

North Georgia News

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Freedom, fireworks on full display at Meeks Park

By Allison Youngblood
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce hosted the annual Meeks Park Fireworks on Sunday, July 4. The weather, which was predicted to be rainy throughout the holiday weekend, proved to be perfect for patriotic spectators.

Folks from near and far gathered at various points along Georgia 515, on the campus and in the parking lot of North Georgia Technical College, at First United Methodist Church of Union County, and all around the Meeks Park network of pavilions, picnic tables and grassy fields.

Families set up tents, tables and chairs to stake out a good vantage point and wait for

the main event to begin shortly after dark.

Children and adults played football, cornhole, frisbee and even set off fireworks of their own, while vendors sold popcorn, cotton candy, snow cones, lemonade and barbeque to round out the family-friendly affair with festive food options.

Although the atmosphere was full of cheer and fun, those who came out to watch did not forget the reasons for the Fourth of July celebrations: honoring the birth of the freest nation in history and all the people who have sacrificed their lives to defend America's ongoing freedoms.

Air Force Veteran Jeffrey Hunt served as a military policeman, and he said the Fourth is to reflect on how

America was founded and continues to be protected by way of personal sacrifice over the many years to ensure the country keeps its privileges.

Hunt and his wife Debbie said the annual Meeks Park Fireworks is a good indicator of the community's support of active and former military service members, which they feel is characteristic of the entire North Georgia Mountains region.

Navy, Army and National Guard Veteran Charles Sutton said the culture of Blairsville and Union County is one of caring for one another and upholding religious freedom, and he has appreciated that since he first began working in Blairsville in the '70s.

Greysen Schmitt said "we're blessed to be here in

America," adding that "if it wasn't for the people who have come before and blazed a trail for us to take us away from tyranny, we wouldn't be sitting here right now."

He feels the roots of honor in Fourth of July celebrations extend back to the colonists who founded the United States of America, as without them, there wouldn't be an America to celebrate.

"The tree of liberty is watered by the blood of patriots," he continued, noting that honoring veterans every day is important, not just on certain days of the year.

Dr. Al Haywood of Pathway Christian Counseling opened the ceremony with a prayer and an acapella performance of "God Bless

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The Meeks Park Fireworks truly outdid themselves this year, with more colorful bangs and blasts than ever before — especially that amazing finale. Photo by Allison Youngblood

Cicada-themed boat takes top honors in annual parade



This cicada-themed boat won the Grand Prize in the 2021 Nottely Boat Parade, with members of the Brood X vessel promising to return in another 17 years. Photo by Allison Youngblood

By Allison Youngblood
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Nottely Marina continued its 25-plus year tradition on Saturday, July 3, with the Annual Boat Parade

that attracted an enthusiastic crowd of onlookers from the shore, side of the highway and on the water.

As the festivities began, David McMahon from Camilla provided live music, performing

patriotic-themed songs and country classics to the delight of those in attendance, who perched on lawn chairs and blankets on a hill overlooking Lake Nottely.

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Commissioner to pitch voters on TSPLOST for Nov. 2

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris is considering putting a 1-cent Transportation SPLOST referendum to a countywide vote in November, with collections to start in April 2022.

TSPLOST stands for Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, and this will be the first time such a tax has been proposed in Union County. If voters decide to support the effort, the total sales tax in the county will increase from 7 cents to 8 cents



Lamar Paris
Sole Commissioner
on the dollar.
The tax would potentially

generate up to \$5 million a year for roads and bridgework, Paris said, noting that this amount would provide property owners about \$1.5 million in tax relief each year, which is roughly the current Road Department budget being paid for out of the general fund.

Paris said the county would use all additional TSPLOST revenues, potentially up to \$3.5 million, to expand maintenance and keep many more of the county's over 600 miles of roads resurfaced and paved each year.

While the City of Blairsville is holding an election

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Suches lights up night sky for Independence Day 2021

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A Union County tradition made its triumphant return Sunday night as the Valley Above the Clouds observed America's 245th birthday with an entire weekend's worth of entertainment packed into an evening celebration.

When the pandemic torpedoed the 2020 event, Suches community members knew they needed to go big in 2021 to remind North Georgia that a small community can still pack a big punch.

"We were up against Blairsville, Blue Ridge and Hiwassee's fireworks tonight, but we refused to



Patriotic youngsters crossed their hearts during Nealy Webster's freedom-stirring rendition of the national anthem Sunday behind Woody Gap School in Suches. Photo by Todd Forrest

Farmers Market kicks off July Fourth holiday weekend

Canning Plant now open

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market celebrated its fifth Saturday of the 2021 season on July 3, and a fine celebration it was, featuring plenty of Union County residents and visitors alike over a sunny Fourth of July weekend.

With the influx of new residents to Union County over the last year, their friends and families have been following and discovering the beauty and quiet solitude of the North Georgia lakes and mountains along with attractions like the unique Union County Farmers Market.

New this season is a goat-petting area where children can pet small goats under the watchful eyes of

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Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings wants people to know the Canning Plant is taking appointments for people wanting to preserve fresh fruits and veggies. Photo by Mark Smith

Enotah CASA joining syrup makers for Sorghum Festival

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Blairsville Sorghum Festival has been a source of local charitable giving since 1969, and that tradition will continue as always in 2021, featuring the same locally made sorghum syrup everyone knows and loves.

And while most people will be unable to tell a difference in the experience the second and third weekends in October this year and moving forward, organizers have made a pretty



The Blairsville Sorghum Festival will return this year, as will the biscuit eating contest and other family-friendly competitions. Photo/blairsvillesorghumfestival.com

Hamilton Gardens nonprofit working to dissolve in 2021

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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HIWASSEE — Citing an ongoing failure to come to terms on an agreement with the Georgia Mountain Fair, the nonprofit Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. will be dissolving this year.

Grace Howard is the executive director of the organization, and she made the announcement at the Mountain Movers and Shakers' weekly meeting on Friday, July 2, noting that the 501(c)(3) had plans to finish out its obligations for the year before completely disbanding this fall.

Upon dissolution, care for the gardens located inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is set to be taken back over by the Georgia Mountain Fair.

As the parties involved are still finalizing a parting of ways, Howard was limited in what she could disclose, but she did speak briefly in the meeting, which featured an open forum Friday instead of a scheduled guest speaker.

Howard thanked the Movers and Shakers for their constant support of the organization and said she wanted to let them know what was going on with Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge.

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Grace Howard
Executive Director
Hamilton Gardens
at Lake Chatuge

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Meeks Park...from Page 1A



Many people celebrated the anniversary of America's independence from tyranny 245 years ago by posting up at various places for the Meeks Park Fireworks, pictured here behind the upper ballfields near the action. Photo by Allison Youngblood

America" before the barrage of fireworks began. The show started around 9:30 p.m., just as the sun set fully.

The showy display

lasted about 45 minutes and included many rounds of dazzling explosives accompanied by a medley of patriotic and classic songs,

and spectators were pleased with the amazing visual and audio coordination, with a thunderous finale that outdid previous shows.

TSPLOST...from Page 1A

this year, it is an off year for countywide elections, so the referendum would be the only ballot item put before county voters in a Special Election on Nov. 2, 2021.

Holding a special election would necessitate an extra expense over waiting until the May 24, 2022, General Primary Election, though the commissioner said he had several reasons for wanting to call a special election.

First, holding the election in 2021 would get TSPLOST collections started sooner rather than later, he said, which would allow the county to capitalize on the increased potential for sales tax revenues as the post-pandemic economy continues to reopen full steam ahead.

Doing so would expedite TSPLOST revenues taking over budgetary considerations for the Road Department, including the cost of employees, equipment, maintenance and materials, thereby enabling the commissioner to cut property taxes in a timelier fashion.

Paris also wants to go ahead and get started upgrading roads with TSPLOST funds to allow for much-needed improvements in maintenance, operations and safety countywide, he said, and to help reduce traffic congestion with roadway and intersection enhancements.

By having these extra funds working at the local level, Paris said the county can make roads safer to travel, which in turn will reinforce the economic success Union County has been enjoying by positively impacting the influx of new residents and visitors.

The effort is in its early stages, but Paris said he and his office are on a strict timeline of procedural steps if they are to

get the initiative on the ballot in just four months.

As the City of Blairsville will be eligible to collect a portion of TSPLOST funds, next steps include the acceptance of an Intergovernmental Agreement between the county and city, which was on the agenda for the July 6 Blairsville City Council meeting that occurred after press time.

Should Mayor Jim Conley sign the agreement and the council approve it, the document will go to Paris to sign and accept in his July 20 regular county meeting.

And if the TSPLOST does make it to the November ballot and passes with majority support, then Union will be joining 32 other counties in Georgia that have adopted the tax, including neighboring Lumpkin County.

It is too early to gauge what precise impact the approximately \$1.5 million in offset property tax revenues would have on property owners, as the county is in the process of finalizing a revaluation of all eligible real property in Union.

Assessment notices were mailed to property owners last week, and people will have 45 days to appeal their reassessed values. Once the appeals process is complete, the county will have a final tax digest with which to set the millage rate for FY22 budgeting purposes.

Paris has said on multiple occasions he is optimistic that the revaluation will increase the digest to the point where he can accept a lower millage rate, which last year saw a roughly 17% uptick due to depleted fund reserves and the rising cost of goods, services and

employees.

Property taxes levied last year were about \$9.5 million toward a \$21.8 million budget, according to the county website.

The 2022 budget will almost certainly increase due to inflation, but just as an example, if budgetary concerns were to remain the same, trimming \$1.5 million in general fund obligations would result in an immediate 16% tax cut.

This decrease could be compounded if Paris is able to lower the millage rate following finalization of the revaluation data.

Paris reiterated that the transportation sales tax would remove the onus on property owners to fund roadwork alone and would instead distribute a more equal share of the local tax burden to all residents and visitors of the county, which he said is crucial in an inflationary environment.

Of course, transitioning the Road Department budget to TSPLOST would create a situation in which the TSPLOST would need to be passed again down the road in order to maintain that property tax cut.

Still, Paris believes that should it pass, the new tax would enable the county to not only better maintain roads and bridges but also dramatically expand road coverage and maintenance for residents moving forward.

The commissioner announced recently that the county was officially debt free, having made its last payment on a SPLOST-backed bond from 2015, and Paris said he hopes people will continue to trust his vision for the county as he navigates Union through to the future.

Sorghum Festival...from Page 1A

big change behind the scenes.

"In North Georgia, the Blairsville Sorghum Festival has been a part of Blairsville's heritage for more than 50 years," per <https://blairsvillesorghumfestival.com>. "While small in number, they accomplished by far the largest and most distinctive event of the year in Union County."

"This year's event will be hosted by the Blairsville Sorghum Syrup Makers and Enotah CASA, Inc. This new partnership will allow us to make the festival the success it has always been."

As noted above, the dedicated Sorghum Festival Club volunteers have run the entire family-friendly event for years. They decided in 2021, however, to seek help putting on the festival, and the Chamber of Commerce reached out to the folks of Enotah CASA to gauge their interest.

Enotah CASA is a child advocacy organization specializing in assisting local children on their journeys through the legal system, with a dedicated volunteer base of specially trained advocates who make sure abused and neglected children have a voice in court proceedings.

The onset of COVID-19 last year all but assured limited fundraising activities for both community-centric groups, with the Sorghum Festival and Enotah CASA's Dancing with North Georgia Stars events having to be canceled in 2020.

After going it alone for many years, when it came time to ramp up charitable fundraising efforts this year, the Sorghum Festival Club was feeling the urge to do something different,

as was Enotah CASA.

For the Sorghum Festival Club, the core group of volunteers has dwindled over the years, with members hoping to retain their cane growing and syrup making duties while recruiting a community partner to share in preparing for and administering the festival.

Specifically, club members were looking for someone to take over running the gate and organizing vendors, games, the parade and entertainment, while the club sold concessions and T-shirts and made the festival namesake syrup at the sorghum mill and pan inside Meeks Park.

As for Enotah CASA, members of its board were concerned that they had exhausted the number of local volunteers willing to participate in Dancing with North Georgia Stars, the time-intensive annual dance competition and gala benefiting children of Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin.

Enotah CASA Board Member Jennifer Mahan, whom many will know as the County Clerk in the Commissioner's Office, was born and raised here, and she's been attending the Sorghum Festival for as long as she can remember.

So, when the opportunity presented itself to partner with the Blairsville Sorghum Syrup Makers, Mahan and her fellow board members decided this was just the opportunity they had been looking for, and the two groups will split festival proceeds according to areas of responsibility.

The ever-popular Square Dance will continue in 2021 as well, with the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority having committed

to holding the community favorite event.

"Everything is the same," Mahan said of the upcoming festival. "The gate fee will still be \$5 for everybody 12 and up, and vendor booth fees are the same as they've always been."

"If you're a local vendor and you want a booth, reach out to me now, because I'm trying my best to get local people and returning vendors booked first."

On a personal level, Mahan said she is excited to be helping to organize such a time-honored local tradition.

"Anybody who has lived here for a substantial amount of time has been to the Sorghum Festival or knows what it is," Mahan said. "So, it's great to be involved in a part of Union County's history and continue that moving forward."

Pertaining to the club, the syrup makers are essentially getting back to their roots with this new arrangement, as the very first festival consisted of syrup makers dressing in old-fashioned clothing and selling syrup to passersby on the Blairsville Square, with vendors added later.

Prospective vendors may call Mahan at 706-897-4784, and more information is available at <https://blairsvillesorghumfestival.com>. Calendar dates for the festival are Oct. 9-10 and Oct. 16-17, and everyone is invited to attend.

"The Blairsville Sorghum Festival organizers want to thank all the citizens, local government, departments, businesses and clubs that help the festival be a success, but most of all, they appreciate your attendance," per the website.

Boat Parade...from Page 1A



Not only is the patriotic parade a smash hit with participants, it's also great for spectators, many of whom return year after year to see the tradition. Photo by Allison Youngblood



Nottely Marina Manager Moriah Doucette waved to people on shore during Saturday's boat parade. Photo by Allison Youngblood

The boat parade tradition is in celebration of the Fourth of July, and many of the captains displayed their patriotism with decorations of red, white and blue.

In addition to enjoying fireworks and parades for the Fourth of July, spectators were proud to be celebrating and honoring active members of the military and veterans for securing America's enduring freedoms.

Tony Sharp of Jacksonville, Florida, said that the holiday, to him, is

about "the birth of our nation, entrepreneurial spirit, risk-takers, and the people who fell down and got right back up," which represents America's history of fighting and sacrificing to obtain freedom.

Mary Woyar, from Colorado, was visiting her sister for the Fourth and looking forward to seeing her first ever Lake Nottely Boat Parade. Woyar's sister Debbie Sticher said that the fun atmosphere last year sparked her interest in taking her sister to watch in 2021.

Sticher and Woyar's father fought in World War II, and in light of the sacrifices their father made for this country, the sisters were in agreement that the Fourth of July represents a deeper appreciation of the freedoms America enjoys.

Allen Lee of Blairsville said he and his family have attended the parade for the last eight years, with "the fun, the excitement, and the patriotic atmosphere" keeping them returning to the annual event.

For Lee, "bringing patriotism back and trying to

make it the centerpiece of what makes America amazing" is why the Fourth is cause for celebration.

Marina Manager Moriah Doucette and her family led the parade procession in a floating Airstream camper. To follow was a line of roughly 25 decorated boats that had the crowd whistling and cheering as they circled the marina several times.

The judges were a panel of five impartial marina-goers entrusted to observe each participant and decide which boats should win trophies. Judges were Pam and Jim Pennington, Chris Peterson, Betsy Weatherford, and Robyn Gillespie.

After all boats finished their hour-long circuit, the judging panel deliberated for about 20 minutes before deciding the following winners: Smallest Boat, the gondola; Most Patriotic, the Olympic Swimmers; Most Spirit, the UGA boat; Crowd Favorite, the Red Solo Cup; Most Surprising, the 60th Wedding Anniversary.

The S.S. Minnow based off "Gilligan's Island" was awarded Third Place, and the Mountain Shelter Humane Society's Doggie Boat earned Second Place.

In First Place was a boat dedicated to the 17-Year Cicadas, which were a rare local phenomenon that persisted throughout the late spring and early summer seasons. A model cicada decorated the top of the boat, and the crew aboard even decked themselves out in bug-eye headwear.

Each of the winners received a gift certificate and a trophy awarded by the Nottely Marina Staff. The 2021 parade was certainly a crowd-pleasing spectacle that will undoubtedly continue to be highly anticipated in the years to come.

Hamilton Gardens...from Page 1A

"We are (dissolving) for one main reason," Howard said. "We've been up there since 2016 under a management agreement. The management agreement just gives us the right to manage the property."

"There's nothing in there about us having a lease or a leasehold, the language of which is essential if you want state and federal funds. So, we've been unable to procure any kind of state or federal funds over the language of the agreement."

The purpose of the nonprofit has been "to restore, preserve, and enhance this public botanical legacy garden for the education and enjoyment of all who visit," and the volunteers and staff have done just that, preparing and upgrading the gardens to make them enjoyable by the public.

But the inability to apply for grant funding or borrow money to continue improving the gardens is a sticking point for the nonprofit, and those involved have yet another concern that their insurance may not be honored if they do not have exclusive rights of use at the property.

"Our board actually voted in January to begin the process of dissolution of our 501(c)(3) if we were not able to get an agreement by the first of July, so here we are," Howard said. "The garden's going to be there; we are not going to be the stewards of the garden."

"We will be working out a notice up there. We will be dissolving the 501(c)(3) legally through the state. We will be divesting our assets, and we do own a good bit up there that, we'll have a big yard sale and they'll all can come."

"We also have to disperse our funds, and any money that's left over at the end of our time will be dispersed to 501(c)(3) nonprofits. We expect to do

that within this community. So, we're on a path, unfortunately. We're sad about it."

Added Howard, "Our legacy is that we were the Garden SWAT Team, and I'd like you to think about us as the Garden SWAT Team, because we came in at a time where there was huge distress up there. There were lots of things that needed to be fixed, and we rescued that garden."

"So, the Garden SWAT Team is going to move on to whatever next project is out there for us after a long-awaited rest, and it'll come again. The legacy of this garden will belong to Georgia Mountain Fair and to Towns County; not to us."

"We were just a moment in time that did some work up there, that made a difference in this community and certainly made a difference in this garden."

Donations are no longer being accepted, and the membership drive and all fundraising activities have ceased, Howard said of the mostly volunteer organization.

As for next steps, Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge has submitted for early contract termination with the Georgia Mountain Fair, "and our hope is that we will be there until the end of October - that's what we've asked for."

The news was not well received in the meeting, with Diana Gutenstein, an avid supporter of the gardens and the nonprofit's work there, asking, "How stupid is this?"

When reached for comment, Georgia Mountain Fair Authority Board Treasurer and Secretary Terry Taylor said Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge had done a good job at the gardens and that he, too, wished the two sides could have met on terms.

"About four or five years

ago, the Fair made contact with the Master Gardeners to see if they might be interested in partnering with the Fair to manage the garden," Taylor said. "After several months of negotiation back and forth, they decided to do that. They later formed a corporation called Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge."

"Since then, there have been ongoing talks of re-doing the management agreement that we had at the time, and maybe 15 or 20 different versions have been looked at and rejected by one party or the other over the last two or three years."

From the way he understands it, Taylor said that Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge "wants to have the property pretty much titled in their name." This or its effect, said Taylor, is not workable for the Fair, which views the 40-year-old gardens as an asset it will not part with.

"We're happy to let them manage (the gardens) and would like to work with them in doing that, except that we're just not willing to deed the whole property to them," Taylor said. "We think it's an asset for the Fair, and a right sizeable asset."

In terms of granting exclusive rights to the property, the Fair wishes to retain the ability to utilize certain aspects of the gardens moving forward, including for overflow parking and other potential uses, which is why the Fair wants to maintain a non-exclusive agreement.

He said the Fair was willing to partner with Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge to help acquire grant funds, though the parties have been unable to come to terms on the particulars of any such arrangements or whether this would even be possible.

Potentially complicating matters is the nature of ownership of the land, which the Tennessee Valley Authority permanently leased to Towns County Government that in turn leased to the Georgia Mountain Fair Authority, with apparent oversight by Georgia Mountain Fair, Inc.

For now, the parties will be working behind the scenes to finalize a termination agreement, and Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge hopes to be able to honor its slate of scheduled lectures, concerts, weddings and workdays this year.

Suches Fireworks...from Page 1A

move our (display) because we always try to hold them on July Fourth whenever possible," said Dena Gooch of the Gaddistown Homemakers, who were selling baked goods at the event.

"We're excited to be here tonight, and everyone is looking forward to fireworks, food and music," she continued. "With tonight's fireworks and the return of our Indian Summer Festival in the fall, everyone seems to be in high spirits."

Spectators began to arrive hours ahead of time to enjoy music and fellowship in the field behind Woody Gap School.

Sparklers and bottle rockets were a common spectacle on both sides of Georgia 60 as the Suches Community Center parking lot reached capacity at approximately 8:30 p.m., with the Post Office filling up minutes later.

Regardless of where visitors set up their folding chairs or laid out their blankets, attendees were grateful to once again be experiencing a slice of familiarity on Sunday night.

Meanwhile, other guests like Shelly Glover and her family were taking in their very first Suches Independence Day, confirming that the small-town vibe had immediately started to grow on them.

"We're from Dahlonega and never knew they had fireworks here until I did a



The entire Suches Fireworks Show was something to behold, especially the grand finale, expertly executed by the members of Suches Fire Station No. 5.

Photo by Todd Forrest

Google search to find a different fireworks show," she said. "We also have some friends in Cleveland that recommended we try this one, and we're so glad we made the decision to come up here."

"We plan on coming back since it's only about 15 minutes away from us. The lady at the concessions stand told us, 'Once you come here, you won't want to go anywhere else,' and she was right. We love everything about it – the food is great, and we just love it."

Local singing sensation Nealy Webster performed "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Proud

to Be an American," and "The Army Goes Rolling Along" before the Union County Fire Department's Station No. 5 lit up the night sky just shy of 9:30 p.m.

What began decades ago as a handful of locals firing bottle rockets at the General Store, the Suches Fourth of July has become a bucket list item for many Northeast Georgia residents.

Once the pyrotechnics display quickly outgrew the local hangout spot, it moved just down the road to Woody Gap School, where it is now under the supervision of the Suches Fire Department.

Farmers Market...from Page 1A



Market patrons enjoyed the Fourth of July weekend by buying delicious produce, like this couple at the booth of Freddie Collins' Farm on Saturday.

Photo by Mark Smith

their parents. There are also tried-and-true attractions like fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, local honey and baked goods, and tons of arts and crafts handmade by local artisans.

Market patron Ryan Santurri said he brought his family up from Orlando, Florida, for a traditional holiday visit with his wife's family. Gemma, Ryan's young daughter, took full advantage of the opportunity to pet a goat.

"It's nice up here, and the weather's been great," Santurri said.

Sam and Susan Brown of Medina, Ohio, were out at the Farmers Market enjoying the day and perusing the fresh vegetables.

"We also have a second home here in Blairsville," Susan said, with Sam adding, "Every other month or so we come down; we really enjoy our time down here."

A lot of people visited the market Saturday, as by the looks of it, well over a thousand people took advantage of the nice weather and ample opportunities to bag some locally grown veggies and maybe a handmade knife, birdhouse, carpenter bee trap, textile or other local craft.

Market Manager Mickey Cummings was on hand to oversee the activities, and he was excited to share that the Canning Plant on the grounds



Up with her family from Orlando, Florida, Gemma Santurri took time to pet one of Hidden Creek Farm's goats at the Farmers Market's new petting area.

Photo by Mark Smith

of the Farmers Market was scheduled to open this week for the 2021 season on Tuesday, July 6.

Canning is an all-day process, Cummings said, and everything is done according to strict state guidelines.

The facility operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with three-hour time slots available at 6 a.m. and 9 a.m., with the latter time slots filling up quickly, he said.

Folks wanting to utilize the canning facility must

call 706-439-6043 and make an appointment, Cummings said.

Appointments became necessary in 2020 due to the pandemic, when social distancing requirements resulted in a reduction of the number of people the Canning Plant could accommodate, Cummings said.

In addition to canning fresh fruits and veggies, Cummings said the Canning Plant can accommodate people who just want to blanch ears of corn to freeze, and they also help folks with canning soups, stews and meats.

"It costs people 35 cents per jar," Cummings said, noting that it streamlines the process if people prepare their fruits and vegetables prior to bringing them to the cannery.

The beauty of the Farmers Market and Canning Plant is that, from now until the end of the season, folks can buy quantities of whatever they wish to can – or as the old timers say "put up" – at the market, then schedule a cannery visit and fill their pantry with food for the winter.

Located at 290 Farmers Market Way, the market runs every Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. and every Tuesday from 2-5 p.m. between now and Oct. 30. More information about the Farmers Market and the monthly Kid's Power of Produce Club can be found at UCFarmersMarket.com.

Lowell Nicholson Celebrates 73rd

Happy Birthday

From the staff of the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald