

# Holiday Gratitude...from Page 1A

here in the world and to think longer term.

"I'm thankful for life, really - this life that was given to me by God, and all that He has given me in my life," Marsh said at Ingles in Blairsville Nov. 28. "He is the reason to be thankful during this season, and He is what needs to be on people's minds and hearts as we get through these difficult times.

"We as people of this country need to come closer to God and show what it means to be His children. We have been fighting each other for the last few months and nothing has been clean, especially this election.

"I would like to see us

come to a calm for the holidays and really reflect on what it is worth in the end. This world is our temporary home, and we may pass it down to our children. But we need to plan for the future, and that future is not going to happen in all of this conflict."

April Martinez of Fannin County believes people should focus on appreciating all the things that make the North Georgia Mountains such a wonderful place to live.

"I'm thankful to be surrounded by people that care for me and my family," Martinez said at the Blairsville Save-A-Lot on Saturday. "My grandmother came from Mexico a while back, and she

lived a very hard life.

"It was with her work that we are here today and able to do the things that I have done in life and what my children can do in the future. I'm thankful for that. And I'm happy to be in an area where people are nice and actually care about me and my family.

"People say all the time and on the news that places like this are full of racists and that stuff, but I have seen nothing but kindness. Sure, you get a few here and there, but it is nothing compared to the amount of love we get.

"I am so thankful to be somewhere where my kids can grow up and have opportunities in life."

# Christmas Events...from Page 1A

crafts out to the kids when they leave, and the parents and kids can do those at home. They won't be sitting in Santa's lap, but we have got a little bench that will be right (near) Santa."

Rowe asks that guests of the event wear masks - provided as needed - and practice social distancing to the best of their ability.

The chamber is also holding its annual Tour of Trees featuring Christmas trees decorated by local businesses and organizations for a beautiful competition inside the Community Center.

"This year we have sold out all of our trees," Rowe said. "Everybody is excited about doing the Tour of Trees that starts on Dec. 1 and runs through the month.

"We anticipate having the gingerbread houses and having the Gingerbread Village, and the trees are bigger and better this year as far as the decorations. They just keep getting bigger and better.

"If you are looking for a way to get Christmas spirit, then you need to come see the Tour of Trees, because it will get you in the spirit."

Annual events like Breakfast with Santa and the Tour of Trees are vital in small-town communities like Blairsville, according to Rowe.

"It is very important to continue traditions," Rowe said. "It is about family and (provides) ways that families can get out and do things, very traditional things, in a safe environment.

"When you see so many things falling by the wayside for whatever reason, especially in 2020, it is important to continue a lot of these activities to hopefully boost people's spirits this time of the year."

Also Dec. 5, on the Downtown Blairsville Square, live caroling at 6 p.m. will correspond with the Moonlight Market running 4-8 p.m., during which time people will be able to do copious amounts of Christmas shopping.

And though this year's Christmas parade has been canceled, just like Rowe and the chamber, Darren Harper with Visit Downtown Blairsville has been aiming to maintain as many traditions as possible

to foster opportunities for businesses and the community alike.

"A lot of what we did was what we normally do," Harper said. "That is just trying to create a sense of normalcy this time of year.

"We did bump up Christmas decorations by a week; that had to do with both the fact that we were short of staff, and it gave the merchants four weekends before Christmas instead of three. That is very important considering the first part of the year a lot of businesses were closed, which hurt.

"These are mom and pop shops we are talking about. They operate on a very thin profit margin, and we are trying to do everything we can to help them get out of that hole but at the same time move forward and think about different ways of doing things."

Concurrently Dec. 5, people will be able to enjoy one last day of shopping at the Union County Farmers Market after its season ended Oct. 31.

The Kris Kringle Christmas Market will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, bringing in around 80 vendors with a variety of crafts, homegrown produce and other locally made treats.

Market Manager Micky Cummings said he is looking forward to this final market

day after a successful year of keeping people safe and providing an outlet for local farmers to sell, even amid COVID-19.

"It has been a good year for us," Cummings said. "We had to operate under different circumstances than in the past, but we did it safely. Hopefully, this coming Saturday will be no exception. We try to operate as safe as we can and are thankful for our vendors and community for working with us to do so."

Be sure to visit Downtown Blairsville Dec. 3-5 for the Jingle Bell Buys shopping deal event. Also Dec. 5 is the Holiday Stop & Shop at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center for more Christmas gift opportunities, and the ever-popular Vogel Tree Lighting is set for Dec. 12.

For more information on upcoming events, check out VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

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# Airport...from Page 1A

The history is a little murky due to the fog of time, but the Blairsville Airport reportedly once had visual approach slope indicator lights many years ago, before the last runway extension in the early 1990s.

Wiring for a PAPI was apparently completed at the time of the extension, but the system was not installed.

It has been a goal of the city and GDOT to install PAPI ever since the Dec. 19, 2018, nighttime plane crash on Kings Road that killed three people and critically injured a fourth. The crash is still under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board.

As previously reported, the FAA advised the city to discontinue landings after dark following the crash, though pilots rated for general aviation may still land at night.

According to Airport Manager Mannheim, Blairsville's runway lights are rated medium intensity, not high intensity, so the airport supports daytime-only

operations for charter flights but does allow landings after dark for personal flights meeting FAA requirements.

Funding for the upcoming construction was approved in the Blairsville City Council's Nov. 3 regular meeting. All told, the projects will cost \$392,471, to be funded primarily using federal and state dollars, with a \$27,330 local match.

"Blairsville Airport is located 3 miles southwest of Blairsville's central business district situated on 156 acres and owned and operated by the City of Blairsville," according to GDOT. "The airport has a 5,006-foot asphalt runway, Runway 8/26."

Continuing, "Blairsville Airport plays a key role in supporting area businesses ... The manufacturing industry has a significant presence in the area ... (and) the area's economy is heavily tied to tourism, thanks to the abundant recreational opportunities in the vicinity and numerous hospitality industry businesses.

"Recreational attractions

and opportunities in the area include the Chattahoochee National Forest, DeSoto Falls Scenic Area, Vogel State Park, Trackrock Archeological Area, Appalachian Trail, Lake Nottely, Brasstown Bald Mountain and Brasstown Valley Resort.

"Frequently utilized by visitors and residents alike, Blairsville Airport serves as a gateway to the recreational activities and attractions of Union County."

Additionally, the airport supports "flight training, forest firefighting, aerial inspections and surveys, law enforcement flights, search and rescue operations, environmental patrols, and real estate tours."

"It serves as a meeting place for many different organizations, including Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Transportation Security Administration," according to GDOT. "Life Flight helicopters, Angel Flights, VET Flights and Humane Society Rescue Flights, whose services inherently enhance the quality of local life, also utilize the airport.

"The local EAA chapter has (annual) fly-in cookouts ... which attract over 150 people, and offer Young Eagle youth outreach events. The Civil Air Patrol conducts search and rescue operations. Blairsville Municipal Airport also serves as a field trip location for local schools."

## Union General Hospital receives Women's Choice Award for Obstetrics

Union General Hospital in Blairsville was chosen by the Women's Choice Award for being one of America's Best Hospitals for Obstetrics in 2020.

Union General ranked in the top 6% of equivalent-sized U.S. hospitals offering obstetrics.



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