

Rodeo...from Page 1A

person whose name got pulled out of the hat had to be even luckier to get the prize, throwing a ringer from a distance of 50 feet.

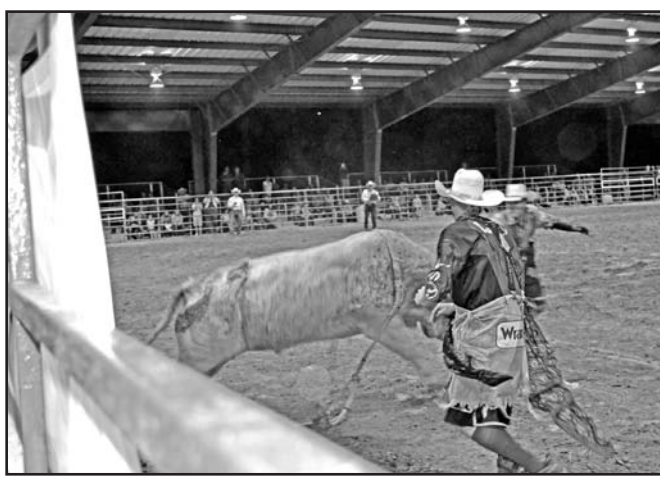
"Friday night, a girl came pretty close," said Miller. "It's a tough thing, but if you're lucky enough, you can drive it home that night. That's something that we added this year, the possibility of a truck giveaway. That may have brought in some extra people, too."

This is Mountain Valley Motors' third year sponsoring the rodeo, and the first time the company has offered the possibility of winning a free truck. Though nobody won the event - and, subsequently, the truck - the horseshoe toss was wildly successful, and could return next year.

Thankfully, not a single cowboy or cowgirl was injured this rodeo, and the packed stands stood as a testament to the level of community support drawn from Union and surrounding counties.

Rodeo Chaplain Randy Dodge held cowboy church before the rodeo began, proffering words of encouragement to those who would test their mettle in the ring.

"My advantage is that I can relate to the guys, because I used to be one of them," said Dodge, who heads up Cowboy



Ministries out of Athens, Tenn. "I rodeoed for years, I lived the life that they're living, so now I can point them to the life that

I think they should be living and that Jesus has called them to live."

The Union County Sad-

dle Club paid special tribute to one of its members during the rodeo, remembering Donna Harkins Carpenter, who passed away Friday following an extended illness.

Carpenter, a well-known lover of horses, was always an active member of the Blairsville community.

"Everybody loved her," said Miller. "She was just a really great person - helped people out when she could, and she just spread herself around. She was just a great person, so we wanted to show our respect for her for sure."

The two-day rodeo was sanctioned by the International Professional Rodeo Association, and many local sponsors were responsible for making the rodeo a reality.

Along with main sponsor Mountain Valley Motors, premier sponsors were: American Cowboy Store, Zaxby's, Complete Cash-Discount Title Pawn, Alexander's Store, McClure Trucking, Nelson Tractor Company, General Supply and Total Recovery Paint & Body.

Additional sponsors were: Home Depot, Jim's Smokin' Que, Michelle Vaughn PC, Mike's Seafood, Rick's Rental, United Community Bank, Ingles, Lance Law, Head-Westgate Corp., Circle

K, Charles, Denise and Britany Long and Michael Sosei, Gooch Trucking, K Creek Farms, Union County FFA, and Steven Rowe CPA-PC.

"We couldn't do this without them," said Miller of rodeo sponsors. "We couldn't put it on and bring in 1,500 people (Saturday) without their support. We couldn't afford to bring in Hedrick Rodeo

Company and all that to do it. No sponsors, no rodeo - that's the bottom line, and we appreciate that."

Miller also expressed appreciation for Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and the county for making the SPLOST-funded Union County Saddle Club Arena possible.

Cummings...from Page 1A

Georgia Extension agent for Union County, after which he will manage the Union County Farmers Market and Canning Plant full-time.

He has been a county agent for 34 years, and is currently already responsible for the management of the Farmers Market.

Calling on his years of experience working as a county agent, Cummings told the Movers and Shakers that he considered himself to be a public servant, which has informed his thinking on the director position at BRMEMC.

"I know that the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC is a privately-owned cooperative, but the people that are elected to that board are responsible to the people in their counties and in the region where they serve," said Cummings. "So, in that viewpoint, I look at it as being a public servant, and anybody that's on the board needs to make sure that they have a servant's heart. I think that they need to place the EMC members' needs ahead of their own personal needs."

In 2004, Cummings was elected - with the help of his friends and peers in Georgia, he pointed out - as vice president of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, and he went on

to serve as president of that organization two years later.

"While serving as president, I learned a lot of things," said Cummings. "I learned about putting other people's needs ahead of my own, but I also learned a little bit about budgets."

Agriculture, Cummings said, is always the first thing to take a hit in and the last thing to pull out of a recession or a depression, and during the start of the recession, Cummings was responsible for managing the budget for the NACAA's national meeting.

One of the measures Cummings had to take was to impose budget cuts.

"I had friends who got mad at me for things that I had to do, but if I didn't do it, our organization would have suffered if we would have had to borrow money," said Cummings. "And our board didn't feel like that was the right thing to do, so we made some severe budget cuts, and we learned how to make some of those budget cuts in some of those exercises that we were trying to go through."

Cummings offered this past experience as an example of how making tough decisions is sometimes necessary when putting the needs of oth-

ers first, and to safeguard an organization from debt.

"I think that our EMC board is dealing with a lack of confidence from its membership," said Cummings. "Things that have happened over the past few years have caused this. To regain that confidence of the membership, I think the board needs to take some actions. First of all, I think our board needs to become more transparent, open some of its meetings to the public.

"I think we also need to make elections easier for people to vote, and also easier for people to run. I really don't understand an election when you don't have more than one person running for a position, so I think our board needs to encourage more involvement from its members, and try to get more people running for these positions."

If elected, Cummings said that he would approach the job with honesty, integrity and "a servant's heart."

"That's the only way I've known how to do it, that's the way I was a county agent for 33 years, and that's the way I would approach it," said Cummings. "And I would always put the members' needs in front of my own. And I also think that the workers at our

EMC are the backbone of our organization. I think that we need to do everything that's in our power as a board to enhance their working environment."

On a side note, Cummings shared his desire and enlisted help in starting a speech contest to take place at the UC Farmers Market this fall, geared specifically toward agriculture and modeled after the Movers and Shakers' successful competition format.

Cummings is retiring from the Extension office as of June 30. The County Extension Office is having a retirement party for him at the Pat Haralson Civic Center on June 30, from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. The readers of the North Georgia News, as well as all Cummings' friends from the Union County Farmers Market are invited to attend the event.

Cummings requested a hamburger/hot dog cook-out meal and fellowship with his friends, family and co-workers.

If you wish to attend, just show up and wish Cummings a happy retirement.

Cummings hopes to see you on June 30th from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Civic Center.

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