

## Arby's...from Page 1A

with the ongoing nature of the negotiations and the significant investment of time and money the developer and Arby's have committed into site investigation, has given the DDA Board confidence that the Arby's corporate board will greenlight the purchase.

Most recently, the DDA Board rejected a proposal by the developer to reduce by \$93,230 the selling price of the Georgia 515-facing Haralson Property land lot the DDA hopes will house a future Arby's.

A point of contention in negotiations has been the results of a geotechnical report commissioned by GLM Development showing water near the surface of the property, prompting the real estate developer to cite unforeseen mitigation costs of about \$200,000.

DDA Board members rejected the \$93,000 price reduction proposal in a Nov. 6 called meeting, pointing to concessions they had already made totaling about \$105,000,

including \$25,000 to be subtracted for site work and the granting of a tenth of an acre of land valued at roughly \$80,000.

As soon as the Arby's corporate board approves the purchase on Dec. 16, as the DDA Board expects it to do, the deal will revert to the original contract timeline, and closing procedures will begin.

Money from the Arby's deal would allow the DDA to get started on its parking plans for the downtown area, including the potential development of parking on the Haralson Property parcel across from Cook's Country Kitchen along Pat Haralson Drive.

The promised paved parking area behind Blairsville City Hall is on hold until construction starts on Steve Cockerham's mixed-use commercial development known as Courthouse View.

Cockerham said recently that he had secured a builder for the project, and that the builder was working with the building's architect to lower construction costs before the final contract could be awarded.

Progress has remained dormant of late on the Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen at the corner of Bob Heat Street and Georgia 515, with an information request to corporate headquarters going unanswered by press time.

According to the most current information from DDA Program Manager Darren Harper, the restaurant is finished being built and has been hooked



**The much-anticipated LongHorn Steakhouse on Brackett's Way continues to make progress toward its February 2020 target completion date.**

up to power, though it's still awaiting delivery of kitchen equipment.

In other development

news, the exterior of the LongHorn Steakhouse on Brackett's Way appears to be coming along, with the

restaurant seemingly still on track for a February 2020 opening date.

## Shop with a Cop...from Page 1A

other family members, said Blairsville Municipal Court Clerk Cindy Neely, who minds the front desk at the police department.

"Our event date is Dec. 14. We meet at the middle school," Neely said. "Fellowship of the Hills Church has graciously agreed to provide food baskets for each family. They get a 5-gallon bucket full of food.

"We also give each family a \$100 gift card to Save-a-Lot for groceries, and Chick-fil-A will provide lunch for the kids."

Neely said the event is possible thanks to the many volunteers they get "from all walks of life," including police officers and their significant others, teachers, members of the Blairsville Cruisers and others who chaperone the kids.

The children start their day of shopping at the Union County Middle School, from which they travel to Walmart at about 8 a.m. and try to finish up shopping by 11:30 a.m.

"This year, I know we have some who are in elementary school, and we have some that are all the way up in the high school," Baxter said, noting that, in years past, they'd only taken middle and high school kids. "We mixed it up a little bit this year."

Added Baxter, "We live in a good community where people have been very, very generous in giving to us, and in return, 100% of the proceeds that we collect for this cause goes to Shop with a Cop."

"And we spend our money locally. We spend it here in our town. It's all spent

locally, and it goes right back into the local economy.

"I'm proud of our community. I'm proud of the businesses, the people, and we're lucky we live in such a good place. The people, they've been so supportive of our cause, and we couldn't ask for anything more.

"It's a big undertaking. It takes a lot of money to make this happen, and it's really not about us. It's about these kids having a good Christmas, and it's the community that makes this happen."

Children participating in Shop with a Cop are selected annually with the help of Union County Family Connection, which works from inside the school system to advocate for student needs.

## Thanksgiving...from Page 1A



**House of Prayer Church volunteers preparing food for people in need of a good Thanksgiving Day meal on Nov. 28.**

Photo by Mark Smith

Meals ministry, was on hand at both locations where food was prepared, boxed for delivery or pick-up, and served.

"For the first time," Wolcott said, "I feel like we've finally gotten where we wanted to be at the beginning, which is to be a community that is stepping out for Christ and setting our particular church denominations aside. To me, that's the big story this year."

The Thanksgiving Day ministry started out in 2011 with seven people at the helm inside the United Community Bank Brackett Room, according to Wolcott.

"That first year we had 145 meals and about 30 volunteers," Wolcott said. "This year, we're at 1,030 meals. I think 503 of them were delivered out of Harmony Grove (Baptist Church); 110 will be dining in (at House of Prayer Church); and whatever that difference is, 400 plus people are coming to pick up."

Five of the seven people who started the Thanksgiving Day ministry are still running the show, undertaking this year's endeavor with the help of over 200 volunteers. And the ministry works with 36 community partners to gather names for a meal count.

The Thanksgiving Day ministry takes a huge amount of planning and coordination. There is, of course, food prep, which was done at Harmony Grove Baptist Church, First United Methodist Church and House of Prayer Non-denominational Church.

But a great deal of effort went into coordinating with the 36 community partners, portioning the dinner boxes, counting up and boxing individual dinners for delivery, coordinating delivery routes and drivers, establishing pick-up locations and, as always, the

clean-up.

"The scripture that we originally started out with that guided us was Proverbs 16:9, 'We make our plans, but God orders our steps.' The planning is done. You're ready to step into what God has prepared for you," Wolcott said.

With that in mind, the delivery drivers were asked to keep a sharp eye out for anything that the ministry might be able to help with as they made their deliveries, such as wheelchair-bound residents with no ramps at their homes.

Wolcott posed an important question that Thursday, asking who was more blessed for their participation, the people receiving the food

or the people giving it? Barb Wolcott replied they were equally blessed in their own ways, making the arrangement a win-win for everyone.

The 10 Union County churches that participated in the Thanksgiving Day feast were Harmony Grove Baptist, House of Prayer, First United Methodist, Antioch Baptist, Fellowship of the Hills, Vertical Church, All Saints Lutheran, Choestoe Baptist, Grace Life Church and Church of Christ.

Of course, there are other churches in the area that have similar ministries for their congregations, and Union General Hospital provided meals for their employees who had to work on Thanksgiving Day.

## Powell...

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"He previously served as Chairman of the House Ways & Means Committee, which oversees tax policy. Throughout his tenure in the House, Jay championed sound fiscal policy, independence of local governments and economic opportunity in rural Georgia, having co-chaired the first Rural Development Council."