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Fortunately, no one was hurt locally, but the storm did kill three Georgians with trees on homes – one person in Cherokee County and two people in Buford – as it cut northeastward through the state.

A band of rain ahead of the tropical storm dropped 2.34 inches of water in Blairsville Wednesday, so the river and creeks were already swollen by the time Zeta arrived Thursday morning with an additional 2.7 inches of rain.

The rapid rise in water through the morning resulted in the Fire Department's Swiftwater Rescue Team being dispatched by E-911 to perform

"water assists" for residents in three separate locations.

People attempting to navigate flooded areas can easily be knocked off their feet and swept away, as floodwaters often move deceptively fast and contain objects and debris that pose a threat to would-be river crossers.

Swiftwater Rescue Team firefighters are trained to respond under just such potentially perilous circumstances, and they assisted a number of residents via boat to higher ground in the Choestoe Valley RV Park, Crossing Creeks RV Park and at Pappy's Plaza Thursday.

Unfortunately, flooding caused damage to businesses inside Pappy's Plaza, and a few RVs and other vehicles were flooded at Crossing Creeks RV Park.

Several propane tanks got loose in the Nottely River, including an empty tank decorated like a pig from the "Pigs Gone Amuck" minigolf course at Jim's Smokin' Que, and a separate 1,000-gallon tank washed away from Pappy's Plaza spewing propane as it bobbed downstream.

Dustin Rogers is an agriculture technician at the Experiment Station, and he reported the big tank to authorities. While checking on one of the station's grassplots, he heard a whooshing sound coming down the river. When he saw the tank, he realized the sound was pressurized propane escaping.

A Union County native, Rogers has been working at the Experiment Station for 15 years. The area around Arkaqua and Pappy's Plaza is known to flood during significant rain events, but Rogers said Thursday he couldn't recall ever seeing that kind of flooding there.

"This is definitely a testament to Mother Nature," Rogers said.

Thanks to Rogers' tip, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn tracked the rogue tank to the River Refuge area of Nottely River across Gainesville Highway from Owlton Market, about 2.5 miles downriver from where the tank began its journey.

Osborn also reported that a mudslide had blocked one lane of Gainesville Highway between Vogel State Park and Helton Creek Falls, and that workers with the Georgia



Pappy's received extensive flooding from the Nottely River after Zeta moved through Thursday morning, undoubtedly causing extensive damage to the shops in the plaza.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Air Force Veteran Harry Williams receives Quilt of Valor



U.S. Air Force Veteran Harry Williams

On October 27, 2020 Homestead Hospice of Blairsville presented Harry Williams of Blairsville with a Quilt of Valor for his service in the Air Force. The Quilt and Pillowcase were donated by the Quilt of Valor Foundation and locally made by the Misty Mountain Quilters Guild. The ceremony was held at his home in Blairsville surrounded by his family.

Shannon Larsen of Homestead Hospice, read about the Quilts of Valor; sharing their meaning and their history and quilted Mr. Williams. David Feathers of Homestead Hospice blessed the room and performed the pinning ceremony.

Congratulations to Mr. Williams and we thank him deeply for his service!



One of the pink propane piggies from "Pigs Gone Amuck" minigolf took a trip down the Nottely River last week. Thankfully, it was recovered.

Photo/Facebook

Department of Transportation cleared the roadway.

Many area schools announced ahead of time Wednesday that they would be closing their campuses Thursday in anticipation of the storm, including Union County Schools, Young Harris College and North Georgia Tech, with classes resuming in-person learning Friday.

In addition, the harsh winds blew signs around all over town and knocked down scarecrows at the Historic Courthouse on the Blairsville Square, and all in all, EMA Director Dyer said the county was fortunate that no one got

hurt.

Continuing, Dyer said all the local agencies and stakeholders worked well together during the event, and that Tropical Storm Zeta was a good reminder for residents of the importance of being ready with a Basic Disaster Supplies Kit in case they lose power for days.

A checklist for such a kit is available at <https://www.ready.gov/kit>.

Later Thursday morning, hours after the storm had passed and after seeing posts on social media highlighting Zeta's toll around town, Rusty and Melanie Durden took their

daughter Margot to see the raging river waters at Meeks II, as many people were doing.

The Durdens are from Macon, and they moved here a few years back to raise their family. Melanie's parents live here, too, and the young couple appreciate Union County for its natural beauty, strong school system and local culture.

"We've only been here three years, so this is the highest we've ever seen the river," Rusty said. "We just like the small-town community. We got out of Macon because we had (our daughter), and we didn't want to raise her in a big city."

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located along a one-way walking path.

The Marina understands that traditions are important – after all, it has hosted a Fourth of July Boat Parade for families for more than 20 years now, started by Marina Owner and family matriarch Carleen Doucette.

Sadly, Carleen passed away at the age of 79 on Sept. 7, but thanks to her leadership and passion for Union County,

the Doucettes continue to be a community-minded family.

So, when it looked like most of the usual Halloween events were being canceled for COVID-19, Shane and Moriah Doucette stepped up to provide a three-day spooky Marina experience for children and families, and they did it with assistance from their employees and community friends.

"We're doing this to help out Moriah," said Alexus

Guglielmo, who has worked for the Marina for nearly two years and has been family friends with the Doucettes.

Guglielmo and her boyfriend Dakota Havard were part of the sinister scenery at the Marina, having dressed up and decorated their Dodge Challenger using a particularly bloody theme from the dystopian "The Purge" movies to provide photo opportunities for attendees.

"The Marina does things like this to bring the community together," Guglielmo said,



More than 1,000 kids and parents visited Nottely Marina over its three days of Halloween, giving families something fun to do for the holiday.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



The Mitchells had fun dressing up to get candy during the First Baptist Fall Festival Drive-Thru Halloween Saturday.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

giving credit to "Grandma Carleen" and the Doucettes for making Nottely Marina such a big presence locally.

And parents enjoyed the opportunity to have something to take their kids to, with many families thankful to carry on a normal American tradition during a decidedly abnormal year.

Joe and Amanda Marlow of Blairsville took their three children trick-or-treating at the Marina over the weekend; Trevor went as a possessed, demon-ized jester, Solomon as the Incredible Hulk, and Peyton was a witch.

"I'm glad that they decided to do something amid the coronavirus crisis instead of shutting it down," Joe said of the Marina's Halloween offering. "Doing things as a family really keeps you in check."

"Good connection, good bonding is important for a household to stay in touch with what's going on, and it's good to make the memories and have that tradition to hold onto."

Tom and Colleen Mangifesta volunteered for the three nights of the event, Oct. 29-31. Tom is a lieutenant with the Union County Sheriff's Office, and he helped families park so they could safely make their way through all the candy stations.

"Moriah and Shane deserve all the credit," Tom said, estimating kid and parent attendance at between 1,200 and 1,500 over the three nights.

"They really care about Union County."

Over at First Baptist Blairsville, just up from the Downtown Blairsville Square, the church held its annual Fall Festival on Halloween, but the event was definitely different this year.

Usually, the Fall Festival provides candy, popcorn and more to masses of children who walk the front parking area participating in various games and activities, with the event historically overlapping with Halloween on the Square, though the latter was canceled in 2020.

This year, the church decided to do a drive-thru event for safety reasons, in which church volunteers put on costumes and decorated 18 of their cars for a Trunk-or-Treat that welcomed hundreds of cars loaded with costumed children.

"It's all different, so with the drive-thru and then COVID and everything, we weren't sure what to expect," Children's Minister Debbie Braswell said. "When we do it in conjunction with the event on the square, we usually have about 1,000 people come through."

And it looked as though the church was well on track to meet or exceed their usual yearly total of guests Saturday, as they ran out of candy at least once, requiring them to go get more.

"We're excited to have this turnout and have this opportunity," Braswell

said. "We were afraid things would happen, a lockdown or whatever, and we wouldn't get to, so we're glad that we're getting to do this."

As to why First Baptist felt the need to keep its Fall Festival up and running in 2020, Braswell said the church wanted kids and families to have a safe place to go on Halloween.

"We just like to show love to our community and let them know that they're important to us here at First Baptist," Braswell said. "It's really fun to be a part of it."

Of course, parents were glad to be a part of it as well, including Trey and Kelsey Tippie, who were up from Cleveland with their kids Nora, Sadie and Henry. The Tippies moved to the area recently to be near Kelsey's parents in Blairsville.

"We actually just moved to the northern Georgia area, so it's new for us," Kelsey said. "To be able to find things like this, it's just special that I can still have fun with my kids on Halloween, even though there's a pandemic going on."

"I appreciate organizations like this that have put the effort out there to make it a fun day for the kids and do something special."

The Blairsville Police Department also attended the Fall Festival, directing traffic and making sure everything went smoothly at the church Saturday.