

Quilts of Valor ...from Page 1A

in the community and honor veterans to let them know that people are thankful for their dedication and service.

"There are quilters within the whole five-county area around us and in North Carolina that are part of our group," Young said of the Misty Mountain Guild. "We know that our debt to veterans and members of the armed

forces couldn't be repaid, but we thought that the things we could do with Quilts of Valor would help a little bit and help the community know about how patriotic we are."

Quilts of Valor is a national organization that began in 2003 when founder Catherine Roberts, inspired by a dream, presented the first quilt to a young soldier who was hospitalized at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Since that first quilt, the initiative has grown to all 50 states and even overseas, as groups of quilters around the country work to honor veterans for their sacrifices.

"The Quilts of Valor Foundation has awarded 269,505 quilts for veterans," Young said. "Sometimes we send them overseas when there is a conflict going on. Sometimes we send them to local veteran hospitals, but mostly we award the quilts in our group to our local veterans."

Saturday's ceremony consisted of quilts awarded to Russell Williams and John "Jack" Foley of Blairsville, Arthur West of Murphy, North Carolina, and a fourth veteran who asked to remain anonymous.

Russell Williams was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Regular Army at Fort Bragg after graduating from college and ROTC summer camp. He was assigned directly to the 82nd Airborne Division to await orders to Fort Benning for IOBC Jump - Ranger training and later received helicopter training as well.

He served from 1963-68, having spent time in Korea, then in Vietnam, where he was wounded in combat. For his service, Williams received several awards, including the Purple Heart, Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters, Vietnam Service Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

Williams is honored to be a Quilt of Valor recipient, and as a Vietnam Veteran who served as a rotary wing pilot in country, he is thankful to the quilters for the presentation.

"Most of us came home and were forgotten," Williams said. "After 45 or 50 years, I ran into a group in Florida, the Purple Heart Association, and started many things and brought back a lot of memories. This is the only real honor or recognition that has been made, and I appreciate it, I really do."

After his military service, Williams worked for 18 years



Korean War Veteran and Marine John "Jack" Foley gratefully took possession of his patriotic Quilt of Valor Saturday.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

running manufacturing plants producing roof and floor trusses and prefabricated homes. He spent another 18 years on the road as a representative for woodworking machinery, traveling throughout the Southeast.

"With the economic downturn in 2008, he lost his job, so he bought a Hot Dog Cart and made a decent living in Fort Payne," Young said Saturday. "There he met Leslie and moved to Fort Oglethorpe, where he bought a flag and flagpole service company, and he says he enjoyed the heck out of that."

"Russ ... moved to Blairsville because of the mountains, small town living and access to the VA Clinic."

John "Jack" Foley, 90, joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1951 during the Korean War and served through 1954. He was part of I Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, First Marine Division.

He spent a year in Korea before serving in Quantico, Virginia, later transitioning to be "I and I" staff, or Inspector and Instructor, with the 54th Special Infantry in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Foley was discharged as a sergeant in July 1954.

"Jack married his wife Lorraine in April 1954 and they had five children," Young said. "They lived on Long Island until 1978 when they moved to Florida. And in 2016, Jack moved to Georgia with his daughter."

Arthur West served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961 through 1990, through

Vietnam and the Cold War. During his military career, West had overseas assignments in Vietnam, the Azores, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

He received many decorations and ribbons for his service, including a Distinguished Flying Cross, the Meritorious Service Medal, several Air Medals, the Vietnam Campaign Ribbon, the Vietnam Service Medal, and Chief Aircrew Wings.

West retired as a Chief Master Sergeant E9, after which he spent two years building a home for himself and wife Patricia. He worked for Ace Hardware for about 10 years and now volunteers his time for local organizations, including Meals on Wheels.

Additionally, he serves with other veterans on the American Legion/Veterans of Foreign Wars Honor Guard for military funerals for deceased veterans in Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina. He also manages and maintains the cemetery at his church.

The Air Force veteran and his wife Patty have been married 49 years and have two grandchildren, and they now live in Murphy.

"It is a great honor," West said of the occasion Saturday, "and the good thing about it is that it will let local communities know about us."

"Because of things like this, people get to hear about locals that were in the military, and it is important that we get all the information we can about our veterans out to the community."

Vaccine Clinic ...from Page 1A

Generally speaking, people may sign up for vaccinations outside of mass clinic hours at the Union County Health Department by visiting <http://phdistrict2.org> or calling 1-888-426-5073.

For Towns County, people will want to call the Health Department at 706-896-2265 to make an appointment for the Saturday, April 24, clinic running from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. People may also call the Health Department to make vaccine appointments generally.

Everyone ages 16 and up who wants a COVID-19 vaccine is now eligible to receive one, and supply availability for both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines has increased to the point where anyone who wants one should be able to find an appointment to receive it.

In addition to the Health Departments, many local pharmacies are administering the vaccine, and people need only call around to check availability and make an appointment.

Synergy Health of Hiwassee is still accepting new signups at ngvax.com, but due to improved vaccine availability in the community, this Friday will be the office's last mass clinic at Foster Park. Moving forward, Synergy's vaccination efforts will take place on a smaller scale.

Per the Georgia Department of Public Health Vaccine Distribution Dashboard, Union and Towns enjoyed the two highest vaccination rates in the state as of Sunday, April 11, with 25% of Union County residents and 28% of Towns County residents being fully vaccinated.

Also as of April 11, Union County had reported only 14 positive COVID tests in the last two weeks, to Towns County's 7 positive tests. And by press time, there had been no reported COVID deaths in Union since March 19, and none in Towns since March 17.



On April 7, the county and Health Department hosted a second-dose mass vaccine clinic at the Sports Center that included more than 500 Pfizer-BioNTech shots administered from these vials.

Photo by Kaitlyn Odom

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH 2016

BUILDING COMMUNITY. BUILDING HOPE.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

A proclamation was signed into law by Governor Nathan Deal on March 1, 2016. It is a time to remember that we all play a part in preventing child maltreatment.

Community involvement is key to raising awareness that child abuse and neglect are both widespread and too often invisible.

A safe stable, and nurturing environment can have a proven positive effect on brain development. Research shows that children who suffer from prolonged stress of abuse and neglect tend to struggle in their behavior, physical and cognitive abilities.

In contrast, children experiencing support in early childhood can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress. This can provide lifelong benefits for their learning,

behavior and health.

Child abuse and neglect does not stem from just one cause and that is why stopping its destructive cycle is so difficult.

Communities with a high rate of violence, limited social services, poverty and unemployment are all factors. Addressing family needs with community support can make a lasting impact in a child's future. There are numerous websites to increase knowledge and provide resources and here are a few: Prevent Child Abuse Georgia: <http://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/pca-media-toolkit/>; CDC April Child Abuse Prevention Month: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyChildren/>; National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2016: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/prevention/preventionmonth/>