

# Cemetery...from Page 1A

historical for Blairsville itself, but we have a couple of Confederate Soldiers that fought up here for the South," said Holman. "It's a big part of our town's history, and it would be better if it was cleaned up and it was known how many graves are here."

The cemetery contains gravesites dating back to the early 1800s, and ground-penetrating radar has brought to light 105 unmarked graves. Prior to Saturday, many of the headstones were black with dirt and mildew, a few toppled either from age or other reasons.

And Holman, in a showing of local pride and respect for those who came before him, decided that the place needed a little TLC to counteract the long years of neglect.

"That's what I'm here trying to do, trying to get it out there, try to get people to want to donate money so we can get a fence and maybe some better markers to put where the unmarked graves are," said Holman, looking ahead past his project to the future of the historic Blairsville site.

The City of Blairsville recently acquired the Old Blairsville Cemetery through a quietclaim process, as the owner of the land, like many of the graves on the property, was unknown.

"It is a beautiful day, and this is such a cool project because there's such history in here. And we're hoping we'll find even some more history, and maybe we can end up finding out what that was," said Commissioner Paris, pointing

to a large pile of rocks placed conspicuously in the shape of a grave.

Some have wondered if the old cemetery is home to ancient Native American burials, though solving the mysteries of the rock pile and the unmarked graves is unlikely given today's technology, which would require disturbing the sites.

Bob Scoda, retired from Florida since 1997, conducts cemetery surveys as a hobby, and has been instrumental in cataloguing many cemeteries in Union County.

"This is probably the oldest cemetery that's in Union County," said Scoda. "They're all in the 1800s, most of them. Some of them are newer, but this cemetery started a long time ago."

The Boy Scouts worked hard to scrub the grime from headstones, many of them puzzling as they went to determine the names of the people atop whom they were cleaning.

"They're using a substance called D/2, which is a biological cleaner, which is basically taking the mold and mildew and lichens off, and getting these monuments to where you can read them a little bit better," said Vince Evans.

Evans managed Alta Vista Cemetery in Gainesville for 14 years, and was also vice president of the Georgia Municipal Cemetery Association.

"Normally, you just don't go in willy-nilly and clean monuments," said Evans. "There needs to be a reason to clean them, like you can't read

them or they've got lichen on them or have mildew."

The cleanup was a huge community affair, starting as an Eagle Scout project and ending as a way for people to care for the memories of the dead. Many graves were cleaned, some were pieced back together, and the Old Blairsville Cemetery was brought back into the fold as an important

piece of Georgia history.

"This is a good community project," said Evans. "Cemeteries just bring people together."

Residents with knowledge of relatives buried in the Old Blairsville Cemetery are encouraged to notify the city and county in an effort to further the historical record of the cemetery.

# Wellness...from Page 1A

pharmacist recommending what they need to try to make it a little bit more efficient experience for them."

Blairsville's Wellness Ambassador is responsible for customers in the store, and will help people to establish wellness routines, such as vitamin and supplement regimens. But she will also be moving out into the community.

"Since we're just getting started with the Wellness side, I'll be doing some outreach in the community with senior centers and with different businesses," said Wellness Ambassador Paige Johnson.

"I can give talks on different health-related or wellness-related topics, and it's kind of just showing them what Rite

Aid has to offer, what our clinical services are as well."

Johnson has a master's degree in public health nutrition, and has training in diabetes management, healthy eating, first aid and other topics, like summer hydration and Alzheimer's.

"The first Wednesday of every month is our Wellness Wednesday, which is for those individuals who are 65 and older that are enrolled in our program," said Johnson. "They get 20 percent off the store, and each Wednesday has a topic."

Rite Aid offers various prescription programs to the community as well, and patients without insurance can save big using Rite Aid's Pre-

scription Savings Program.

"We are here to help them, and if they have any needs, I'm always available to help them with whatever they need," said Johnson, in a message to the community.

Longtime customers stopped in Saturday to see the changes to the store, and all were impressed with the new Wellness branding.

"All of the interior is lovely, and we like the flooring especially," said Joan McLeod, who visited the ribbon-cutting with her husband of 50 years this month, Billy. "We love the pharmacist, Jerry. He's been a good friend of ours for many years and a business associate, and we come in because of him."

Jerry Dyer has been a pharmacist in the community for 35 years, and with Rite Aid for 30. As a pharmacist who has likely seen it all, he, too, is impressed with what his company has done in Blairsville.

"I'm excited about it," said Dyer. "I think it's going to be a very good opportunity for us. I think it's going to help our customers, and I like it."

Rite Aid will host a Health Fair on June 20, which will give the community another glimpse of things to come with this new Wellness Store.

The Health Fair will offer many screenings, including COPD, diabetes, memory impairment screenings, cholesterol checks and more.

# Scottish...from Page 1A

"The Ceilidh used to be a formal event at the community center but moving it Downtown was a great idea. It's free and there will be something for everyone," said Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Williams.

And if you see a FOX 5 news van around town on Friday morning, don't be alarmed, they are actually coming to Blairsville to do a positive story on the festival.

"We are very excited about this year's festival, the games and there will be plenty to do," Williams said. "It's a big weekend for us because of the boost that it gives to our local economy. We're expecting thousands of people to pass through Meeks Park and Seasons Inn Plaza. And last but not least, Fox 5's Good Day Atlanta will be here (Meeks Park) on Friday morning to showcase weekend tourist destinations in

North Georgia."

This year, the festival will feature Daisy - the famous hot air balloon that is 11 stories tall and 11 stories wide when fully inflated.

Unfortunately, no balloon rides will be given, but if the weather cooperates, Daisy, who is going by 'MacDaisy' this weekend, will be able to fully inflate.

It's possible that MacDaisy will be viewable from Georgia 515, but it's being requested that no one stop on Georgia 515 for picture taking or to just take a look at the enormous daisy-shaped balloon.

The featured band at this year's festival is Seven Nations, and the excitement swirling around this band is incredible as they make their Blairsville debut this weekend.

"They've been (featured) in *Rolling Stone* magazine, *GQ* magazine, *Playboy*,

and the list just goes on forever," Varian said. "They are a great international band. It's Rock N' Roll with bagpipes."

The opening ceremonies will be held at noon on Saturday, but music, dancing, and heavy athletics begin at 9 a.m. At 10 a.m. the Kilted Mile race begins. A kilt must be worn to be eligible for the race. At 10:30 a.m. the Mini Cooper car club will parade through Meeks Park.

This year's Honored Clan will be Clan Donald. Family names that make up Clan Donald include Alexander, Allison, Brown, Chambers, Cochran, Cook, Daniel, Hudson, Kelly, Martin, Murphy, Patton, Turner, and Wright.

This is not a complete list by any means but if your family tree is something that interests you, there is no better place than the Scottish Festival. The festival also features special vendors who



attend only to help determine if you're Scottish, and then, trace your roots and then locate your clan.

Once you've discovered your clan (or clans) you can purchase a kilt with its own unique tartan to show off your Scottish pride and represent your clan in style.

"I want to emphasize just how much there is to do," Lynn Varian said. "This is not an arts and crafts festival and it's not a music festival, but if you're looking for something to do (this weekend) there are 50 things to do on Saturday, and 50 things to do the next day."

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