

Reece Days...from Page 1

community engagement minor. The site is also utilized for service learning and internship opportunities for many of YHC's academic programs.

"I see the Farm and Heritage Center as a learning center in respect to Appalachian culture," said Dr. Kay. "Without the investment of YHC personnel and resources in this venture, it is doubtful we could have created and sustained what is by all counts a viable and thriving organization."

The Society was founded in 2003 on the YHC campus to increase awareness of Reece's work through programs, publicity and development of the Farm. The majority of the group's officers have direct links to the College, and many YHC employees also serve as members of the Society's board of directors.

A virtual showcase of Appalachian farm life in the first half of the 20th century when the Reece family tilled the land as subsistence farmers, the Farm is designated part of the Southern Literary Trail, placing Reece alongside literary greats such as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams,



Margaret Mitchell and Flannery O'Conner. To learn more about the

Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, visit byronherbertreesesociety.org.

Witness...from Page 1

contacted *Witness to War* with a plan to feature veterans in the surrounding area.

"Although they were interested in veterans from all wars, I concentrated my search on World War II veterans, because their stories are leaving us so quickly," she said.

Although the search for veterans went slowly at first, Gibson soon found herself with 10 World War II combat veterans who were willing to be interviewed about their experiences.

Among them are, of course, Johnson and Kimsey, who served in the U.S. Navy in the Battle of Iwo Jima, and Gamache, a U.S. Marine who also served at Iwo Jima.

In the course of her work, Gibson's gotten the opportunity to know them.

"Todd Kimsey turns out was my husband's high school science teacher," she said. Kimsey, a member of the U.S. Navy during Iwo Jima, said he got his education in the Pacific.

"We live on memories. I wake up at night and sometimes those memories come back to me," he said. "You come to the realization that we all went through hell in that war."

Iwo Jima was a 35-day bloody battle, 6,821 Americans died, 19,217 were wounded, and one U.S. Destroyer Escort was sunk. Almost 19,000 Japanese soldiers died; only 216 were taken prisoner.

"It wasn't supposed to take very much time to take control of Iwo Jima," Johnson said. "Three days or no more than a week tops."

Three days turned into

35 before U.S. forces could claim control of the tiny island on March 26, 1945, Johnson said.

"We bombed Iwo Jima for 72 hours before attempting to go ashore," Johnson said. "It didn't do any good. All it did was make potholes in the airfields. The Japanese were in the hills."

"The Japanese had turned the island into an anthill," he said. "They had miles and miles of tunnels underground and in the hillside. All that bombing and we didn't touch a single Japanese soldier."

Johnson, who served in both the Pacific and Atlantic during World War II, said the Japanese were among the most disciplined military forces of all time.

"They fought to the death," Johnson said. "Before you even encountered the Japanese, you knew you were in for a fight."

The first three days after the Allied bombings on Iwo Jima were torture as well, said Johnson, who was aboard a Destroyer Escort.

Johnson stood helplessly as one U.S. Marine after the other dropped dead or wounded on the beach during the first three days of fighting ashore took place.

"It was horrible, they just couldn't get a foothold," Johnson, now, 92, remembered. "It breaks your heart to see your friends go down."

Gibson was invited to a luncheon at Bear Meadows Grill in February that honored the Iwo Jima survivors on the 69th anniversary of the battle. The experience was emotional

for her.

"It sure was devastating," she recalled. "I don't know how these people survived. So many didn't."

"What I'm doing has really put me in touch with not only combat veterans, but I'm getting calls from people who have inherited memorabilia from their relatives who are deceased," Gibson said. "And they tell me stories that touch me. Many's the night that I've hung up the phone and cried after hearing these stories."

One of her favorite stories illustrates the dual nature of soldiers and war.

One man called her to say that although he was 10 years old when the war broke out, he had a special encounter with the allied soldiers.

This man helped his grandfather pick and sell produce. On that particular day, they had nothing but watermelons left, which they were going to take to market. A troop train pulled in to a nearby station, so his grandfather decided to give the watermelons to the troops for free.

But before the train pulled out, the soldiers started throwing money out the window. When the farmers collected it, they had between \$18 to \$20.

Had they sold their watermelons at market, they would have made far less—about \$2.

"That's what these boys were like," said Gibson. "And then you go on to read how they were killed and maimed and amputees and all and you can think is 'wow.'"

Cochran...from Page 1A

game in Savannah last March.

The Northeast Georgia All Stars consisted of top senior class players from schools from five of the six Georgia High School Association classifications with only Class AAA not being represented.

Players from Pickens County, Clark Central, Lumpkin County, Stephens County, Habersham Central, and Jefferson were included with Cochran being the only player from a Class A school on her team.

The Northeast Georgia All Stars brushed aside a brief 2-2 tie in springing out to leads such as 8-2 and 17-7 during the first 10 minutes of the game, which was divided into two 20-minute halves as is done at the college level.

They continued their dominance of the game in leading 28-14 near the 5 minute mark of the first half on a Cochran basket and followed a Hall County trey at the 4:59 mark and a 28-17 score with a 16-2 run for a 44-19 bulge at intermission.

The Hall County All Stars would get no closer than 21 points the last half on two occasions, on a trey at the 16:34 mark for a 46-25 score and on a 9-1 run the final 2:32 of the game in closing to within the final score of 74-53 while the Northeast Georgia All Stars led by as much as 59-29 midway through the last half.

Cochran earned a starting position in the game and statistically had an outstanding all around game as she scored 10 points and contributed 3 assists, 4 rebounds, and 4 steals while forcing 3 turnovers, according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

Most of her statistical totals came during the first half when her team took control of the game as she wound up playing about 27 minutes of the 40-minute game.

In a preliminary event, Cochran participated in a 3-point shooting contest with four other players involved in the game and gave all appearances of winning the competition before a puzzling decision never adequately explained by those in charge, left her in second place. She tied with another player in the first round of competition and then won a tie-breaker round, but for some reason, was required to face another player not involved in the tie with Cochran falling short this time.

If the three players had been tied after the first round, which was not the case, one would have expected all three to participate in the tie-breaker round with equal numbers of shots being attempted by all involved.

As carried out, Cochran attempted 75, 3-point attempts in three rounds of competition

while the player awarded first place attempted just 50 shots in two rounds.

At any rate, all who closely observed the competition came away realizing that Cochran should have been recognized as the winner of the competition.

The multi talented Cochran has contributed innumerable skills to her Lady Indians teams for four years as evidenced this year in part by averages of 18.4 points, 4.7 assists, and 5 steals per game.

Perhaps the most remarkable statistic of Cochran's career, however, is her consistent accuracy at the foul line.

She sank 340 of 446 free throw attempts during her four year career for 76.2 percent accuracy with a single season high of 78.4 percent her sophomore year when she sank an astounding 33 of 34 attempts in a three-game sweep of Class AAA Dawson County.

She then also youthful Dawson County Lady Tigers would finish as state runners up just a year later to Class AAA power St. Pius X.

Congratulations and best wishes are extended to Eryn Cochran from the *Towns County Herald* and this reporter for an exceptional and most memorable four years as a Towns County Lady Indian.

Hayesville senior A. J. Bruce creates iron cross



A. J. Bruce displays his labor of love.

Hayesville High School Senior AJ Bruce, Class of 2014, has turned what began as a summer camp experience into his senior project and a wonderful gift to Good Shepherd Episcopal Church Hayesville.

AJ, son of Dave and Laurie Bruce of Hayesville, took the blacksmithing course at the John C. Campbell Little-Middle School about three years ago. He liked the class so much that he took it twice and began making small iron-works such as candle holders to give as gifts. Now, working with his mentor Dave Smucker, who has taught blacksmithing at the Folk School for eight years, AJ has made a beautiful Celtic cross that measures 22.5 inches high and 15.5 inches

across and weighs about seven pounds. In addition, AJ made six small crosses to give as individual gifts.

Making the large iron cross, along with writing a research paper about the art of blacksmithing, fulfills the requirements for Hayesville High School's Senior English project. Every senior must complete a project, spending at least 15 hours working on it with a skilled mentor and make a passing grade on it in order to complete the English requirement. In May AJ will appear before a panel of three judges to have his project evaluated and graded.

Meanwhile, the cross hangs in the chapel at Good Shepherd Church. AJ says,

"Making the cross was Dave's idea, but this church helps me out a lot, and I thought it would be good to give back." He is also a chalice bearer at the church and active in its numerous youth activities.

AJ explains that even Dave Smucker had not made a Celtic cross like this before, so they made models first. They also had to create special tools, including a hammer, bending forks, and a jig needed to create a circle that is part of the cross. Working in Dave's forge and using his welding equipment, they spent a total of 21 hours completing the project. Dave praises the young man's work:

"AJ is an outstanding young blacksmith. I have taught many beginning blacksmiths, and I've never had one who learns as fast as AJ or has reached this level of work this quickly. Show him how to do something once—and he can do it!"

When asked whether blacksmithing might become a career for him, AJ says that it will remain a hobby. He plans to attend Western Carolina University to major in Natural Resource Conservation and Management (forestry). But his gift to Good Shepherd will remain a treasure for the appreciative parishioners.

For more information about Good Shepherd, see the church website: www.good-shepherdhayesville.org. (T/APR2/F2) SH

HOSA...from Page 1

attended their annual State Leadership Competition March 6 through March 8.

More than 3,400 students and advisors attended the Healthcare leadership conference in Athens.

Students attending got to enjoy educational symposiums, conference exhibitors, and workshops.

Towns County had 28 members compete in various health care events against other future health care professionals in the state of Georgia.

These students have worked extremely hard these past seven months just getting ready for competition by practicing and perfecting their skills.

Six of the competitors and teams placed in the Top 10 of their various healthcare-related competitions.

In addition to Lovelady's success, the team of Alexis Stephens, Kayla Davis, and Alexis Roach placed 4th in the Public Health event, and the team of Angel Benedict and McKenzie Henderson placed 10th in the Community Awareness event.

Competing at the national level has not only increased Lovelady's knowledge, but also has boosted her confidence in her health care skills.



These 28 Towns County High School Health Occupation students competed at the Annual Health Occupations Students Association State Competition in Athens on March 6th through March 8th. They were among 3,400 students and advisors attending the Healthcare Leadership Conference. Towns County's Hayle Lovelady finished second in the Personal Health category and will compete in June at the National HOSA championships in Orlando, FL.

VFW Golf League

Play will begin on April 3rd at Chatuge Shores Golf Course. We will tee off at 9:30. Please try to be there at 8:45. Same format as last season.

Preparedness Seminar April 12

Preparedness Seminar - Saturday, April 12, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Primary Candidate are invited). Brasstown Community Center, 255 Settawig Road, Brasstown, NC. Keynote Speaker Scott Hunt of Practical Preppers will cover Water, Food, Energy, Shelter and Security. In between sessions browse vendor product and information tables. Door prizes - Book Sale - Gun Raffle Tickets - Food Available. No charge - everyone is welcome. For additional info email 912ccp@gmail.com, call 828-837-0055 or visit www.912murphync.com/.

Old Union Golf Course first accredited FootGolf facility in Georgia

Old Union Golf Course, located 5 minutes north of Blairsville will soon be the first "FootGolf" course in Georgia. Last week an agreement was signed between Old Union and the American FootGolf League, Inc. (AFGL) for Old Union to receive accreditation for the new facility.

FootGolf is a relatively new sport with origins in Europe around 2009, and the first U.S. facility opening in 2012. "FootGolf is a precision sport where players kick soccer ball into a cup, in as few shots as possible," says Laura Balestrini, president of the California based AFGL. The rules of the game are similar in most respects to the rules of golf.

Old Union is currently preparing routings for the FootGolf course for testing and reviews during April while targeting an official opening in early May. "Integration of traditional golf and FootGolf is major to

our concerns," stressed Ryan Scott, Golf Director at Old Union. "Fortunately for us, the Old Union layout provides a lot of flexibility on how we will arrange the FootGolf to be compatible with our existing golf operations."

Old Union is planning 18 holes of regulation FootGolf and a short course to allow all levels of players enjoy the new sport. Approved dress attire and golf carts are very much part of the game. Ryan continued, "It is really exciting to add the new facilities and provide a new sporting venue in North Georgia. The affordability and less technical aspects of the game should attract more people and certainly will add another activity for the North Georgia tourists."

For more information about the FootGolf and Old Union call Ryan at 706.745.4653 or go to www.olduniongolf.com