipment that the North Vietnamese could use either militarily or as propaganda.

Deployed to Vietnam at the same time as Smith were his brothers Lester Neville and Grover Jr. It was unusual for multiple family members to be simultaneously serving in combat, but thankfully, all three brothers survived their tours. Smith also served briefly with his brother Paul in Korea.

Smith was promoted from captain to major halfway through his yearlong tour of duty in Vietnam, and the Army moved him to 11th Armored Cav Headquarters, where he worked as a Special Intelligence officer until leaving the country in 1968.

He spent the next two years in Fort Meade, Maryland, at First Army Headquarters managing units and posts for 15 Northeast states. It was there, in 1970, that the Army selected him for a special briefing on its intention to conduct a branch-wide update of educational processes.

From 1970 to '71, Smith attended Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to learn how to run divisions and staff positions.

While in Kansas, he earned a bachelor's degree in educational administration from Benedictine College, graduating from there in 1972. Smith would later go on to earn advanced degrees in education



Then-2nd Lt. Smith, left, in 1961, teaching infantry soldiers the trajectory of multiple rounds being fired from a machine gun.

from Georgia State University, North Georgia University and the University of Georgia, with doctoral studies at NOVA University.

Between 1972 and 1975, Smith traveled back to Fort Benning to serve on the Combat Arms Training Board. The aim of this newly formed board was to reform and upgrade the educational process of the entire U.S. Army.

Smith was one of 41 hand-picked service members tasked with the important job and was assigned as the director of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command for a newly formed simulative systems unit.

He had enjoyed multiple leadership positions training troops to that point, including successfully experimenting with individualized, self-paced learning that would later become the cornerstone of Mountain Education Center, but this experience was on a different level.

His specialty was in realistic computerized simulations, and Smith helped to develop training programs, like arcade games, that effectively taught soldiers how to, for example, execute tank maneuvers and conduct other combat operations without having to set foot in a tank.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other schools and organizations became involved in Smith's program, and not only was the military saving money using simulations to train troops, but it was also starting to catch up educationally with civilian institutions of higher learning.

After developing the program, Smith transferred to Europe from '75-'78 to implement the training for squadron command units there. This assignment linked the educational process between service schools, research units

DAV Van transport to VAMC Atlanta

The DAV Van, sponsored by DAV Chapter 28, Blue Ridge, started one day a week transportation to the VAMC Atlanta every Tuesday. If you need a ride call John at 706-851-5204 to make a reservation. The van meets each Tuesday at the Veterans Conference Center in Blue Ridge.

and the field commanders and their staff.

As he did basically his whole career, he served in other key positions during this time as a "fixer" of sorts for the Army to create a more fluid and comprehensive educational process for commanders and staff.

In 1978, Smith took over as Professor of Military Science at the University of Kentucky Instructor Group. This group was part of the Army's Second Reserve Officers' Training Corps Region in the Training and Doctrine Command, and Smith's job was to oversee the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at UK.

While there, he designed and started an ROTC program for nearby Kentucky State University, all the while pursuing his passion for furthering his own education with college classes in the military, which would serve him well in his second career after he left the Army in 1980.

During his busy military career, the Smiths had three children: Michael, Wade Jr. and Lynn. The retired lieutenant colonel gives abundant credit to Pat, his loving wife of more than 66 years, for raising their children as he served in various places around the world.

Smith earned a slew of ribbons and medals in recognition for his service in the Army, including the Bronze Star for actions in combat. The Bronze Star is the fourth highest medal awarded by the United States Armed Forces for service in a combat zone.

He received a Purple Heart for being wounded in combat when his helicopter got

shot down in Vietnam, resulting in a face full of shrapnel, an AK-47 bullet in the neck, and a week or so in the hospital before he received the opportunity to go home, though he decided to return to his unit.

Additionally, in recognition for his outstanding service during his two-year stint at the University of Kentucky, Smith received the Legion of Merit, which is the highest medal awarded during peacetime.

His 29 years of service to his country featured many other assignments – back to Germany, for instance, in '57, where he ran the 8th Division Noncommissioned Officer Academy – in which the Army sent him to solve problems at various command posts.

Around the time he decided to retire to embark upon a new path, however, the Army made its intentions known that it was not done with Smith, having selected him to lead a major unit after the University of Kentucky assignment.

But by Christmas '79, he had convinced the military it was time he answered another calling – he was wanted back home to serve the educational needs of the children of this area. So, Smith officially retired from the Army in January of 1980 and returned to his beloved North Georgia Mountains.

For the second half of this feature article on Wade C. Smith Sr. that covers his creation of the Mountain Education Center and extensive service as a Freemason, be sure to pick up a copy of next week's edition of the North Georgia News.



Meet Me at The Market

Mickey Cummings & Kristy Peney

The Union County Farmers Market is now accepting Prospective Vendor Applications for the 2022 season. We do not anticipate many openings for new vendors this year.

Potential vendors can obtain a Prospective Vendor Application by visiting our website at ucfarmersmarket.com. That Prospective Vendor Application should be completed and submitted by March 18, 2022. Accepted vendors will then be invited to complete a full application. Also, please make sure to read all Farmers Market Policies.