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Veterans to be honored in patriotic events Nov. 11

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

It's November, and Veterans Day is almost upon the nation – a time set aside to renew vows to remember, thank and honor the men and women who have worn the uniforms of the U.S. Armed Forces: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force and Reserves.

In addition to active-duty forces, it is veterans who have defended this constitutional republic and the freedoms it espouses against those despots in the world who would do away with the American way of life if given the chance.

It is they who have sacrificed time away from families and loved ones and put their lives on the line so that all may freely speak their minds, move about unhindered, choose livelihoods, raise children as seen fit by each family, vote, and worship God.



Veterans will receive first-class treatment on Friday during the 2022 Union County Schools Veterans Day Ceremony. Photo by Shawn Jarrard/2016

Being home to a great many veterans and being in fly-over country, North Georgia – specifically Union County – is a haven of Americanism. Its people, both young and old,

demonstrate respect for God and country, which often seem in short supply in other parts of the nation today.

Veterans Day is observed every year on Nov. 11, the

significance of which is it's the day that the "War to End All Wars," World War I, came to a halt: the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918.

It's extremely important that Veterans Day be celebrated annually, especially for young folks who weren't alive for Sept. 11, 2001, or the Vietnam War or Korean War. In that vein, several Veterans Day events are scheduled in Union County this week.

On Nov. 11, not one but two breakfasts, a luncheon, and a recognition ceremony will be offered in honor of veterans and their spouses.

Of particular note is that all of these events are being offered by civilian organizations, which is as it should be; in many places around the country, veteran appreciation celebrations are done only by veterans for veterans.

Towns/Union Habitat for Humanity will host an abbreviated veteran's breakfast at the ReStore at 225 Welborn Street from 9 a.m. until noon. Blairsville Restaurant Grits and Greens will cater the breakfast,

and discount coupons for the ReStore will be offered to vets and their spouses.

The Union County School System will host a full breakfast at the High School cafeteria from 8:15 a.m. until 9:30 a.m., followed by a full student body Veterans Day presentation beginning at 10 a.m. at the Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

In case of inclement weather, the presentation will be moved to the Union County Schools Performing Arts Center.

Each school in the district will contribute to the presentation, and students are given full rein to create their own show, which will include both the High School and Middle School Chorus and the High School Band.

Additionally, there will be a Quilt of Valor ceremony, and participation by American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121.

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Pat Phillips honored for accomplishments, service

By Ron Hill
News Special
North Georgia News

Last Wednesday, Commissioner Lamar Paris proclaimed Nov. 2, 2022, as Pat Phillips Day at the Union County Nursing Home pavilion before a large gathering of family and friends.

Retired Sgt. First Class Pat Phillips, a longtime veteran advocate and resident of Blairsville, served over 20 years in Army combat arms units with three tours in Vietnam, and he retired at the Pentagon in 1975 at the rank of Sergeant First Class.

After the military, Phillips worked for the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, where he served as a Claims Counselor, Office Manager, and Area Supervisor over 16 field offices in the North Georgia region from 1985-99.

Commissioner Paris presented a Proclamation to Mr. Phillips recognizing him for his service to his country and community with great distinction during his military career, and in an unparalleled manner as a civilian.

Phillips epitomizes the U.S. Army values of service to others over oneself. His lifelong service to his country and to others has brought great credit to him, the U.S. Army, the State of Georgia, and the various organizations to which he belongs.

He has always considered the pinnacle of his career to be the championing of better health care for Georgia Veterans with compassion and zeal, and his helping secure the Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Blairsville, Georgia.

The Invocation was offered by Pastor Jerry Helton, House of Prayer Church, Blairsville, and the posting and retrieval of the Colors was performed by the 152nd North Georgia Composite Squadron Civil Air Patrol Color Guard.

Retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur McCann conducted the Pledge of Allegiance and served as Master of Ceremonies, reading the award citation as it was presented.

District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter presented Mr.

Phillips with a commendation signed by Gov. Brian Kemp honoring Pat for his many accomplishments.

Sid Turner, President of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, presented Pat with the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution award of the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal in recognition of notable services on behalf of America's principles.

Ron Hill, Northeast Georgia Veterans Society, presented Pat with a proclamation honoring his many accomplishments and outstanding service to his fellow servicemen.

Karen Lynn Trombley, State Coordinator, Georgia Quilts of Valor Foundation, assisted by Shirley Hill, member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, presented a "Quilt of Valor." Karen displayed the quilt at the gathering and then presented it to Pat, who smiled as it was draped over his shoulders.

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Veteran Pat Phillips, seated, surrounded by family members for his special recognition on Wednesday, Nov. 2, at the Union County Nursing Home. L-R behind Pat: Jon Stubblefield, Drew Phillips, Kathy Stubblefield, Susie Phillips and Robby Phillips. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Two runaway teens returned home safely last week



Brooke Beise, 17, missed a week of school after running away Oct. 28, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office. Photo/Submitted

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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Two Blairsville teens were located safe and returned home last week in a pair of unrelated runaway incidents, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

The first, Jacqueline "Jackie" Vester, 16, was discovered in Dalton by her family, and the second, Brooke Beise, 17, had been hiding out in Murphy, North Carolina, UCSO Capt. Daren Osborn said.

Vester ran away from home in the early morning hours of Oct. 23.

The investigation included multiple other law enforcement agencies, including in Forsyth and Dawson counties; however, the family received a tip on Thursday, Nov. 3, that Jackie was holed up in Whitfield County.

The Dalton Police Department met with Jackie's family at an apartment complex there, where the teen was found with an individual who was not part of the initial investigation into her whereabouts. Jackie returned home that same day.

As for Beise, she reportedly ran away after completing her shift at work on Friday, Oct. 28, and her

family reported her missing the morning of Saturday, Oct. 29.

Prior to her being located, Capt. Osborn said that Beise was last seen getting in the vehicle of 27-year-old Alex Herrera, who has a Blairsville address but is believed to be living in Murphy, North Carolina, where the investigation was concentrated.

Beise reached out to her parents on Friday, Nov. 4, after seeing the Nov. 3 Facebook post by the North Georgia News regarding her disappearance, and she returned home the same day, Osborn said.

"That's the reason we reach out to news media,"

Osborn said, "to let not only these kids know that we're looking for them, but to let other people know that we're looking for them and to be on the lookout for them."

It was not known at press time if charges would be filed against any of the individuals who were party to the girls' absences from home.

Beise, who has run away before, and Vester, who has previously threatened to run away, will have hearings in the Enotah Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court to determine the consequences of their actions, Osborn said.

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Operation Watchful Eye VII a major success in 2022



Thanks to an initiative involving 66 Georgia Sheriffs, including the Union County Sheriff's Office, 42 sex offenders were arrested and 117 warrants were issued across the state Oct. 24-31 for violations of state registration laws.

In 2015, the first coordinated effort across the state was launched to conduct residence verifications and compliance checks of registered sex offenders during a specific time period. The coordinated initiative became known as Operation Watchful Eye. Due to the overwhelming success of the original initiative, Georgia's Sheriffs have made this an annual operation and recently conducted Operation Watchful Eye VII.

The Office of Sheriff is mandated by law to register sex offenders and to keep the public informed of where registered sex offenders reside, work and attend school. Throughout the year, each sheriff's office verifies addresses provided by registered sex offenders. While conducting residence verifications, deputies also ensure additional registration requirements are being adhered to.

The purpose of this statewide effort is to create aware-

ness that sheriffs' offices work collectively, network, and actively engage their office by participating in statewide verification checks and other non-compliance matters in order to make our state safer. In numerous counties, deputy sheriffs, U.S. Marshals, U.S. Probation officers and Department of Community Supervision probation/parole officers worked together to verify sex offenders comply with the law.

Preliminary reporting by the 66 participating sheriff's offices reveals 10,232 registered sex offenders, 366

predators and 329 homeless sex offenders are currently living in their counties. During the one-week operation, 7,878 residence verifications were conducted, 64 new sex offenders moved into the reporting counties, 79 warrants were issued for residency violations of the sex offender registry, nine new warrants were issued for violations of the sex offender registry law (other than residency violations), two warrants were issued for new sex offenses and 27 warrants were issued for other miscellaneous new charges. More

importantly, it was discovered that 476 sex offenders had absconded from their last known address, which will require the sheriff to work with other supporting agencies and track these individuals down.

Remember, for the protection of your family and neighbors, visit your local sheriff's office website or visit the <http://gbi.georgia.gov/georgia-sex-offender-registry> for more information on the whereabouts of registered sex offenders in your community.

Union County Schools 2022 Veterans Day Presentation



On Friday, November 11, 2022, at 10 a.m., Union County School District will present the 2022 Veterans Day Celebration in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Prior to the ceremony from 8:15-9:30 a.m., all Veterans and their Spouses are invited to a free full breakfast at the Union County High School Cafeteria. There will be parking provided adjacent to the football field for the ceremony. There will also be a bus for transportation to and from the cafeteria to the football field for those who choose to park at the football field and want to eat breakfast.

The students and staff

of Union County School District work hard every year to provide a quality performance. This year's ceremony will include the High School Chorus led by Alicia Covington, the Middle School Chorus led by Melissa Pilote, the High School Band led by Will Stafford and the Middle School Band led by Daniel Foster.

Elementary and Primary School students along with students from Woody Gap School will present Veterans with letters of appreciation for their service to our country.

Our keynote speaker is Ashley Shipes, and assisting in the ceremony is Brady Husson and Jaylen Hogsed.

Eloise Whisenhunt will orchestrate the Quilt of Valor ceremony along with Liam Cone, Nate Johnson, Sophie Truex and Eli Underwood. We will award deserving Veterans

the Quilt of Valor sewn by the ladies of the Misty Mountain Quilters.

The American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 will be a part of our ceremony this year along with students representing the 152nd Civil Air Patrol.

There will also be a special presentation by the 625 Foundation and the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.

Our Veterans deserve the recognition and our School District takes pride in presenting this great event.

The point of contact for this year's ceremony is Art McCann. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Art McCann at 706-745-2216 ext 1112, or you can email him at amccann@ucschools.org. In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the Fine Arts Center.

Author Connie Rosenberry Book Signing at Book Bound Bookstore

Local author, Connie Rosenberry, is excited to announce the release of her book, *Finding Abraham*, just in time for Christmas shopping! *Finding Abraham* is the second book in her "Portal to the Past" series. The first is *Survival in the Jungle*. They are aimed at middle readers, aged 8-12. Both books are available online at Amazon, or locally, at Book Bound Bookstore (save on shipping!) located at 35 Blue Ridge St, by the square, in Blairsville.

Reader Susan M. says "Applause, applause, applause!! *Finding Abraham* was such a fun and interesting read!". The tales, a mix of fantasy and adventure, with a bit of history thrown in, tell the story of children traveling through a portal to another time and place. Connie says "10-year-olds rarely won-

der about their ancestors. It's not part of their DNA at that age. It's something we wonder about when we are much older; sometimes when those with the answers to our questions have already passed on." The "Portal to the Past" books are fun to read and a wonderful conversation starter for families to share their own unique stories.

Ms. Rosenberry lives in the north Georgia mountains and is a member of the Georgia Mountain Writers Club. In her previous life she was an elementary school media specialist, but retirement has given her the opportunity to focus on putting on paper the stories she had previously carried in her head.

She will be at Book Bound Bookstore in Blairsville, on November 19 from 1-3 PM and will be signing



Connie Rosenberry

copies of her books. As an added bonus, local artist and illustrator of the books, Pat Gray, will also be on hand to sign the books. How much fun it would be to give that special child the gift of a book, personalized and signed by the author and illustrator.

Veterans Day ...from Page 1A

the 152nd Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, the 625 Foundation, and the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter of the Georgia Society Sons of the American Revolution.

Following the morning events, the Rotary Club of Union County will host a Veterans Day luncheon for veterans and their spouses at the Union County Community Center, located at 129 Union County Recreation Road, beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Because of the limited amount of seating at the Community Center, tickets will be issued at no cost to veterans. When the tickets run out, attendance will be closed.

Tickets may be obtained

at any Veterans Service Organization chapter in Blairsville or from any Union County Rotarian. Call Gene Windham at 706-781-8176 for more information.

Finally, the Union County Historical Society will host a ceremony at 7 p.m. at the Old Courthouse to honor legendary Union County veterans Leon Davenport, Eric England, Franklin Hunter, and D.L. Martin for their military service to the American people.

It should not go without mentioning that the United States Marine Corps will celebrate its 247th birthday on Thursday, Nov. 10, as the Second Continental Congress resolved to raise two battalions

of Marines on that date in 1775.

Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment #783, which draws membership from Union and Towns counties, will celebrate the occasion with a Marine Corps dinner at Brother's Restaurant in Young Harris.

One of the highlights will be the cutting of the cake ceremony, performed with a Mameluke sword. Traditionally, the first piece of cake goes to the guest of honor, the second to the oldest Marine present, and the third to the youngest Marine present, per the Marine Corps Association.

Historical Society to honor local heroes



On Friday, November 11th the Union County Historical Society will honor Leon Davenport, Eric England, Franklin Hunter and D. L. Martin for their service to the American people during their military

careers. We will begin this program at 7 p.m. at the Old Union County Courthouse so please come out and let's pay respect to some real Union County and American Heroes.

Runaways ...from Page 1A

Abuse at home was not suspected in either situation, Osborn said, adding that unruly children running away from home cause an undue burden on law enforcement resources that could be better put to use working crimes in the community.

Giving an example, Osborn said the two runaways diverted attention from an investigation into a registered sex offender, Wade Allen Huffman, who absconded from his home while he was supposed to be on curfew Halloween night.

Huffman, 32, was originally convicted in 2010 for unlawful sexual conduct with a minor in Ohio, according to the GBI Sex Offender Registry, and he previously failed to register as a sex offender in Union County, resulting in additional

prison time before his release in September.

"It takes a lot of time and is a very big drain on our resources," Osborn said of investigations into runaway children. "We have spent multiple hours this week just on these two cases."

Fortunately, Union County has a good track record of children returning home safely after running away, but that doesn't make such actions OK, Osborn said.

Runaway youth are "vulnerable to a range of negative experiences including exploitation and victimization," with those who don't return home at greater risk of becoming homeless and being "more likely to engage in substance use and delinquent behavior," per youth.gov.



At press time, the Sheriff's Office was still looking for Wade Allen Huffman, a registered sex offender who absconded Oct. 31. Mugshot/GBI Sex Offender Registry

UCMS Pathway Day shows kids career path options



Union County Fire Lt. David Ueltzen showing students equipment used in emergencies on UCMS Pathway Day Oct. 26. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

“I liked speaking to the people and gaining insight on what the future may hold for me.”

Such were the words of a Union County Middle School student as recorded by Dr. Crystal Beach, Middle School CTAE Director, during the first ever Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Pathway Day in the UCMS gym.

She and High School CTAE Director Josh Davis, CTAE Governing Board members, and the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Union came together recently to brainstorm an event to better prepare upcoming high schoolers for choosing a focus of study.

“This really came about because, through our College and Career Academy Governing Board, there was a need to – again, as our CCA develops – to bring that down to our eighth-graders and to our Middle School,” Beach said. “We’re very, very excited to be able to have this and just so blessed to have our entire community support us in this new endeavor.”

For his part, Davis was on-hand to elaborate even further on how Pathway Day came to be. Usually, eighth-graders receive a pathway tour of UCHS around February so they can get a brief idea of the career-focused electives they may wish to pursue.

But the young students started offering feedback that “it was almost overwhelming to them because they only get five minutes in each area,” Davis said, so program stakeholders decided to try something more immersive this year.

Davis likened the dedicated Pathway Day event to a career fair, and it certainly seemed professional, with a circle of booths decorated with official logos and flags, manned

by industrial leaders, founders, or other prominent figures and volunteers connected to area companies.

Things like a CPR dummy at a nursing table and the Jaws of Life at the EMS table offered interactive and visual approaches to students looking to see their options in action.

And for each pathway with a corresponding course at UCHS, older students attended to represent the various potential vocations; this was an important aspect of the event, as sometimes kids are more apt to approach someone closer to their own age when it comes to learning, and Davis and UCHS Principal C.T. Hussion said the High Schoolers were happy to oblige.

Like the local businesses and organizations in attendance, the High School students set up tables with posters describing the kind of work that someone in agriculture, computer science, or business could pursue among other choices.

Many student-led tables featured the same interactive aspects to their presentations like examples of what their pathway was capable of teaching interested students.

Take, for example, the awesome snarling panther head put together by metalworking and welding students, or the innovative undercar lighting system from students interested in business. Alongside those were various electronic gadgets that more technologically inclined students could check out.

A few colleges also set up tables for the students to consider. While graduation may be a few years away for them, it’s never too early to prepare, and the kids were free to take home brochures on options like Young Harris College and North Georgia Technical College.

Eighth-grader Keely Bosen enjoyed attending the new event, saying that the opportunity to learn more

about secondary education was invaluable; she has her sights set on North Georgia Tech and is considering a future in photography.

“Choose wisely, because you never know what you’ll find an interest in,” Bosen advised her fellow students. “Look at all of them if you have to.”

Meanwhile, Leslie Daniel of the Union General Health System was present as a community partner and described Pathway Day as “an awesome event.”

“We partner with the school system with the STEM Program,” Daniel said, “so I put my folks from the hospital with the STEM class, and they get the real-world experience of what’s taught in the classroom.”

“This fair has been great. I think it will be wonderful for the children to get them ready to go to high school and prepare them for whatever they want to do. And it gives them a little idea of what’s out there in the community to be able to know what jobs are available.”

Middle School Principal Pat Donaldson agreed, saying she was “excited that we had this opportunity to offer to our eighth-graders.”

Donaldson, her fellow educators and community leaders hope that the event grows and continues to guide indecisive students to fill in the blank canvas of their lives ahead. In fact, Donaldson said she plans to include even greater variety in future Pathway Days and is eager to see what impacts the proactive approach has on education moving forward.

The schools are thankful for participants, including the chamber’s Leadership Union class that helped coordinate the event, consisting of community members like Stacy Plante of the Union General Health System, Monica Payne of SouthState Bank, and Katie Sayres of Chick-fil-A.

Phillips Honored...from Page 1A

“We could tell that he was very pleased with the award and understood its meaning,” Karen said in a statement. “Every stitch in this quilt was made with thanks for Pat and his service to our country.”

During her presentation, Karen explained to the audience the mission of the Quilts of Valor organization, which is “to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.”

She continued by relating the meaning behind the three layers used to construct the beautiful quilt.

“The top of the quilt with its many colors, shapes, and fabrics, represents the communities and the many individuals we are. The batting, the filler, is the center of the quilt, its warmth. It represents our hope that this quilt will bring warmth, comfort, peace, and healing to the individual who receives it. The backing is the strength that supports the other layers. It represents the strength of the recipient, the support of his or her family, our communities, and our nation. Each stitch that holds the layers together represents love, gratitude, and sometimes the tears of the maker.”

Phillips, a life member of Post 112 in Dalton since 1976, is an active member in The American Legion. Since 1978, he has served as a member of the American Legion’s National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

A past state commander of The American Legion – Department of Georgia, Phillips has been the state chairman of



Karen Trombley of the Georgia Quilts of Valor Foundation hugging local hero Veteran Pat Phillips after he received a Quilt of Valor on his namesake proclamation day Nov. 2. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

the Legion’s Rehabilitation Committee since 1993. Besides serving as state vice commander on three different occasions, he has been twice elected district commander over Legion’s posts in the North Georgia area.

By Executive Order, former Gov. Sonny Perdue appointed the Honorable Pat Phillips to serve on Georgia’s seven-member State Veterans Service Board. Pat served 16 years including serving as Chairman of the Board.

Phillips and wife Susie of 61 years have four children: Patti Aukerman of Muskogee, Oklahoma; Robby Phillips of Villa Rica; Kathy Stubblefield of Blairsville; and Drew Phillips of Ellijay; and they have 13

grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Pat joins the great heritage of other brave American warriors who have served freedom around the world since the time of the Revolutionary War. His continuing efforts to care for the welfare of Veterans and to honor their service and sacrifice is a testament to his dedication to his fellow Veterans and to his country.

The ceremony closed with appropriate remarks by Commissioner Paris, and Phillips took the opportunity to express his heartfelt gratitude for the recognition and thank everyone for their attendance that day.