

North Georgia News

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Kris Kringle Market attracts thousands of Christmas shoppers

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market hosted the annual Kris Kringle Market on Saturday, Dec. 7, and it was a resounding success.

With all of the activities going on around town Saturday, there was some concern that the weather wouldn't cooperate, and fortunately, it turned out to be the perfect fall day with cool temperatures in the morning and not a cloud in the sky.

The Kris Kringle Market officially started at 10 a.m., though the parking lot was full by 9:30 a.m. At 10:30, the overflow of cars spilled to the area beyond Butternut Creek and all the way up to the Hunter-England Cabin.

Inside the cabin were not just hundreds of people but a couple thousand at least, making for slow going

through the market, which gave shoppers more time to peruse the merchandise of the 90-plus vendors who were elated with the big crowd.

Market Manager Mickey Cummings and Assistant Manager Kristy Peney stayed extremely busy running the 2019 edition of Kris Kringle.

"It's exceeded our expectations about the number of people that have shown up so far today," Cummings said. "We have pretty close to 90 or 91 vendors here today, and it's a beautiful day, so we're really excited for our vendors and our community. It's been a good day."

Allison Caldwell and her sister Lisa Kurti were busy selling fragrant soaps on behalf of Crooked Creek Farm, while their mother Sheila Ruud had a booth for the family business at the Holiday Stop and Shop at the Union County Civic

Center.

"It's going very well," Caldwell said. "We have lots of people. People are coming out. We have lots of talented vendors. We're all good."

Dennis and Sue Bible of Blairsville were at the Kris Kringle Market enjoying the day.

"It looks to me like people are encouraged," Bible said. "The economy is up, unemployment is at a 50-year low, and people have some money to spend now and they're out here enjoying what they have. You can tell people are in a good mood."

Richard Chaplin and Desire Reding of Ronger, North Carolina, traveled to Blairsville to see the Kris Kringle Market.

"We love it," Reding said. "We enjoy coming to this market because everybody is



The annual Kris Kringle Market at the Union County Farmers Market featured plenty of Christmas-themed shopping and activities for the whole family to enjoy on Saturday, Dec. 7. Photo by Mark Smith

Hundreds attend nighttime Christmas parade in Downtown Blairsville

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Though it's only been held at night since 2017, the annual Blairsville Christmas Parade was as popular as ever in Downtown Blairsville on Saturday, Dec. 7.

Hundreds of people from all around the area came up for the big parade, which continued unbroken all the way from the square, down Blue Ridge Street, up Hunt-Martin Street and over to Kimsey Street.

Classic cars decorated with lights and garland, more than two dozen festive floats, a team of Christmas-dressed horses, various church groups, local organizations and businesses celebrating the reason for the season, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus all made their way along the parade route.

And throughout, the Union County High School Pride of the Mountains Marching Band and the Woody



Santa and Mrs. Claus took to their sleigh for the annual Blairsville Christmas Parade around the Historic Courthouse on Saturday, Dec. 7. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Gap Band of Steel entertained the masses with cheerful Christmas music.

Many parade participants threw candy for kids, including Blairsville Mayor John Conley, with the event being coordinated

by Visit Downtown Blairsville and the Union County Historical Society.

Libby Stevens emceed the parade as always, and Fire Chief David Dyer led the

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Americans reflect on price of freedom during Pearl Harbor anniversary

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service carried out a sneak attack against the United States at Naval Station Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Every year since, Dec. 7 has been set aside to honor and remember the 2,335 U.S. military personnel and 68 civilians who were killed, as well as the 1,178 injured on that infamous day.

This year, the 78th anniversary of the attack fell on a Saturday when the area was in full Christmas mode with planned weekend festivities, and many patriotic residents incorporated Pearl Harbor remembrance for the thousands of Americans killed and injured that day in 1941.

Retired U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Clarence E. "Bud" Johnson, 97, of Hiawassee, joined the Navy in 1939 at age 17. Johnson wasn't at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, but the



The U.S. Flag flies over Hickam Airfield after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Note the burning buildings in the background. Photo/Pearl Harbor National Memorial

Two Jima Veteran remembers it well.

"I had two and a half years in the Atlantic Fleet," Johnson said. "I was on my second destroyer when Pearl Harbor (happened). Like everybody else, we couldn't

believe it either. But this was no drill.

"I didn't get out to the Pacific until 1944. We spent a month operating in and out of Pearl, and I saw the results of it."

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Residents encouraged to 'Give the Gift of Food' to a senior this Christmas

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

For the month of December, the Union County Senior Center is hosting the "Give the Gift of Food to a Senior" program in which members of the community can share the gift of a meal with a homebound senior this Christmas season.

From Thanksgiving until New Year's Day, meals delivered to homebound seniors in Union County will come with a special card wishing Happy Holidays from the gift giver.

Community members can provide a meal for a day, a week, a month or a year, with the cost of one meal being just \$3.87.

For one week, the cost is \$19.35. For one month, it's \$85.14. And for one year of meals for a Union County senior, it's \$1,021.68.



Union County Senior Center Program coordinator Sarah Lopez and Director Kathy Hill make sure seniors who utilize the center get the most of their experiences there. Photo by Mark Smith

Checks should be made payable to Union County Senior Center Holiday Gift Certificate Program and delivered or mailed to Union County Senior Center, 95 Senior Center Drive, Blairsville, GA 30512.

The Senior Center serves as a nutrition and activity center for seniors Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., with the county budgeting funds in support of the center

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'Christmas on the Square' provides Santa visits, activities for children

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Visit Downtown Blairsville partnered with the Union County Historical Society on Saturday, Dec. 7, to put on a super festive Christmas on the Square event for local families to enjoy.

The occasion featured an assortment of activities beginning early in the day and lasting until the end of the nighttime parade.

Activities taking place outside the Historic Courthouse included face painting, stocking decorating, coloring with crayons and glue painting, and holiday snacks were provided to those who needed an extra boost of energy after partaking in the various pastimes.

Inside the Old Courthouse, Santa awaited visits from all the kids to tell



Kids took part in fun activities during the Christmas on the Square event Saturday, including coloring and stocking decorating. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

him what they wanted for Christmas and pose for a few photos.

And sure enough, children rushed up the stairs

for a chance to sit on Santa's lap as he talked to them about the North Pole and how good they have been for the year.

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Former Library Director Stone: 'I was always proud to be your director'

By Shawn Jarrard
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Vince Stone was taken aback when he learned that the 12-member Mountain Regional Library System Board of Trustees had voted unanimously to terminate his employment as library director on Oct. 15.

After all, the Regional Board had given the director "full high marks" during his last job evaluation in June,

and resulted in a paralyzed right arm and an inability to speak. He subsequently qualified for a job-protected leave period under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which expired the day before his termination.

In the intervening months since his stroke, Stone says he has started talking again and is showing progress in physical rehabilitation. But following his release from employment, he has struggled with the public messaging surrounding his

termination.

The former library director recently reached out to the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald to tell his side of the story, as he feels the library's Regional Board has supplied inadequate reasons to the public about his termination.

Stone and his family believe he lost his job for no other reason than his continuing health problems. Furthermore, Stone says he was not invited

to the meeting in which he was fired, and that he was thereafter removed from his job without a single board member speaking with him.

As reported in the Oct. 23 editions of the newspapers, at the time of his termination, the board said Stone had been away from his job for several months for unspecified personal reasons, with Interim Regional Director Claudia Gibson having served as temporary director



Vince Stone

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