

Easter Egg Hunt...from Page 1A



Several youthful egg hunters earned some serious loot in the form of Easter baskets at this year's hunt. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

the fields having the times of their lives. I've missed seeing that myself. You don't realize how much we were missing out

on until you see it again.

"I think it is time for us to get back out there and start doing the things we used to. I

know it will take a little time, but the kids need it. This was just proof of that."

Mildred Underwood retires after 45-year banking career

Blairsville native Mildred Underwood has retired earlier this year after more than 45 years in the banking business. Underwood joined United Community Bank in 1988 as a Loan Officer Assistant to bank founder and previous CEO Jimmy Tallent and most recently served as Senior Compliance Officer and Compliance Program Manager

"Mildred's expertise, leadership, attention to detail and superb work ethic have been invaluable to our company," said Carol Chastain, Chief Compliance Officer for the bank. "She will be sorely missed by all of us, but we wish her the best in her new job as grandma."

"Mildred has been a vital piece of our team for years," added Susie Hooper, Director of Human Resources for United Community Bank. "She has supported so many divisions of our team, nurtured employees, and provided unparalleled service to all of our customers and community. We are grateful for her influence and the legacy she leaves."

Underwood has worked in various consumer, commercial and mortgage lending divisions for the bank. For the past few years, she has been a part of the crucially important compliance group—serving as a subject matter expert for all lending regulations, regulatory change management, training and com-



Mildred Underwood compliance exam coordination. As Senior Compliance Officer and Compliance Program Manager, she was also responsible for audit and compliance monitoring.

Work Detail...from Page 1A

detail. But when COVID hit last March, the state-run Detention Center pulled its crews out of concern over potential spread in congregate settings.

After Colwell suspended its details, Bradshaw had to task the county Road Department with many of the duties formerly undertaken by state inmates. The extra work wasn't easy, but Bradshaw said the county employees handled their additional responsibilities admirably.

Even so, the commissioner knew it wasn't a sustainable arrangement. After all, the Road Department still had county roads to look after, and now employees were doing all the grass cutting and weed eating at county-owned buildings.

That's why Bradshaw approached Henderson following his election in November to ask him about starting a local inmate detail once he took office in January. Henderson said yes, and the rest is history.

After settling into his new job earlier this year, Sheriff Henderson got busy laying the groundwork for the detail, and by mid-March, inmates were taking to the streets to beautify the county under the supervision of TCSO Sgt. Richard Morgan.

"The Sheriff's Inmate Work Program is an initiative to use inmate labor to keep our roads clean and county facilities landscaped and looking good, and at the same time save

taxpayers money," Henderson said.

Come July 1, Bradshaw will be happy to welcome back two of the three crews from Colwell Probation to augment what the county is doing with its local inmate work detail. Going with a local crew instead of a third Colwell crew is shaving about \$50,000 off the budget currently.

The commissioner thinks the county can operate a local crew for the foreseeable future, and he's hopeful that, by January 2022, he will be able to contract for a third crew from Colwell Probation to bring the total number of inmate crews to four working in the county.

With four crews, Bradshaw will be aiming to permanently assign the sheriff's crew to picking up roadside trash exclusively.

"Ever since I've been in office, I always wanted one crew to do nothing but pick up trash," Bradshaw said. "We've always had the three crews, but it takes three crews to do all the grass cutting, weed eating, and cleaning of the county buildings."

"Like the Rec Department at Foster Park, they go in and clean the floors, the windows — same at the courthouse. So, we usually have one crew that does all the cleaning, and then you have two crews doing the grass cutting and weed eating, but we don't have anybody to pick up trash."

"I've always wanted to have an extra crew just to



Sgt. Richard Morgan heads up the Towns County Sheriff's Office Inmate Work Detail.

Photo/Facebook

dedicate to picking up trash. So, starting in January, and providing COVID continues to get better like it is, then we will have that."

Added Bradshaw, "It's a win-win situation for the taxpayers and helps keep our county cleaner from trash on the side of the roads. This is also a win-win for the inmates, because they like getting out and working. It's good for them."

So far, the county hasn't had to hire a separate deputy dedicated specifically to the sheriff's work detail, and the inmates serving on the local crew are using equipment already owned by the county that was previously used by Colwell Probation detainees, adding to the taxpayer savings.

CASA...from Page 1A

has maintained its laser focus on the needs of the children of North Georgia.

"We have not even skipped a beat," Lago said, commending her volunteers and employees for their efforts. "Our volunteers in the past year have advocated for over 295 children."

"While some of the government agencies have really had their hands tied in terms of making home visits or putting eyes on the children physically, our CASAs have made those visits and done all those kinds of things, which are so valuable."

The COVID-19 crisis has presented unique challenges society-wide, including for Enotah CASA, which has embraced the use of newer technology to get the job done.

"A lot of our CASAs are older and learning how to use Zoom for the first time, which is how our court hearings are," Lago said. "They have really stepped up and done what is needed to focus on these children."

Of course, as a community-based nonprofit, Enotah CASA relies greatly on the support of the communities whose children it champions, with fundraising efforts having been especially impacted since the onset of the

pandemic.

Dancing with North Georgia Stars, for instance, is the largest fundraiser CASA puts on each year, and sadly, it had to be canceled in 2020 out of concern for safety amid COVID-19.

So, CASA has had to get creative to try and make up for that loss, developing new fundraisers that don't pack so many people into an indoor venue.

"Last September, we did our first Mountain Arts Festival, and we are going to do it again this September," Lago said. "Right now, we are doing a Boston butts smoked meat sale as a fundraiser (with pickup available April 3)."

"We are focusing on April as Child Abuse Awareness Month and doing the 'I Am For The Child' training and bringing in two great speakers. It will be virtual, and it is free because of our great sponsors."

The "I Am For The Child" virtual training will take place Friday, April 16, from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., with registration available at enotahcasa.org. Presenting sponsors for this event are Attorney Daniel Duello and community supporter Fred Weil.

Fortunately, the community has been a powerful driving force behind CASA, steadily donating

and aiding the organization in the last year to continue helping children who are otherwise helpless in their own situations.

And though CASA would like to bring back Dancing with North Georgia Stars as soon as possible, Lago said she wants to wait until it is sufficiently safe to have the event and take time to prepare for it.

As such, CASA will focus on its other fundraisers this year, with organization members also putting their energy into getting the word out about the need to recruit more CASAs.

Lago encourages the community to keep an eye out for the 295 pinwheels now spinning in the breeze on the lawn of the Hiwassee Town Square, designed to honor the children CASA volunteers have served over the past year. And the need is not going away.

"As these children are out in the community more, going back to school and stuff, we are starting to have more children come into care," Lago said. "Our biggest reporters are our educators and police."

"We are absolutely in need of volunteers. They can go to our website or give us a call, and we have training that can be done virtually with our lead advocate."