

Habitat for Humanity breaks ground with Lee Family on 18th build



Solomon Patrick, Trevor and Lacy Lee, and Bryan Thomas holding a symbolic groundbreaking at the future site of the new Lee Family Home on Saturday, Feb. 16. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack
North Georgia News
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YOUNG HARRIS – Members of the Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties joined the Lee Family to break ground on the nonprofit's 18th new home project on Saturday, Feb. 16.

After a long process of going through applications, the local Habitat for Humanity Selection Committee has decided the next family to receive a Habitat home will be Trevor and Lacy Lee, along with their three children.

The Selection Committee sorts through several applications and picks a family that is most suitable to put in the 250 hours of sweat equity and be able to pay off the cost to build the house, according to Habitat.org.

"Habitat offers homebuyers an affordable mortgage," according to the website. "Those payments are then cycled back into the community to help build more affordable homes."

Continues the website, "One in four households in the U.S. pays more than 30 percent

of their income for housing and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food or clothing."

The Lee Family is currently renting a home that is in need of several repairs and is just too small for their family.

"It's exciting and kind of overwhelming knowing that we are starting the process of having a place to call home," said Lacy. "Anyone looking to apply for this opportunity must have patience, be willing to do all the necessary paperwork, and accept that you may have to keep trying."

"It took us three times. We applied once a year for three years before we were selected. Go all the way through and don't give up, because this can happen for any family if you don't give up. Look at our family."

Of course, the home is not free, and Lacy and Trevor will be responsible for a mortgage and for volunteering alongside the builders and volunteers who are helping to make this possible.

Solomon Patrick of Patrick Construction, who has been a part of the Habitat for Humanity new home process

for over 11 years, is going to help Lacy and Trevor in building their new home.

"It doesn't look like much now, but start to finish, in about six months, the house will be complete," said Patrick.

Added Bryan Thomas, executive director of the local Habitat for Humanity, "As far as the groundbreaking goes, we do this today, and Solomon will get some folks out here to start working on the foundation to get some excavating done."

"We do things a little different here because our volunteer base is older than in Atlanta. We use a lot of sub-contractors and have the volunteers come out a little later to help with the build."

Habitat for Humanity operates in both Towns and Union counties, and usually they alternate between counties when deciding where to locate the next home build.

"We try to get the most qualified people we can get that need the housing," said Thomas. "The selection process has already started for the next plan for Union County, where we have a few pieces of land, but not a specific one at the moment."

Seniors...from Page 1A

"They enjoy the company and have some wonderful volunteers that dedicate their time, vehicle, gas, and their love every day to provide these meals."

The Senior Center serves hot meals to residences over three routes, and on Mondays, they send out a box of frozen foods with five meals in it to around 30 people in Young Harris and other areas that are too far away to have the hot

meals. Stephens-Berrong and other members at the Senior Center hope to continue this fundraiser in future years and get more donations for their program.

"Through the gift certificate donation in December, we received almost \$12,000 in donations already," said Stephens-Berrong. "We are thankful for the community support. They have already been

wonderful in supporting us." The Senior Center is still in search of volunteers to deliver food to the homes of seniors throughout the week and help with their Meals on Wheels program.

For more information on volunteering or donating to the Memory Heart Tree, visit the Senior Center inside Hiwassee City Limits at 954 N Main Street, or contact them at 706-896-3138.

Fire Corps...from Page 1A

us many, many things. Just recently, they purchased AEDs (automated external defibrillators) and a Polaris (off-road vehicle) for upgrading our Appalachian Trail and rescue teams.

"They help us out immensely with their mailouts, and I can't thank them enough for their efforts and what it does for our department. And

the citizens who respond to the mailouts, it's just phenomenal, and we deeply appreciate it.

"It helps us deliver better service to (local residents) and also better service amongst our department for firefighter safety. It's a win-win in every direction."

The Fire Corps is a "locally driven Citizen Corps program that enables

community members to offer their time and talents to their local fire/EMS department in a non-emergency capacity," according to TCFirecorps.org.

The Citizen Corps program is a Homeland Security initiative that helps coordinate volunteer activities.

The Fire Corps program was rolled out nationally in 2004.

BOE...from Page 1A



Towns County School Board Members Stan Chastain and Dr. Kilee Smith. Photo by Mark Smith

"And we'd like to say a special thank you to them," said Hobbs. "They also donated this to us last year, and as a result, the Ag Department has not had to make a single purchase for their welding classes since then for these consumables, so we're very thankful for that."

Hobbs said that TCHS Counselor Lana Parker has been working with freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors to prepare them for their various "next steps" concerning financial aid, scholarships and dual enrollment.

Parker, she said, is also scheduling Yellow Ribbon training on the next teacher work day, as will the Middle School, for faculty and staff and, following that, training for students. Yellow Ribbon is a suicide prevention and awareness program.

Middle School Principal Erica Chastain reported that her students were "now in full swing reviewing for Milestones End-of-Grades (EOG) Assessment and completing final units in our classes to prepare for those."

"I want to say congratulations to the VFW Patriot's Pen winner Jaden Taylor," said Chastain. "I also want to say congratulations to our robotics team for placing fifth out of 33 teams in the First LEGO League Super-regional on Feb. 2 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I'm very proud of them for that."

Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page reported that Evan Lee, a member of the Southern Order of Storytellers, will be conducting a teacher training session on effective storytelling

as opposed to just reading a story.

Lee, she said, will return on March 5 for Read Across America day to conduct a parent workshop, then perform publicly following the workshop. Teachers will be honing their skills at storytelling to students in classes that day.

Teachers Lisa Ledford and Davey Williams are preparing students for the Science Olympiad at Kennesaw State University this spring. "Our second statewide walkthrough for our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) Program is on Feb. 27," said Page, adding that the fact that they employ intrinsic rewards instead of monetary rewards has attracted interest.

EMC...from Page 1A

of service study, Nelms said in January that the fixed charge portion of each customer's bill should actually be in the \$38 to \$40 a month range, with offsetting adjustments to the energy charge.

Furthermore, Nelms stressed that moving the customer charge in that direction – which would take place over several years and not all at once – was necessary to keep the EMC financially sound.

Excluding the cost of power, fixed costs make up 76 percent of all costs associated with operating the EMC, according to Nelms.

For decades, many of the fixed costs associated with running the EMC have been built into the per kilowatt-hour rate, meaning the EMC has historically relied upon power sales to meet those costs.

Due to changing consumer habits and higher adoption of energy efficient technologies in homes, however, power sales have steadily declined in recent years, even though fixed costs for things like power poles, powerlines, transformers, etc., have continued to increase.

In light of persistent lower residential power usage, Nelms has argued that, in order to maintain operations for a growing EMC, the board needs to look at redesigning the EMC's power rate to better cover fixed costs.

This means moving the needle on the customer charge, which would require the EMC to increasingly shift fixed costs from the kWh side of member bills to the customer charge over time, according to Nelms.

Another concern in the member's letter to the editor was how increasing the customer charge might adversely affect members with low and fixed incomes.

"I do not believe there is a strong correlation between income levels and energy usage," said Nelms in the meeting. "In fact, lower income users often reside in homes that are less energy efficient."

According to a review of recent payments to the EMC via charitable organizations, Nelms said most households



Carson Chambers, Danny Reagan and Kara Dudley in front of the White House during the 2018 Washington Youth Tour. Photo by Byron McCombs

receiving help experienced power bills "typically in the \$200 to \$300 range."

Bills in that range demonstrate that power usage among families struggling to pay their bills is well above average, said Nelms, so that a rate redesign would likely lower the cost of these families' power bills.

Finally, Nelms pointed out that the member was correct in his letter to the editor concerning the customer charge increasing from \$14.69 in 2012 to \$21.37 in 2018, though he clarified that this was largely due to increases passed on by TVA and not the EMC.

"The rest of the story is, our cost for 1,000 kWh in 2012 was \$123.61 and in 2018 was \$128.84," said Nelms. "That is a price increase of 4.23 percent during that six-year period."

"This can be attributed to TVA increases during that time, which were passed through to our members. These are not BRMEMC rate increases. An additional positive point is we are \$2.24 less than Georgia Power at the 1,000 kWh usage level."

Board President Ray Cook asked if Nelms would prepare some customer charge comparison charts to better demonstrate to the membership how increasing the customer charge to more accurately reflect fixed costs could benefit many members by reducing kWh charges, especially in cold and hot months.

Also in the meeting, the

EMC Board welcomed three local youths who attended the 2018 Washington Youth Tour – with the EMC's Byron McCombs as chaperone – last summer through the EMC: Carson Chambers of Union County High, Danny Reagan of Towns County High, and Kara Dudley of Clay County (North Carolina) High.

The Washington Youth Tour is a weeklong adventure sponsored by local EMCs across the state in which more than a hundred Georgia high school students travel to the nation's capital to partake in leadership development, civic engagement and community service.

For her part, Chambers said she had been to D.C. several times before, but that this time surpassed all of her other visits there. Overall, she greatly appreciated the freedom to share her ideas with others on the trip, and she called the entire experience "life changing."

Reagan said that the trip forced everyone out of their comfort zones, which helped him to make many new friends. In fact, he said he was amazed at the number of friends he had made, many of whom he still speaks with on a daily basis.

Dudley loved meeting with lawmakers and sitting in to watch the day-to-day activities of Congress. She also enjoyed the endless history on display in D.C., and thanks to the trip, she has changed her career interests following high school from biomedical sciences to political science.

Arbor Day...from Page 1A



The Georgia Forestry Commission helped to coordinate the Arbor Day commemoration. Photo by Mark Smith

it too deep, said Hawkins, who went on to demonstrate the correct way to plant a tree.

"I just try to recreate forest conditions, because trees really want to grow out there in the woods," he said. "Another thing people typically do when they're planting, they don't dig the hole out wide enough. They'll dig it just as wide as the root ball."

"It's really best to dig out

at least twice the width of the root ball, and if you can, three of four times (with slanted hole walls)."

"The whole idea is tree roots grow out, not down. The majority of your tree roots are in the top 12 to 18 inches of soil. Sometimes, with an open-grown tree like this, the roots can grow out twice or three times the height of the tree."

Moving along, Hawkins

and Reed, with the help of Troop 407, got the tree planted, backfilled and mulched about 25 yards due east of the bathrooms at Mayor's Park, as Ordiales, Crothers, Harkins, Sparks and Barrett looked on smiling.

"Eventually, the roots from this tree will reach all the way down to the lake," said Hawkins. "It's going to be a beautiful tree."

Don Pedi concert at the John C. Campbell Folk School

Don Pedi will perform a Friday Night Concert at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC at 7 PM on February 22nd. The show will be held in the Keith House. Admission is free, donations are appreciated.

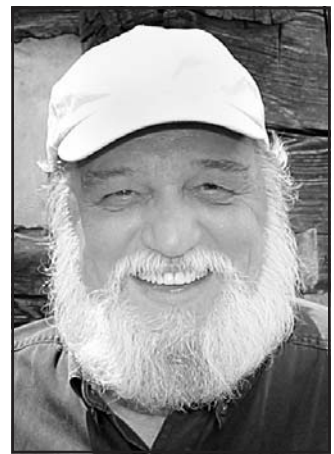
Don Pedi is a Traditional Mountain Musician who started playing the dulcimer in 1968.

He shares songs, tunes and stories in a warm, often humorous and always entertaining manner.

Don is known for developing a playing style for the fretted mountain dulcimer that can match a fiddle, note for note, while maintaining the rhythms and characteristics of traditional music.

In 1974, he won first place in the first contest he ever entered, at Fiddler's Grove, in Union Grove, N.C.

In 1979, Don was declared "Master Dulcimer Player" and removed from future competitions at Fiddler's Grove. Before retiring from competition in 1984, Don had amassed over forty first place ribbons in contests through-



Don Pedi out the south east, both in solo competitions and as a key band member.

Over the decades, he's been recognized and honored for collecting, preserving and performing Traditional Appalachian music.

Since 1985 Don has championed folk music as an on air host at NPR affiliate WCQS 88.1 in Asheville, NC. His weekly show "Close to Home" airs on Saturdays, locally from 8-10 PM (Eastern Time) and simultaneously streams on the web.

Don has appeared in the motion pictures "The Song Catcher" and "The Journey of August King", as well as a number of documentaries and music specials. NT(Feb20,21)CA

Cancer freezing procedure

Freezing procedures available for breast, lung, liver, and prostate cancers. These procedures have been around for years, yet so many people do not know about them. Research information under www.radiologyinfo.org and look up procedure by name, Cryotherapy.

Opportunity to change a life

Do you know a loved one who struggles with addictions or strongholds?

Unity Farm, a biblically based, 12-step Men's Recovery Home is located in Union County. For more information please call 706-851-5390 or 706-455-9043. NT(Feb20,21)CA