

Byron Herbert Reece Society celebrates 103rd birthday of namesake poet

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Byron Herbert Reece

“Canceled events have included the Annual Membership Meeting, the Spring Opening, the ‘Maters and Music Festival, and the 103rd Birthday Celebration that was to take place this September. We are hoping for a year of welcoming everyone back to the events in 2021.”

Although events are not being held during this difficult time, the Reece Farm remains open. Guests are welcome to stop into the Reece Farm and visit the exhibits in the museum and the Old Reece Barn. It is advised to maintain distancing and masks during these visits.

The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a part of the Union County Parks and Recreation Department and is open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“Take a step back in time and discover a wonderful museum displaying many aspects of Appalachian farm life of the early 20th century,” Gill said. “The barn loft holds so many treasures from Reece’s personal life, many framed poems, pictures of his family, some of his favorite music and books.”

“Browse in the bookstore and Welcome Center for more history and books written by and about the renowned author. Enjoy the walk beside the Season’s Garden with beautiful large stones displaying Reece’s poetry.

“Take note of the barnyard animals which

children and adults enjoy, and ‘Mulberry Hall’ where Reece spent hours reading his favorite inspirational authors and writing his own poetry and novels.

“Spend time with the engaging sculptures of local artist Al Garnto, and stroll beside Wolf Creek to hear the same waters that inspired Reece. Enjoy the beautiful pavilion across the walking bridge or hike the trail that connects the Reece Farm to Vogel State Park.

“There are so many attractions that you will want to make many visits at different seasons of the year.”

Other noteworthy evidence of the Reece’s local legacy is the Byron Herbert Reece Trailhead at the base of the Appalachian Trail, just off US 129 South, aka the Byron Herbert Reece Memorial Highway, up from the Walasi-Yi Interpretive Center.

The trailhead features a beautiful semi-circle drive for a shady and cool picnic area, parking for the Appalachian Trail, as well as a beautiful monument to Byron Herbert Reece.

Reece’s monument is a large boulder inlaid with a gorgeous black granite marker engraved with a poem from Reece’s “Ballad of the Bones” and a photograph of the poet.

“And what could be more fitting for such a literary legend

in this area than a memorial in the local newspaper?” Gill said. “For over 60 years, the West Family publishers of The North Georgia News and Towns County Herald have acknowledged Reece as the genius that he was.”

The poet/novelist received recognition outside of his home mountains as well. Consider Ralph McGill, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution in the 1950s, who has been quoted as saying that Reece was the best writer in the nation for his time.

It is the intention of the Reece Society that more people in Reece’s hometown come to know of his novels, his poetry, his life and the beautiful surroundings of his Farm. So, watch for more information about the life and times of “Hub” Reece, as he was affectionately called by his family and friends.

Inside this edition of the newspaper people will find a Membership Application for the Byron Herbert Reece Society. Many have asked if they can apply for membership through the mail. Just clip and complete the form and mail it, along with the membership fee, to the address on the form.

“Membership will open a very enjoyable world to you,” Gill said. “Enjoy your visit to the Reece Farm, which is located 1 mile north of Vogel State Park on US 129.”



John Kay and Sanford Freeman a few years back visiting the Byron Herbert Reece monument at the poet’s namesake memorial trailhead off US 129. Photo/Submitted

NGTC President Ivester passes away after battle with coronavirus

News Special
North Georgia News



North Georgia Technical College President Dr. Mark Ivester, 57, of Toccoa, passed away Saturday, Sept. 12, at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Braselton, following a monthlong battle with COVID-19.

The college operates campuses in Clarkesville, Toccoa and Blairsville.

“With incredibly heavy hearts, we are so sad to say that Dr. Mark Ivester passed away last night around midnight after losing his battle to COVID-19,” according to an NGTC Facebook post Sunday.

Continuing, “Please continue to pray for Eleanor and his entire family. Thank you for all the love and support you have shown them and one another during this time. We are all devastated and will miss him terribly.”

Private funeral services were held for Ivester on Wednesday, Sept. 16, at the First Baptist Church of Toccoa. Acree-Davis Funeral Home had charge of the arrangements, which were also livestreamed via Facebook.

“In honor of NGTC President Dr. Mark Ivester, all three of our campuses will be closing at 1 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 16, for the remainder of the day. We will resume normal hours on Thursday,” the college said.

Ivester served on the college’s Executive Team for more than 20 years, as Vice President for Administration Services, Vice President of Economic Development, and Acting President before his appointment to President of NGTC in August 2016.

Prior to his career at North Georgia Technical College, he worked for 13 years with textile, steel, and plastic manufacturers including Diamond Carpet Mills, Gilbert and Bennett and NAMPAC.



Dr. Mark Ivester