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These six competitors did a good job decorating and carving their pumpkins last Saturday at the Union County Farmers Market: Jordan Pandolph, JoJo Lewis, Jared Jones, Katelyn Jones, Isabel Galindo and Grayson Collins.

Saturday – I’m going to go down and watch Georgia and Georgia Tech play football.

“But otherwise, we’ll miss people, miss getting together with our family here at the Farmers Market every week, but we’ll kick things off in 2017 and do the same thing again.”

Not only does the Farmers Market attract thousands of people a month during its regular season, it also acts as a way to put money back into the community at large. Vendors selling their handmade goods and homegrown produce at the market use the money they make to buy their personal goods and services throughout the county.

“It’s hard to gather what that is worth to the county,” said Cummings. “We do a survey every year, and we ask our vendors what kind of money they took in this year.”

“We’ll take the information from that survey and use it with some other data, and get together with some statisticians at the University of Georgia in the Center for Economic Development.”

UGA then helps Cummings come up with some good figures to indicate the economic impact of the Farmers Market within Union County.

On average, the Farmers Market’s economic impact to the county each year, through its vendors, the Union County Canning Plant and Trash & Treasures vendors, is more than \$1 million, according to Cummings.

“We appreciate everybody’s support,” said Cummings. “It’s been a good year. The Farmers Market is something that brings the community together economically and socially, so it’s important to everybody in the county and we want to keep it that way.”

The market will be hosting its annual Kris Kringle Christmas Market on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., which this year will feature more than 75 different vendors.

Also, the Canning Plant is open for four more days this



Margaret Flesher, center, will be turning 92 in a week, and she has never missed a Saturday at the Farmers Market. Flesher is one of the representatives of 7M Family Farms.



Moonfairy Gems was one of dozens of vendors to hand out Halloween candy to excited youngsters during the Oct. 29 Halloween at the Farmers Market.



Eleanor Smith all decked out for Halloween at the Union County Farmers Market. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

year, from 6 a.m. until noon Nov. 1, Nov. 8, Nov. 15 and Dec. 6.

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future quality of the lakes.

However, significant improvement in Lake Chatuge has been documented, which is partly due to the efforts of the City of Hiwassee and the newly implemented nutrient reduction system at the Hiwassee Wastewater Plant.

“This summer, nutrient reduction technology came online that essentially wiped out the nutrient loading from the City of Hiwassee’s wastewater treatment plant into Lake Chatuge,” said Moore.

“They aren’t required to treat nutrients, so this is a voluntary action that took place to remove that nutrient loading and prevent algae blooms in the future and, hopefully, to prevent a situation that could possibly interfere with water treatment for drinking. It’s very exciting.”

Moore also pointed out that Union County had also taken precautionary measures to ensure the safety of Nottely Lake, and that government officials from both Towns and Union have worked with the coalition to provide safe waters for residents to enjoy.

For all those in attendance, Moore shared a map highlighting waterways and streams located in the Upper Hiwassee River Basin that had been identified by the state’s 303(d) list of impaired and threatened waters, a list that is updated every two years.

One such waterway added to the list this past year, for example, is Rapier Mill Creek in North Carolina.

Waters can be regarded as impaired for a multitude of reasons, such as pathogen contamination, excess nutrients within the water, excess sediment and unstable oxygen environments that can cause harm to natural ecosystems.

“We also include the



Attendees of the 2016 State of the Water prioritized which issues were most important to them concerning the Hiwassee River Watershed.

natural habitat and biological communities that are associated with our rivers, lakes and streams,” said Moore. “So, when we talk about water quality, or the body of water being impaired, it could be a fish and aquatic life impairment.”

“In other words, the stream could be not up to snuff because of the fish and other aquatic life are not what they should be under natural conditions.”

“So, many times the work that we’re doing is repairing our fish community rather than dealing with human uses.”

Another point of concern this year is the low levels of rainfall, something that has a great effect on the overall sustenance of the waterways within the basin.

Due to the extreme drought most of the Hiwassee River Basin has experienced this year, quality concern for the waters have increased, something Moore attributes to the low quantity of rainfall.

“Drought brings a whole host of other issues to the watershed,” said Moore. “It’s not just a quantity issue but the quality of the water that is exasperated when you’re in a drought situation.”

As of right now, there is no definitive answer to solve this problem. Moore suggests water conservation and to pay close attention to neighborhood water bodies. If there appears to be a problem with the waterway, residents should contact the HRWC or local government officials to express concern.

As it stands, there are 55 active sites within the Upper Hiwassee River Basin that are being sampled and monitored by volunteers involved in the Adopt-a-Stream program throughout the various communities.

Anyone interested in helping collect samples should contact Moore at the HRWC. Volunteers and monitoring are essential to the cause.

“Freshwater is only 3 percent of all the water on earth,” said Moore. “Of that 3 percent, only 0.3 percent is in rivers, lakes and streams.”

“The reason the coalition exists, our mission, is to sustain good water quality in those rivers, lakes and streams. We’re so reliant on that and it’s such a small percentage of all freshwater resources. It’s important to remember that and take care of the water we have.”