

Tractor Supply...from Page 1A

and held a soft opening last Thursday," Assistant Manager Johnny Jones said Saturday. "Word got out (that we were open), and we ended up doing a ridiculous amount of sales."

With the nearest Tractor Supply stores located in Blue Ridge and Murphy, North Carolina, the new store is a welcome addition to the community, especially for those living in eastern Union County, Young Harris and Towns County.

"I love it, and I'm so excited that they built this store here in Blairsville, it's very convenient for me," Elizabeth Saunders of Hiwassee said. "I own horses and chickens, so I'm interested in all the products they sell."

"This (store opening) is very exciting because there's just not a lot of options around here, and this place has everything that I need."

One feature unique to the Blairsville location is the pet washing station. For \$9.99, Tractor Supply will bathe your pet on-site. While the station is not limited to K-9s, the equipment was constructed with dogs in mind, Jones said. "Customers have already

taken to it," he said. "On our second day we did 12 pets. It's a one-stop shop, and we supply different types of shampoos, dips, a full grooming station, and it comes with a super-powered blower or a towel dry.

"We're the only one in the area that offers this. Murphy doesn't have one, Blue Ridge doesn't have one, and I believe Rome is the closest location that does."

Store manager Adam Christian couldn't be happier with the response he's received from the locals. And while COVID-19 has limited community outreach and special events, Tractor Supply is hoping to build strong relationships with non-profits in the tri-state area.

"Everyone I've met has been extremely friendly and excited," he said. "Lots of different programs in the area, like the FFA and Humane Society, have been awesome, and we're looking to get involved with them."

"We're holding off on hosting any big events because of COVID, but we hope to hit the Farmers Market and host some pet adoptions and tractor



The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and local stakeholders held a ribbon cutting for the new Tractor Supply store on Saturday, Oct. 3.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

shows to bring some fun to the community." Also Saturday, Atlanta's NewCountry 101.FIVE attended to kick off the grand opening celebration, bringing Dallas McCade from the weekday morning show "Kincaid and Dallas" to hand out shirts and hats while greeting customers at the station tent from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Jones and the Tractor Supply management team want the community to learn the store's correct location, as the directions provided on Google

Maps are inaccurate and have been leading customers into Downtown Blairsville.

The store is located just east of Blairsville off Georgia 515, just past Wendy's, but

before Sears and the Aviator Café. Tractor Supply is on the right, just below the Union County High School front office.

Visitors may also reach

the store via Panther Circle, but caution is advised during school pickup and drop-off hours.

Ninth District Opportunity to offer heating assistance starting Nov. 2

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Each year, Ninth District Opportunity offers heating assistance to low-income households, and residents in need can begin to take advantage of this annual program as soon as next month.

Starting Nov. 2, households over the age of 65 or those considered medically homebound can apply for the program, with Dec. 1 being the wider rollout to the public, said Resource Coordinator Amber McCoy of Ninth District Opportunity.

"The program assists low-income families, and it will give a \$350-\$400 credit based on income," McCoy said. "It is a free credit, and the money goes straight to the heating source, so we can do their electric bill if that is what they heat with or we can do Freeman, Heritage and things like that."

"This program is a one-time assistance. The income limit is different for every group. If they are over 65, it is automatically a \$400 credit as long as they make less than \$25,025 for a one-person household.

"The income limits are the same for both (program date ranges); however, we do have a max amount for the December



one, so that \$25,025 will be the max amount for a one-person household, which means that they would end up qualifying for the \$350 if they are close to the \$25,000 line."

This program has been helping people in the community for more than a decade, with allotments steadily increasing over the years, according to NDO Community Resource Coordinator Ann Sullivan.

In this area, she said, upwards of 500 people or more from each Union and Towns County take advantage of the program every year. Both counties usually get the same monetary allotment, though there are always funds left over.

The program lasts through March and is followed by the start of the cooling assistance program that offers similar energy assistance. For more information, visit <https://www.ndo.org/web/heating.html>.

Appointment scheduling for the application process will begin Nov. 2 for 65 and older or medically homebound residents, and on Dec. 1 for everyone else, with the automated

number of 855-636-3108 opening at 12:01 a.m. on Nov. 2.

Ninth District Opportunity offers other programs for households in need that can be applied for at any time.

"Our energy assistance program is the one that we are most known for, but we also have housing programs," McCoy said. "We can help people financially get into housing as long as they are income eligible."

"We can also help people that have court-ordered evictions. We can help them to where we can possibly catch them up and get it to where they are not in that eviction anymore."

"We also get two other grant funding (opportunities) each year, and with those two, based on different guidelines, we can help with electricity and sometimes rent and things like that."

For more information on these programs, contact Blairsville Ninth District Opportunity at 706-745-6596 or Towns County Ninth District at 706-896-4783.

GFC Unit...from Page 1A



This airplane is specially designed for aerial firefighting by the Georgia Forestry Commission, which was in town last week for special training with local firefighters.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

(local fire departments) are best equipped to move water and get it to us as fast as possible.

"Having that county support is needed, and usually when they call us in, it is a larger incident anyways, so it is nice to have those guys with us."

While Georgia has not seen large-scale wildfires in the last few years, it's just a matter of time before such an event occurs again, so it's important for fire agencies to work together to prepare.

"We have wildfires on a regular basis throughout the state," Gleaton said. "We haven't really had a lot of huge fires lately in Georgia, but we were down in South Georgia at the end of January of this year, and that was the last decent-sized fire we had. But some years it is wide open."

Union County Fire Chief David Dyer attended the event with his men, seeing it as an opportunity to give his firefighters some experience and

training should they ever need to help the Air Operations Unit with moving water.

"It is nice that we can support them like this," Chief Dyer said. "This is going to be one of those things that, if they are doing some sort of air operation somewhere and need water, it is nice that we can train to be able to know what to do and how we can be more comfortable with supporting them."



With fire season fast approaching, the Union County Fire Department assisted the GFC Air Operations Unit with training at the airport in preparation for potential wildfires.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener