

H&G...from Page 1

owners with products that they need for their home," he said. "It's convenience, it's a one-stop shop, so they can come in here and buy 10 different things for their home."

Among the sellers was Dee Dee Seifken, representing Blairsville-based business Budget Blinds. Although this is the first expo she's attended in Hiwassee, Budget Blinds has had one home show a year for the past 11 years. She said she enjoys making personal connections.

"It gives you the opportunity to talk to people face to face," she said. "Even if they're not ready to make a purchase right now, they may be in the future, and they will remember you because you were able to

give them a lot of information at that point. I think that is so much better than just advertising somewhere where they have no clue who the people are. It's just that personal touch."

She also added that it's been a good show, and Budget Blinds is expecting an uptick in business.

Another business at the show was Mountain Top Furniture, represented by Molly Gonsolus. Mountain Top Furniture is on its ninth year of business and going strong.

"We've had a good response from this show," she said. "It's interesting for us because we've had everyone from Warne, NC down to South Atlanta, which works for us. That's what surprised me, just



the wide array of locations that people are coming from. So we've had a good response."

Increasingly, people ask what Mountain Top Furniture has to offer that sets them apart from the competition. Customers are worried about not only the quality of their goods, but

also where those goods come from.

"We try really hard to get American-made products, said Gonsolus. "That's been a big thing. A lot of people are asking if this is from China or somewhere else. And from us, it's not. It's American."



CHAMPS...from Page 1

sponsored by the Georgia Sheriffs' Association, and classes were held in conjunction with the FBI's ALERRT program from Monday, June 1, through Wednesday, June 3.

"Today's students face dangers older generations could not have imagined," according to the GSA's website. "Choosing Health Activities and Methods Promoting Safety (CHAMPS) was founded in 2003 by the Georgia Sheriff's Association to address these urgent challenges."

For many Georgia schools, CHAMPS has replaced the DARE America Program, and is seen by the GSA as being more flexible in tailoring content to specific areas around the state that face varying degrees of community issues.

CHAMPS is growing in the state every year, according to GSA Specialized Training Coordinator Brent Loeffler, who said that after further certifications this summer, 92 of the 159 counties in the state will offer the program.

The current target audience for CHAMPS is fifth-graders, though the GSA is hoping to move the program into middle and high schools in years to come.

A school's resource officer administers the program, which is typically one day a week for 12 weeks.

Lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations, along

with student workbooks, assist SROs in teaching the class. Lessons taught in the CHAMPS program include: alcohol, Internet safety, ATV safety, bullying, marijuana, gangs, stress, tobacco, hunting and firearm safety, violence and more.

Towns County Deputy Sheriff Donnie Jarrard is the SRO for Towns County Schools, and he took part in the summer conference to maintain his instructor credentials.

Those in town for CHAMPS training also participated in FBI's ALERRT program, which stands for Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training.

Deputy sheriffs trained and drilled for two days, using the school to simulate an active shooter scenario.

The drills featured law enforcement officers being thrust into scenarios as first responders with very little information upon walking into the school. Officers wore protective gear for the training, which featured blue handguns that fired simulated rounds made of plastic.

Particular emphasis was paid to creating a realistic scenario, with loud shots and bystanders running through the halls shouting for help.

The sounds and atmosphere were frightening, but school resource officers, being the first line of offense and defense already on campus

should an active shooter take to the schools, benefited from drilling in the chaotic environment.

"The feedback we get is fantastic from the post evaluations - very good feedback on the program," said Andy Van Epps, who is the training coordinator for the FBI in Atlanta. "This is about getting the team of the first officers responding in there to address the person that's hurting the people."

Sheriff Clinton monitored the training at the schools and coordinated with the school system to bring the training to bear.

"Our Towns County Schools are willing to shift some things around and make this available for us to be able to do it here," said Sheriff Clinton during the active shooter training. "It's a testament to how hard they've worked, and it's been my experience the whole time I've been sheriff that we've worked really well with the school to do everything we could."

"It's something that we hope we never need, but they have the same mindset we do - we do whatever we can to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of the students."

Sheriff Clinton hopes that area residents turn out for the annual Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes Benefit Trap Shoot, which will take place Friday, June 12, at Chatuge Gun Club.

Fest...from Page 1

fairgrounds is spending \$5,000 to bring top-notch jazz bands to the festival.

Playing Friday will be The Emrah Kotan Latin Jazz Trio and blues star Andrew Black, and Saturday will feature Monica Spears, the Toni Byrd Quartet, The Christopher Otts Band, as well as Mercy Myra and The Rhythm Jets.

"You get a two-day ticket for \$50, or if you want to attend Saturday only, it's \$40," said Thomason. "If you just come on Friday only, it's \$20, because all of the wineries won't be pouring on Friday."

Five or six of the wineries will be pouring on Friday, and all 11 will be there Saturday: Hightower Creek Vineyards, Crane Creek, Currahee, Eagle Fork Vineyards, Mercier Orchards, Sharp Mountain, Tilford, Gin Creek, Cartecay Vineyards, Five Point Berries Winery and Cherokee Cellars.

"Admission price includes four tastings from each winery, plus a souvenir wine glass," said Thomason. "And then you get to listen to all the jazz entertainment, and you can walk around and visit all of the fine art booths."

Several artists will offer their works, including Jennifer Clem, Elizabeth Daniels, Jack Meacham, Laura Tracy-Harris, Jeannine Cherry, Deb Collins and Harvest Hardware.

"Something new that we've got this time is cigar rolling," said Thomason. "We've never done anything like this at the Wine & Jazz Festival, and I saw this in Hilton Head, SC, at a wine festival. I had never seen that demonstration done before, and it was the neatest thing."

"They had such a big crowd around it, people watching it and looking at it. I thought, if they can do that in South Carolina, we ought to be able to do it in Georgia. They've got a permit, so they'll be able to sell the cigars as well."

Thomason thanked the event's sponsors prior to the festival: United Community Bank, Towns County Tourism Association, Lake Chatuge Lodge, Park Sterling Bank, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Atlanta Magazine and Faron King with Coldwell Banker.

"I want to say a big thank you to all of the people who are volunteering the day of the event, as well as all of the committee members that served on the committee with me," said Thomason. "And to Sanford Green with Hightower Creek Vineyard and Eric Seifarth of Crane Creek Vineyard."

"We certainly want to say a big thank you to them, because without their help, we

wouldn't have the opportunity to have all the connections with the wineries, because Eric is the president of the Winegrowers Association of Georgia, and Sanford and Eric both have been a big help in making sure that we get all the wineries to participate."

All event patrons planning to drink wine will need to bring their IDs, and those old enough to drink will be given armbands.

Tickets for the festival can be pre-purchased or purchased at the event.

Coming up, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will celebrate Independence Day on Saturday, July 4, with its usual family fun activities before dark, followed by a festive fireworks display.

Also, David Allan Coe tickets go on sale July 17 for a Sept. 4 show date in Anderson Music Hall at the Fairgrounds.



David Allan Coe

Weston...from Page 1

great guy, and he's been supporting my music from the very beginning, and we come from the same town. So we got together there, and he was telling me about how he's moving this business, and so he asked if I was willing to come by, and I said just let me know and I'll be there."

Describing her music as "definitely Country but inspired by Americana, a little bit of Rock and Folk as well," Weston treated those in attendance to a small concert after the ribbon-cutting.

As far as the store itself, Marco Morello is happy with his decision to move from Florida to Hiwassee.

"We got tired of Florida life," he said. "You've got your season down there as well as here, and it's the opposite of here. And business is a lot more competitive here. So it's a lot bigger areas and more competition. It's a lot harder."

Fortitude is not like most jewelry stores in that it special-



izes in rarities.

"We buy and sell estate jewelry," said Morello. "Basically, estate jewelry is a little harder to find than regular jewelry. The difference is it's usually one of a kind pieces, custom pieces, and it's older stuff, and it's not usually run of the mill jewelry that you buy in a regular jewelry store."

Morello has been in the jewelry business for nearly two decades. It runs in the family.

"I've been doing it on and off for over 20 years," he said. "My brother's been in the jewelry business for over 30 years. So one day this is all I started doing. It became a full

time thing, learned how to fix and set diamonds stuff like that. I still enjoy being around the jewelry and having a good time with it."

All that time spent learning the trade means that Morello knows his business backwards and forwards.

"You buy stuff, you get it cleaned, you have to know what you're looking at, you have to be able to evaluate a diamond, a sapphire, an emerald, any gemstone, you have to know what you're looking at. You have to know how to test the gold, if it's 14, 18, 10, or platinum, it takes a long time to learn all that," he said.

Shakers...from Page 1

America Program, so we started recycling. Was only about a handful of us there, and all of them were ladies. I learned in politics that men kind of bail out when the going gets tough," he joked. "But women will stick with you."

The Take Pride in America program eventually got them invited to the White House where President George H.W. Bush honored them as one of his "Points of Light" - a program meant to celebrate the power of individuals working to change the world.

"But those ladies did all the work," said Barrett. "I might have taken some of the credit, but you know politicians tend to do that."

Afterward, according to Barrett, "after I left my wonderful career in politics and had to go back into the real corporate world of working to earn a living," the idea of recycling and re-using soil never left him.

He said that the idea of re-using and recycling is integral to the area of Southern Appalachia.

"If you grew up in Southern Appalachia, you use everything you can, and you use it two or three times if you can,

and you use it for different things," he said.

"You can't beat an organic fertilizer for growing crops, because you're growing something out of a waste product that was used to produce something that was thrown away, so you're ahead of the game. You putting something back into the soil that was taken out the first time. You're replacing it. And with chemical fertilizers, that doesn't happen," he added.

After Barrett spoke, Perren address the movers and shakers about electricity. Perren is running for a seat on the board of the Blue Ridge EMC, so he's been researching electricity and electrical services and learned some history.

The invention of electricity, which many of us can't live without, is a relatively modern invention, and wasn't widespread in the United States until decades after its discovery.

"My granddaddy was born way back in 1891," Perren explained. "Edison invented the light bulb back in 1879, but it was not something that my granddaddy would have ever seen as a young man growing

up in West Georgia. He was born into a world that was lit only by fire, and many of your grandparents were probably in the same situation."

"In the 1920s and early 1930s, about 80 percent of the farms in France and Germany had electricity," he went on. "When I read that statistic I was amazed by that, because only about three percent of the farms in the US had electricity. When Roosevelt became president, he tried to do something about this."

The story goes that Roosevelt once stayed at a small cottage in Georgia. The cottage had access to electricity, but only just. When Roosevelt got the electric bill, it was four times higher than what he had paid in the city.

Taken aback by the high prices people in rural areas had to pay, he founded the Rural Electrification Act, which provided federal loans for the installation of electrical distribution systems to provide electricity to rural areas.

"So it could be said that a little cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia, was the birthplace of rural electrification," Perren said.

Fire...from Page 1

Keyes, all assisted with suppression and operations efforts, according to Chief Copeland.

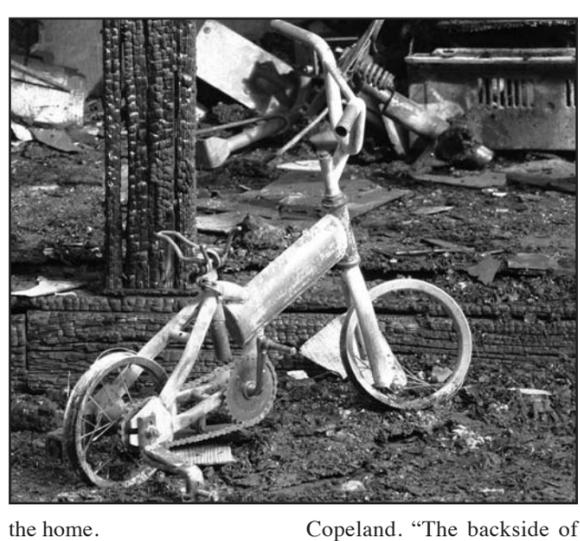
"A ladder was deployed to the main street side of the house," said Chief Copeland. "Capt. Jerry Hamilton was our safety officer, and Firefighter Tom Kლოსki assumed pump operations from Lt. Canterbury, as Lt. Canterbury established a water supply from the nearest hydrant."

Explorers Dylan Roberts and Reed Moss assisted with salvage and overhaul, according to Chief Copeland.

An Explorer is a junior firefighter, and can join the fire department when he or she turns 14 years old.

"They can do anything but go into a burning building or drive an apparatus," said Chief Copeland. "They can help us sling ladders, they can help us deploy hose. They help us with our tools, our axes, our attic ladders, our exhaust fans. If you looked at our roster, I would say a third of our roster to this day came up through that program."

Sally Varao of Towns County's Disaster Action Team, the local arm of the American Red Cross, brought water for firefighters, and gave assistance to the resident of



the home.

"It was well orchestrated," said Chief Copeland, citing Blue Ridge Mountain EMC crews that cut power to the scene, allowing firefighters to work free of worry over downed power lines.

Much of the front of the home caught fire, including two cars parked out front, and Chief Copeland believes the fire to have started in the living room area of an accidental cause.

"Many important papers were saved," said Chief

Copeland. "The backside of the house, other than smoke and heat damage, was okay. We were able to save, for example, her driver's license, and a lot of personal papers were saved."

Paramedic Justin Mitchell and Towns County EMT Jonathan Wilson also assisted on the scene, and Hiwassee Police Department and Towns County Sheriff's Office helped with traffic and crowd control, rounding out the coordinated effort that kept a fire from escalating to a major tragedy.

Pet...from Page 1

understand it."

Classes begin Saturday, June 13, and will run three in June and three in July, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. every Saturday, skipping over the July 4th weekend.

"They'll get to have a hands-on with a cat and a dog," said McConnell.

Sherry Manuel of Blairsville will be teaching the classes, with help from Dena Randall and certified therapy dog Cheree, pronounced "Sheree."

Adoption fees were also drastically reduced for Saturday's event, and Pet-a-Pet garnered help from various pet-friendly businesses and organizations from Towns and Union counties.

Blairsville Animal Hospital personnel were on hand to educate patrons on their services in Union County, offering free physical examinations for pets adopted Saturday.

Dr. Rinday Barrett of Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital shared pet acupuncture information and fielded "ask the vet" questions.

Carl Haines of Wholly Cats Rescue informed people on the dangers of failing to spay and neuter cats, and Sandy Hazen represented Operation PUP, an acronym for Preventing

Unwanted Pets.

Mountain Shelter held a silent auction to benefit the Humane Society's local efforts, and money was raised on items ranging from dog food to cat carriers.

Devin Saunders walked dogs during Pet-a-Pet, continuing his tradition of volunteerism at the shelter.

Saunders, 15, began volunteering for Mountain Shelter to earn his Merit Badge with Boy Scouts of America Troop 101, and ended up completing an Eagle Scout Service Project at the shelter by building an agility course for the dogs.

"They learn basic commands and how to be controlled on a leash, and gain confidence, and when they go to a home, they feel good," said Saunders of his agility course.

And Union County's most famous K-9, Deputy Sheriff Lacey of the Search and Rescue Team, and Deputy Sheriff Jeff McConnell, made an appearance.

"What we do is man trailing, tracking," said Deputy McConnell. "We do lost people, especially people with dementia, Alzheimer's - lost hikers, lost hunters. Somebody, say, that we go to serve a war-

rant on at their house, they run out through the woods, they call me in and we go find them."

Lacey loves children, and when she's not busy tracking people or visiting with kids at the schools, she spends her time off doing many things that children love to do.

"She loves the water," said Deputy McConnell. "My grandma lives on the lake, so I take Lacey to the lake and she plays fetch in the water."

Saturday was a special day for another reason, as the Pet-a-Pet event served as the local debut of the song meant to benefit the shelter. "Please Take Me Home," as written by Greg Martin and performed by John McLane.

Those interested in showing financial support to Mountain Shelter can stop by either of its two thrift stores, in Blairsville and Hiwassee, and/or purchase a Memorial Brick to be laid on the premises, leading up to the shelter's Rainbow Bridge.

All in all, the day was a success, as several animals were adopted and the shelter garnered "lots of memberships, Memorial Bricks, and lots of loving," said Shelter Director McConnell.