

## Target Range...from Page 1A

all over the county.

"The thing that the public didn't understand is that the Forest Service is not just for hiking the Appalachian Trail. It is property owned by the United States, and their goal is to try to provide recreation and event space and facilities for a lot of different folks.

"So, it's not all just the campers and the hikers. That's a big part of it – you don't want to destroy your national forest – but this particular property is already in grass, so there's very few trees that will have to be cut."

Now that the Forest Service has approved the project, Larry Garrett and Jim Marchman of the Commissioner's Office will join Paris for a meeting with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources on funding for the range, which will likely consist of local, state and federal dollars.

Paris said they will be speaking with DNR officials to get direction on who to contact about developing a site plan. There are companies that specialize in gun ranges that DNR has used in the past.

It is estimated that site plan development will take at least two or three months to complete, though as mentioned above, it's still too early to offer a construction timeline for the range.

Sheriff Mason said he was thankful for everyone in the community who stepped out on faith and took a chance when forming the Gun Club, investing their patience and hard-earned money in a grassroots effort of this magnitude.

"I said this is the only chance that I know of for Union County to have a gun range,"

Mason said. "That it's kind of a now or never, so everybody jump in, stick together, and let's see this thing through. It isn't going to happen overnight."

Added Mason, "In unity, there is strength, and that's one of the things that has propelled us. We're sitting on 500 members plus, which shows the need and necessity to get this done.

"There is a lot target practice that takes place on Forest Service land near houses, and homeowners in close proximity disturb one another when shooting on their property.

"I'm hoping to centralize these people, that maybe they'll want to join this club, confine it to a particular area by shooting in a nice, safe facility.

"Safety is one thing. The

aggravation of homeowners is another, infringing on their peace and tranquility."

The sheriff went on to say that the Chatuge Gun Club Target Range in Towns County has been in operation for about 40 years with no accidents or issues, with countless thousands of people having belonged to that group over the years.

Sheriff Mason said he was also thankful the Union County Gun Club Board Members for their many hours of work looking up regulations and compiling information to get the Target Range effort to the place it is today.

"We are so pleased with the patience that has been shown to our board members by our Union County Gun Club membership personnel for their support and standing so firmly

behind us," Gun Club President Paul Clark said.

Added Clark, "We would like to take this opportunity to thank folks from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue's office, Rep. Doug Collins' office, folks from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, our local Ranger Andy Baker and Forest Service personnel, our Union County Commissioner's office, and our Sheriff's Office for their collective unwavering support for the progress that has been accomplished so far.

"Everyone involved has voiced, at one time or another, 'what a wonderful team-supported effort has been garnered for this momentous project.'"

## Gaddistown...from Page 1A

Gooch said several local groups participated that year, which culminated with a tree lighting ceremony. The tree lighting then became a yearly event.

The Homemakers planted another tree at the Suches Community Center when it was built, and the Christmas tree lighting moved there, just across the street from Woody Gap, which opened its doors in 1941 and today combines a mountain heritage education with 21st century skills.

Gooch said the annual Christmas tradition has gotten a little bigger each year, and now, being combined with the school's Open House and participation by local churches, it's a large community event. About 200 people attended this year.

The partnership between the Gaddistown Homemakers and Woody Gap started about four years ago when Principal Carol Knight approached the Homemakers with a proposal to combine their Christmas Tree Lighting with the school's Christmas Open House.

Each year, the Christmas show begins inside the school auditorium with a program of local pastors telling the story of Jesus' birth, followed by the singing of a cantata and various children's Christmastime performances.

The Gaddistown Homemakers are famous in The Valley Above the Clouds for the pies they make and sell alongside crafts at the Indian Summer Festival the first weekend in October every year.

They sell ice cream on the Fourth of July and raffle quilts as well, all to raise money for the Suches community at Christmas.

It was during the auditorium part of the event that Gooch distributed those funds on behalf of the Gaddistown Homemakers to various causes and organizations in the Suches community.

Those distributions were to Functional Fitness, a local community fitness program, \$250; Suches Community Needs Program, \$300; Skills USA Program, \$500; Jekyll Island Science Trip, \$500; Woody Gap Band of Steel, \$1,000; and Union County Fire Station No. 5, \$2,500.

Things got a little emotional during the presentation to Station 5, because the locally known "Suches Fire Department" means so much to the community, and the donation helps tremendously.

"We have a community that is dedicated to supporting us," Station 5 Lt. Ernie Pruitt said. "The Gaddistown Homemakers are a huge part of that and always have been. We couldn't live without them."

Following the auditorium show, everyone moved over to the school gym, at which

### Megan Byrd in holiday concert

Megan Byrd of Blairsville, GA participated in the annual University of North Georgia (UNG) Holiday Concert. UNG's music department presented a single performance at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, at Grace Episcopal Church at 422 Brenau Ave., in Gainesville, GA. It was free and open to the public.

The performance featured traditional hymns such as "Joy to the World" and "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and Holiday favorites "Winter Wonderland" with more contemporary pieces such as "The Waiting Sky." N/Dec18Z3CA



Woody Gap School kids decorate the halls and doors of the school in preparation for the Gaddistown Christmas event. Pictured here: the door of the seventh-grade class.

time the Christmas tree lights were lit, and Santa made an appearance. Kids – and several adults – were able to get their pictures taken with Santa.

A veritable feast with refreshments was laid out after Santa's visit by community members who brought all sorts of finger foods and desserts,

and a great time was had by everybody.

"I think we are very blessed to live in a community where we can do a Christian music cantata and people not object to it," Gooch said. "And we're very blessed to have dedicated people like Ernie in Suches."

### Author speaks at Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting



Author Mary Phagan-Kean, great niece of the 13-year-old Atlanta factory worker murdered by Leo Frank in 1913, spoke to the David W. Payne Camp #1633, Sons of Confederate Veterans, at their December 12th meeting in Blairsville. Phagan-Kean is flanked by Camp Adjutant Jessie Pinson (L) and Camp Commander Mike Pettus (R). NT/Dec18Z17CA

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