

Independence Day...from Page 1A

"If you don't get there before 7 p.m., you won't find a parking spot, because it's going to fill up in a hurry," said

Chamber President Steve Rowe. "I believe that Walmart cuts off their lights around 9:30 p.m., so some people could park there if they had to."

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Just up the road, the First United Methodist Church of Union County will be welcoming visitors beginning at 6:30 p.m. for a great view of the Meeks Park fireworks, with the FUMC Praise Band "Overflow" performing in the main tent.

Boy Scouts of America Troop 101 of Blairsville will be selling barbecue baskets at the church, and beverages will be available to purchase from the Youth Ministry.

The Sons of the American Revolution will be on hand to host a "Colonial Campsite and Trading Post" and help with the children's games.

And at 7:30 p.m., Girl Scouts of the USA Troop 11365 will lead a Flag Retirement Ceremony, with more praise music to follow until the grand finale at dusk.

Guests are invited to bring blankets, chairs and bug spray. Public restrooms will be open inside until 9:15 p.m.

SUCHES FIREWORKS

For another laid back, church picnic-type environment, people should look no further



The Meeks Park Fireworks Show attracts thousands of patriotic residents from all over the region, who take over the park, line up along Georgia 515, and fill up the North Georgia Technical College to get a good view of the action. Photo/Staff

than the Suches Fire Department at Station 5, the members of which invite everyone to their annual July Fourth Fireworks Show.

Held in the field behind Woody Gap School, where lightning bugs provide the backdrop and crickets serenade the festivities, the Valley Above the Clouds is an escape from the city lights, crowds and concrete of Blairsville.

The fun starts at 5:30 p.m. with hot dogs, hamburgers, soft drinks and more available at the concessions stand.

Plenty of music, games and good times are in store for those willing to make the drive to Suches for an event that radiates family-reunion vibes.

Those attending for the first time will leave awestruck after learning this event originated with just a few locals firing off bottle rockets at the General Store.

Parking is available at Woody Gap School and across

the street at the Community Center and Fire Department. Additional parking is available at the Suches Post Office, General Store or along Georgia 60.

VOGEL STATE PARK

For a family-friendly experience that takes place earlier on Independence Day, folks can visit Vogel State Park for its July Fourth Celebration.

"Celebrate July Fourth at one of the nation's oldest state parks," says Vogel. "We will start the day with a flag-raising ceremony at 8 a.m. at the Visitors Center, followed by a day of games for the whole family."

"There will be a bicycle parade, pedal boat races, sandcastle competition, watermelon eating contest, sack races, egg toss and greased pole climbing."

Parking at Vogel State Park is \$5, with festivities to run until 4 p.m.

For more information, call 706-745-2628.

LAKE NOTTELY BOAT PARADE

Last but not least of the patriotic festivities is the annual Nottely Marina Boat Parade on Saturday, July 6.

A Blairsville tradition started by marina founder Carleen Doucette and family, this event attracts boats and watercraft decorated to the gills in a variety of themes. From patriotic to just plain wild and wacky, the boat parade is certain to be a hit with people of all ages.

Beginning at 12 p.m. on Saturday, boats will make a lap through the cove that borders US 129 N as onlookers cheer for their favorites from the docks and the shore. Judging and awards will follow the parade.

For those interested in participating or visiting by water, the marina is located in the cove at Marker 10 on Lake Nottely. For everyone else, the marina is located up Murphy Highway on the left, approximately three miles north of Blairsville at 86 Doucette Circle.

Heritage Day...from Page 1A

The Union County Historical Society featured a collection of antique items at their booth on Saturday, including an old tire seal and irons with other home tools.

"We have had a lot of people come through with plenty of items, and unusual items, too," said Historical Society President Judy Carpenter. "This is important to preserve the history of Union County - that's our main goal, and to build awareness of these things and helping people find out what some of these things are and the history of it."

One of the most noticed items at the booth was a document containing the "John Hancock" of famed Declaration of Independence signatory John Hancock, which was especially fitting given the proximity of Heritage Day to Independence Day.

The John Hancock signature was featured on an old commission document and displayed for the day courtesy local couple Joe and Sue McGinnis, who own the document and brought it to the market on Saturday to show the community a major piece of American history.

"Joe's grandmother is from New Jersey, and she used to collect antiques from all over the place," said Sue McGinnis. "When she passed away, we inherited all of the things that she collected."

"And it was so funny, because she kept it in a safety deposit box in an envelope, and she would go and get it and open and close it so much, and that's why it's kind of ripped. I had it framed in the



Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings with an old tillage implement from the 1940s on Heritage Day, June 29. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

preservation glass so that the sun and nothing else would hurt it."

Joe McGinnis is a descendant of George Clymer, who signed the Declaration of Independence as a Philadelphia Representative.

"My grandparents had a 13-room house up in New Jersey, and it was full from the first floor to third floor with nothing but antiques," said Joe McGinnis. "They used to go to Maine every summer, and that's where they would find all of their antiques."

"They were collecting antiques back in the '40s, when everyone else began buying antiques. They were buying the good stuff, because they studied all the time to figure out what they should get."

Also at the Heritage Day event was a booth helmed by Byron Herbert Reece Society President Jerri Gill, who shared

Reece's literature with people and informed folks of the importance of Reece to local history and culture.

Wanted...from Page 1A

spotted it in their county later that morning before trying to make contact with Bryant, Davenport said.

"He did strike a Fannin County patrol car in an attempt to evade capture, and he almost struck a Fannin County deputy as well, as I understand it," said Davenport. "The chase ensued into Union County, with Fannin County and GSP involved, and our units as well."

Authorities were forced to pursue Bryant from a safe distance due to his excessive rate of speed, though they kept him in sight until he crashed off Tate Road, after which he escaped into the woods and headed west toward on foot toward Morganton, Davenport said.

Searchers remained "two steps behind him" all day Friday, said Davenport, adding that "he broke into a house off Hawks Claw Road and tried to steal a UTV," or utility terrain vehicle.

Bryant is facing multiple felony charges in Gilmer, Fannin and Union counties related to this incident, though he had outstanding warrants for obstruction of an officer and giving a false name in Union County prior to his June 28 run-in with law enforcement, Davenport said.

Following this incident, his new charges in Union County include burglary, theft of a motor vehicle, entering auto, obstruction and numerous traffic violations, Davenport said.

He is also facing a charge

of aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer and an additional count of theft of a motor vehicle.

"We are still attempting to locate him," said Davenport. "We do not have anybody actively in the woods, but we have units in the area. If anybody has contact with him, please call the Union County Sheriff's Office and we'll take him into custody."

Added Davenport, "I thought everybody that responded did a heck of a job, including our 911 Dispatch Center."