

Inaugural 'A Day for Veterans' event a huge success at Trackrock Campground

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
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Trackrock Campground & Cabins hosted its first ever "A Day for Veterans" appreciation barbecue to show support for local veterans on Saturday, June 1.

Complete with food by Full Throttle Ministries and live music by Southern Vantage Band, the event brought veterans of the community together in celebration of their service to the country, and it also acted as a way to remember those who have lost their lives defending freedom.

"I think that the event turned out perfect, and it's small and cozy rather than large and uncontrollable," said Connie Totman, an Army Veteran who helped organize the event as Post Adjutant for the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7394

in Blairsville.

Continued Totman, "From my point of view, it is awesome to get all the veterans in the area together, new and old. We need to come together, and we need to know that everybody is here for each other.

"And Blairsville's VFW doesn't have the bar, the pool tables and the food, but we want them to know that we are still there and still available. Just because the doors are shut when we are not there doesn't mean there aren't phone numbers to get a hold of us.

"We really want these veterans to enjoy each other and be able to enjoy the time we have for them while we celebrate them."

The Alexanders, who own and operate Trackrock Campground, were glad to host such a patriotic event, as they interact regularly with both local and out-of-town veterans.

"There's so many veterans in this area, and ... so many people come up here on vacation, and they are veterans, so something like this is neat to do and important to do to let them know that we are thankful for the time they served and what they did for us," Frank Alexander said.

Many of the veterans and their families at the barbecue appreciated the feelings of support expressed by the event's organizers.

"This event is special to us because it means camaraderie and brotherhood," said Veteran Charley Andrews of Towns County. "We all served and we all gave, and all the families gave, so it's important for us to remember that."

The occasion also acted as a way for the community to remember what veterans went through during their service.

"A lot of people have for-



Many veterans gathered for the "A Day for Veterans" barbecue and concert at Trackrock Campground & Cabins on Saturday, June 1.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

gotten our veterans, especially after they came back from Vietnam and people spit on them," said Veteran Becky Thrash, also of Towns County. "And think of how long we have been at war now, and people don't even act like we are at war, and we have all these young men and women coming home injured,

and people never really say anything about them.

"I just think this is great for awareness, and I love being here with veterans because they are always so sweet. It's a big encouragement when you can celebrate with other veterans."

Due to the success of the barbecue and concert, Alexan-

der and Totman definitely want to try holding the event again next year.

"We are hoping this becomes an annual thing - we are really hoping - and I think that with the support we have, it will be," Totman said.

Book Sale...from Page 1A

Over the past year, the local libraries have welcomed over 66,000 visitors, circulated over 77,000 items, and presented over 50 programs for more than 1,200 children, highlighting the impact of the local libraries.

The books that are sold at the Book & Bake Sale are donated from the community throughout the year and then are resold to raise money.

"We have two books sales a year," said Book Sale Chair Marcia Aunspaugh. "We have a children's book sale and our Book & Bake Sale."

Hiwassee Council Member Amy Barrett volunteered her time helping with the sale last Friday.

"This is a great way to get the community involved with the libraries, and it helps fund our libraries, so all in all, it's a great thing, and I'm happy to do whatever I can to better our community," said Barrett. "Before we opened the doors at 9 a.m. this morning, we had a large crowd. Probably more than 30 people were waiting to come inside."

Several customers spent lots of time shopping for books and trying to decide which baked treats they wanted to



Volunteer Amy Barrett chatting up guests of the 2019 Book & Bake Sale at the Mountain Regional Library.

Photo by Chad Stack

purchase, like Melany and Brian Weese from south Georgia, who stopped in as they were passing by.

"We think this is a great fundraiser for the local libraries," said Melany Weese. "We bought some books and some cookies from the bake sale as well."

The Friends are always looking for more members,

including businesses, and for information on how to become a member or to make a donation, visit the library in Young Harris or the one in Hiwassee.

To see a calendar of events for the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County, visit www.mountainregionallibrary.org/folc.



Just a few of the many veterans who attended the veterans barbecue with their families at Trackrock Campground on June 1.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Memorial Day...from Page 1A



Members of several Towns County veterans service organizations conducting the Laying of the Memorial Wreaths on May 27.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Wars Post 7807 Cmdr. Bart Rodgers welcomed guests to the ceremony.

"We are gathered here to honor the veterans of our great nation who have paid for our freedom with their lives," said Rodgers. "I'm proud to have fought for this country, and I want to thank my fellow veterans for their service and sacrifice personally. We can't honor the dead without recognizing the living."

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw thanked everyone who was involved in organizing the service, and he also gave a special thanks to the Towns County Fire Department for flying the American flag from its ladder truck across the street from the service.

"As we go into Memorial Day - and what a special day it is, as we all know - think of the people who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms in this country that we enjoy," said Bradshaw. "I ask that we continue to pray for their families and pray for our service men and women who are actively serving today."

"My prayer, ladies and gentlemen, is that, as the United States goes into the future, Memorial Day will always be

recognized just as it is today. My prayer also is that the American flag, as we go into the future, will look just like it is and remain as it is 100 years from now, and that we will always recognize that we are one nation under God."

Air Force Veteran Jeff Carroll of Newnan served as the keynote speaker for the ceremony. Carroll is the State Senior Vice Commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Georgia and is in line to become the next state commander in June.

He is also a member of the American Legion and the Air Force Sergeants Association.

"The highest tribute we can render your loved one, our comrade - the most profound respect that all of us can demonstrate - is to live our lives with such faith and undaunted courage as was your loved one," said Carroll. "To each of you, the families of those comrades, we pledge our sincere friendship of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, of this VFW Post and its Auxiliary."

During his remarks, Carroll also thanked everyone for taking the time to remember and honor America's fallen

heroes.

"As we enjoy living in the land of the free and the home of the brave, we must continue to remind our fellow Americans that there is no freedom without bravery," said Carroll. "And those we honor today were the bravest when it counted the most."

Veterans of all military branches, ranks, wars and conflicts dating back to World War II attended the 2019 Memorial Day Service in Towns County, and the event featured many patriotic observances.

The North Georgia Honor Guard proudly posted the colors and fired a commemorative volley, and the following local service organizations conducted the Laying of the Memorial Wreaths: VFW Post 7807 and Auxiliary, American Legion Post 23 and Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 23, Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment 783, and the Army-Navy Squadron 66.

Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Police Chief Paul Smith were also in attendance during the Memorial Day Service, after which the members of VFW Post 7807 invited everyone back to the post for a courtesy lunch.

AARP Smart Driver™ Class June 13th at NGTC

AARP Smart Driver™ - the new and enhanced driving refresher course from AARP Driver Safety will be offered at the North Georgia Technical College Conference Center in Blairsville. The college is located at 121 Meeks Avenue (off Highway 515). The class will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday, June 13. The class will be taught by certified volunteer instructor John Daniel.

Since 1979, AARP Driver Safety has helped over 15

million older drivers stay safe, educated and confident behind the wheel. AARP Smart Driver Course participants will learn: valuable defensive driving skills; proven safety strategies; how to stay current with the latest driving technologies; the current rules of the road, specific to your community, and how to manage and accommodate common age-related changes in vision, hearing and reaction time.

Participants are encouraged to check with their in-

urance agent to see if they are eligible for an insurance discount. There are no tests required to pass the course.

The course is open to drivers of all ages and costs \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for non-members. There is no charge for those who have the AARP Medicare Supplemental Insurance. Lunch will be on your own.

Participants need to pre-register as class size is limited. Call John Daniel at 706-400-9957. NTUim5Z3JCA