

Veterans...from Page 1

college and would spend 47 years of his career as a champion of veterans' affairs, called the arrival of The Moving Wall "a great healing process."

"It actually brings veterans out who have never acknowledged their status as a veteran, and it allows all of us to understand that the names on that wall behind me are still part of our thought process," said Clack. "I actually know 38 of those names on that wall in terms of those that died with the company that I served with, and then there's another three that I grew up with, graduated from Decatur High School in 1965."

"Those are the kind of people that we need to make sure that we always honor. Most of us Vietnam Veterans grew up in a family that we had a mom and dad who went through World War II. I think that's our saving grace as a generation — we saw people that survived the Depression and survived World War II, and we still have their values."

Clack spoke to what he saw as an erosion of those values in today's political environment, and how many veterans are on the frontlines of faith and upholding the Second Amendment.

"There are four different Walls that travel America," said Clack. "They're going to be,

in this year alone, in over 420 communities across America. I had the opportunity to have this very wall back in Conyers in May, and that was my fifth time bringing it to Metro Atlanta. And each time is a very unique experience."

"You learn different stories, you meet different people. It's phenomenal. Chapter 1101 is to be commended for all that they had to do to make this a reality. You're being commended for being a part of it, and what you're going to do for the citizens here today. They're going to have an opportunity 24/7 to view that wall."

The story told by The Moving Wall is one of both historical and cultural importance. According to Clack, there are 1,583 Georgians who served in the Vietnam War listed on The Wall, including the names of 30 still missing and 20 that were repatriated after having been prisoners of war.

Each and every one of those Georgians is part of a larger narrative, one that is often overshadowed by the negative public opinion of the war at the time.

"Georgia has always played a role in the defense of this country, but I want to remind we Vietnam Veterans — and I've been saying this since the day I got back — we

actually won every battle we fought in Vietnam," said Clack. "We actually stopped the killing fields while we were there. We actually gave the Pacific Rim countries time to develop into the free societies that they are. We met every goal assigned to us, we eliminated the Viet Cong, we stopped the NVA while we were there."

"That's an awesome heritage, folks, that we accomplished, and sometimes it gets forgotten. We came home and we became fathers. We became people that got involved in our communities. We became elected officials, and we got involved in everything around our society, and we make a difference."

The ceremony closed with the North Georgia Honor Guard's Firing Squad, followed by a live playing of "Taps" and the Retiring of the Colors.

Alongside the hundreds from around the area in attendance that Thursday was the Union County High School Band, which also performed the national anthem and a selection of service songs called "Salute to America's Finest."

Local and area government leaders in attendance were Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and Georgia Sen. Steve Gooch.

Wall...from Page 1

chance to learn and grow, something acknowledged by local Vietnam Veteran Roy Hamby, who served 23 years in the Army, followed by 23 years in the Georgia Department of Veterans Services before retiring a decade ago.

"I think it's a good education," said Hamby of The Wall, who served two and a half tours in Vietnam, from 1966-1969. "A lot of our younger people in school may not know what Vietnam was all about. And the most salient point would be that it's a healing process for the Vietnam Veterans who never got a Welcome Home. This is welcome home to all the Vietnam Veterans in this area."

Bringing The Wall to Union County was a massive effort that required countless hours of organization, from raising funds to recruiting volunteers, to getting the location itself ready for the wall.

Union County government made Meeks Park available as the site of The Wall, and had electric and fiber optic utilities installed at the site to accommodate the demands that hosting an around-the-clock memorial would create.

The Home Depot of Blairsville proved instrumental in preparing and installing the necessary components to make The Wall as accessible to the public as possible, and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Group volunteered to escort The Wall into the park for its installation.

Union County first responders, like the fire department and sheriff's office, helped to direct traffic and run security for The Wall.

Volunteers from the community, as well as the many members of the Blairsville Chapter 1101 of the Vietnam Veterans of America under the leadership of Chapter President Mike Priven, staffed the event, ensuring that no matter the time of day or night, people were available to welcome visitors to The Wall.

Along with a Moving Wall Memorial Keepsake booklet containing an abundance of information about The Wall, the war, Agent Orange and much, much more, volunteers at The Wall made available printouts of names for people to make rubbings from the



Each printout contained the biographical information of the service member whose name could be found on the wall, as well as a special place to complete the rubbing for a personalized keepsake.

The county even installed a flagpole to be situated behind the memorial, and the flag that flew there was first flown in the U.S. Capital.

From monetary donations to simple donations of time spent volunteering at the wall, a nearly countless number of the community pledged their support in making this Welcome Home a reality.

And even the rainy start of the weekend could not deter the many thousands who spent time at The Moving Wall in Union County.

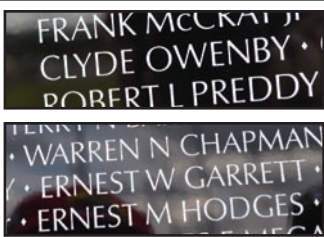
Luther Hyatt, VVA Chapter 1101 member, welcomed Wall visitors with umbrella in hand on Saturday, Oct. 10.

"This is just a mild, slight rain," said Hyatt, who was in Da Nang, Vietnam, in 1966 and 1967. "During the monsoons, it was just constant rain, full force, all the time. We didn't have umbrellas, just ponchos and helmets."

Hyatt moved to Ellijay about a year ago and joined the Blairsville VVA chapter six months later.

"The support we're getting, even though it seems like it's 50 years late, it's appreciated now," said Hyatt.

Brenda Todd drove up from Woodstock to visit The Wall with her granddaughter. Todd's husband,



Vietnam Veteran David Todd of the 101st Airborne, passed away two years ago from lung cancer due to exposure to Agent Orange.

Todd first saw The Moving Wall 28 years ago with her husband in Comer, and visiting The Wall again was emotional for her, and she was glad to be accompanied by her 14-year-old granddaughter.

"The last time I saw it, it was with him, and it was kind of a somber moment then, and it's brought back some memories today," said Todd. "I would just like to welcome home all of the vets that are still here."

Georgia Sen. Steve Gooch, who attended the opening ceremony for The Moving Wall on Thursday, Oct. 8, walked through the memorial with an air of reflection. This was the first time The Wall was visited by his district.

"It's an honor for me to be here, and to be reminded of the great sacrifice that so many people gave their ultimate life to protect our freedom and preserve our future liberties here in America," said Sen. Gooch. "It's sobering to be in the midst of all these heroes, and the 58,307 names that are on this wall — we owe them everything."

Pioneer Village as authentic as ever

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

One of the main attractions at the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival is the Pioneer Village, a modern day throwback to authentic mountain living.

At each festival, experts in their craft demonstrate a whole range of old-world skills, including saw-milling, soap-making, quilting, beekeeping and distilling moonshine.

Luther Mull manned the distillery and gave demonstrations of the ways in which the liquor was distilled. He had a pair of wooden barrels and ran the liquor through copper tubes.

"Well, a lot of people, they want stainless steel. It'll work. But it don't make it taste like this does," he explained, referring to the copper.

"But bad liquor is where they work the barrels off, and then they start running them. Well, by the time they got one run a day, the other one over here's turned to vinegar. But if you let it run slow over there, it'll come out just as sweet and mild as can be. Copper will stand up to heat till hell freezes over. And it's so little. That steel will sit there on boil for six and a half hours," he said.

He had bottles of homemade whisky and brandy for people to smell, but said that he didn't have any favorite liquor.

"I like to make it all," he said. Mull represents the fact that moonshining has come a long way from when bad liquor would turn people blind.

"That blindness comes from the radiators. People were too lazy to build a cooler. They'd go to a junkyard and find them a truck radiator. The middle of that radiator was copper but the top was yellow brass and down at the bottom was yellow brass. That's what got them. They got lead poisoning for that," he said.

He was adamant, however, that only experts should attempt distilling their own liquor.

"I had a friend who got



Glen Henderson, Beekeeper

his still cut down, so they got two sheets off of the shed and built him another. It got him and his wife a week apart. Killed them. It's just like a rattlesnake, this stuff is. You've got to know what you're doing or you'll kill somebody. I started when I was a little wee fellow. My daddy showed me all about that, and my granddad," he said.

Also taking up residence in Pioneer Village for the nine-day festival was the Mountain Beekeepers Association. Their work is unique in that it is now more necessary than ever.

"It used to be that we have all these wild bee trees, and you didn't have to raise bees because they were in your neighborhood already. And they've all died out due to diseases. So you have to have a white box full of bees to replace that tree. And that's our mission," said

Glen Henderson, president of the Beekeepers Association.

The beekeepers had the bees contained in a mesh cage for onlookers to view the inner workings of a beehive. Henderson said he was committed to educating people about the importance of bees.

"All of the different members visit classrooms and garden clubs and stuff. We do talks on bees and how important it is. About 70 percent of the food we eat has been directly pollinated by honeybees. If the bees die, we'll still have food. And the apples will be smaller. The green beans will be smaller. A seedless watermelon is about the size of a basketball and a Charleston Gray watermelon is about 30 pounds. The only difference is honeybee pollination," he said.

Hiawassee...from Page 1

people who are actively investing in the community. Anderson, the son of Eloise and Robert Anderson, recently moved his financial services into the same building that used to be Anderson's Department Store for almost 50 years.

"I moved the Raymond James office into the old building there, effective in I think about three weeks. I'm 51 now and I intend to do this for the rest of my life. So I'm very fortunate to have the location there and very honored to have the city's proclamation here," said Anderson.

Mayor Mathis presented him with the proclamation, which read, "Whereas during these difficult economic times, the City of Hiawassee is recognizing a period of growth. It is important to recognize those businesses and individuals who are investing in our city and who have committed themselves to the idea that the future of Hiawassee is bright and promising."

The Anderson family legacy is integral to the history of Hiawassee. Robert Anderson founded the

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and was the president of the Lion's Club for some time. Anderson Bridge was named after him.

After his death, his wife, Eloise Anderson, was integral to the operation of the Bank of Hiawassee.

"Eloise is just an institution within the city and the county. She's probably one of the most powerful figures in Towns County History," said Stancil.

The council adopted the first reading of the 2015 Ordinance Adopting the Georgia State Minimum Standard Codes for Construction.

"We're just updating the building codes in the city. Last time the city adopted was in 2009. The State's updated the code since then. So this is part of that ongoing regular review of updating our ordinances," said Stancil.

The motion to adopt the first reading of the 2015 Ordinance Regarding AirMedCare Network Membership passed.

"We had our first reading on the AirMedCare Membership. It's something the council is interested in doing for the people within the city. We're still checking it out, but there will be a second reading on Oct. 22," said Stancil.

The motion to adopt a resolution regarding a cooperative agreement between the Tennessee Valley Authority and the City of Hiawassee for TVA funding of improvements at Hiawassee Mayor's Park was held until a later meeting, because the city has not yet received finalization from the TVA.

"What that is, is they've committed to giving us \$15,000 reimbursement towards construction of the Mayor's park, and we'll have to obligate that money this year, and we're just working out those details," said Stancil.

Finally, the council passed the motion to adopt a resolution accepting a proposal for services, classification and compensation study from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

Balloon...from Page 1

guy with a big giant balloon on his head, and I was like 'I've never seen this before in North America,'" he said.

"They had one of these on the shelf, believe it or not, for (use at) a car dealership — you know how sometimes car dealerships float these balloons with helium. So I bought a balloon off the shelf where I was buying animal balloons, and I tried it out in my living room and I was like, 'There's something here, because it's so different.'"

The highest number of people he's ever fit inside that balloon is 18, but Johnson doesn't always take it that far. He usually only fits fewer

than five people at once. Even that gets pretty cozy.

"I pop it to get everyone out of the balloon. I ask the audience what they all want to do and they say pop it," he said.

For a regular show, he takes in all types.

"If it's like a half-hour show, I'll put three or four people in it. Once you see all the different types of people, I usually start with the smallest people first, as they kind of set the stage for the rest of them, and then a teenager, and then an adult," he said.

The balloon, while certainly the main attraction, is not his only

trick. "I do some comedy magic. I get out of a straightjacket to warm up, I build the audience, and then this is kind of like the grand finale," he said.



Handmade crafts at Fall Festival

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Georgia Mountain Fairground's annual Fall Festival has come to Hiawassee, and in its first weekend alone, the festival drew thousands to visit Pioneer Village, see the shows at Anderson Music Hall and enjoy the rows of crafters selling their creations.

The list of crafters varies only slightly every year. Most of the people who line the walkways to sell their goods have been in the business for a long time.

Some 33 years ago, Nancy Moore learned the craft of traditional basket weaving in the mountains of Virginia from an 80-year-old woman named Mary. Moore is still going strong today.

"I've been here four years. I'm a free-form basket weaver, but I do everything in here. I paint, I do recycled art, so I'm always looking for old things to paint on. I go to yard sales and flea markets and paint, and then I do mosaic stained-glass windows. I used to do the lamps years ago, but I quit doing it," she said.

Although Mary taught Moore the craft, she never taught her to color the baskets. That's something Moore learned to do herself.

"I had a restaurant, and I got a stain on my chef's apron. It was beautiful, and I wove it into a basket. So I never would have thought that my apron in a basket would sell, but I put it on a table with the pie of the day at my restaurant. People wanted the pie and they wanted the basket, so that's where that idea to sell colored baskets was born," she explained.

Moore loves her craft for several reasons. One reason is that she gets to meet people she's selling to. Another is that every day presents her with something new.

"I'm never bored. I'll do one week of stained glass, and then I'll do a week of weaving till my arm starts bothering me, then I start to paint and I switch. So I never know what I'm going to do. It's just what I feel like in the morning," she said.

For the more adventurously inclined, Jim McCurdy, who is retired from the Navy, sells custom parachute-fabric hammocks to take hiking, camping or backpacking.

His hammocks are rated to hold 1,500 pounds and are suspended from rope braids that have 1,800-pound breaking strength.

"I was actually approached by Backpacker magazine and Cordura fabrics several years ago. I wanted a lightweight hammock made out of Cordura fabrics for the backpacking community, so I made a few hammocks and came up with an idea for a unique suspension system that I have a patent on," McCurdy said.

"My thing is I like to make sure that when somebody walks away, they have a strong belief that our hammock is stronger, it's more comfortable, it's more durable, and it's going to cost less," he added.

Finally, if one needs a break from all the art and the adventuring, Hightower Creek Vineyards is open for business at the festival. A relatively young vineyard, they were selling wine made from grapes that, for the most part, only grow in the Upper Hiawassee Highlands viticulture area.

"AVA is America Viticulture Area. It means you're federally recognized as a unique grape grower in the area. It's like when you bottle something as Napa Valley, we can bottle things as Upper Hiawassee Highlands

now," explained Travis Green, who with his wife Liz runs half the vineyard.

They've come to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds for three years now, and are planning big things for the future.

"We're going to have our first festival next year. We've been open for three years now, so I think next year everything will be mature enough to actually throw a festival," said Green.

The Fall Festival continues through Saturday, Oct. 17.



Liz and Travis Green, Hightower Creek Vineyards



Nancy Moore

Expo...from Page 1

I'm talking 40 to 60-year-olds who are still in that working area of their life — will be doing the painting and the electrical and things like that," said Lee.

Many businesses hoping to start up all make similar mistakes.

"The problem the majority of the time is businesses going in without a business plan, without ever sitting down, writing it down on paper, presenting it to someone that knows what it should look like, or having something to take to the bank to get that loan. The bank's No. 1 question they're going to ask is, 'Do you have a business plan?' And

Angela Smith takes place on Young Harris City Council

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In the October monthly meeting of Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and City Council, Angela Smith, who is running unopposed ahead of the Nov. 3 municipal elections, was sworn in by City Council to take over the seat recently vacated by Hilary Martin.

"Angie qualified for that position and technically it would have been a special election the same day, Nov. 3, but no one ran against her. So since she was not opposed, she was then eligible to be sworn in. I have never had that happen before, so I wanted to be sure we asked the right questions," explained Mayor Gibby.

"So we called the Secretary of State's office, but they didn't get back to us. So our attorney was trying to make legal decisions without tons of information, but Councilman Terry Ingram was actually able to make some contacts and call some people and think through the issue, and they determined that it was the right thing to go ahead," she added.

Erring on the side of caution, Smith abstained from all votes during the Oct. 6 meeting.

Also in the meeting, the city began to finalize some of the big projects that have been going on for several years.

City Attorney Cary Cox performed the first reading of the Water and Sewer Rate Schedule Amendment, which will increase water and sewer rates across the board by 5 percent annually for years 2017 and 2018.

The City Council also voted to approve the Millage Rate Rollback of 2.965.

For the first time in recent memory, the city engineers had very little new to report. Reid Dyer said that there are no new requests for building or road projects. The temporary road for Mt. Zion Church of God has been approved and the college parking lot has been completed. Work on the sewer lines is ongoing.

The city's infrastructure projects are nearing completion. Mayor Gibby is hoping that Young Harris will soon be able to support a wide array of business openings.

"As mayor, what I personally want is business. We need jobs in the city. That's my goal. The council has been working diligently for literally five years to get infrastructure in place so that when we begin to get business

interested in the city, then we're ready. We don't have to stall, and that's the reason we push so hard to get the water and the wastewater expanded so that we're ready. So that's the positive thing," said Mayor Gibby.

She explained that there has been such ongoing debate about the water and sewer because, once the infrastructure projects are completed, the city will be prepared to bring new businesses in.

"Really the reason we push so hard is to make sure strategically we're in a really good place in literally another year. When we finish the wastewater plant we will be able to bring in any kind of business. So we're positioned for the next 20 to 30 years," she said.

Mayor Gibby said that the geographic realities make it difficult to draw in business — Young Harris is nearly two hours away from any major city.

"But I do believe that we have a demographic that we can draw from. I think there's a certain group of businesses that will want to be where we are. I think that we're in a really good place to start reaching out to certain technology companies or communication groups. So that's what we're looking at," she said.