

# Sorghum...from Page 1A

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley tossed out candy from a Chevy Camaro convertible as Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris did the same from a Union County Fire and Rescue Kubota ATV.

Tailing the elected officials was the Blairsville Chapter of the Victory Riders motorcycle group, the Sons of the American Revolution, Diamond Pageants, Girl Scouts, the Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers, John Deere tractors, riders on horseback, plenty of classic cars and trucks, and others.

Church floats from Liberty Baptist, New Hope Fellowship, and others were the favorites at the 2014 Sorghum Festival Parade.

The First Place float went to Heavenbound Sportsmen who's theme was "Use what God gave you to 'git 'er done.'" Among the runners up, the Appalachian Home



Health Care's Duck Dynasty themed float.

As the parade wrapped up the consensus among parade-goers was that this year's

was one of Blairsville's best parades in recent memory with its length drawing lots of praise from the crowd.

The festival opens

again this weekend and will feature a square dance at the Old Middle School Gym at 8 p.m. on Saturday.

If you missed the first



weekend, you still have two more chances to take part in one of Union County's most famous, and long-standing traditions. Come join the fun

at Meeks Park and see for yourself why the festival has lasted 45 years and is showing absolutely no sign of slowing down.

## Locals travel to New York to support climate change resolution

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Three Towns County residents – Dr. Vernon and Mary Joyce Dixon, along

with Brad Rouse – marched in the People's Climate March in New York City Sunday, Sept. 21.

"There were people from all walks of life everywhere, enthusiastic that we have to do something about this, and demanding that we do something about this," said Dr. Dixon.

The march was in advance of the United Nations' Climate Summit 2014 that took place Sept. 23, an event organized to bring world leaders together to talk about climate change.

"And what that's leading up to is they're having a summit in Paris in December of 2015, in which all the world leaders are supposed to come together, hopefully to sign a treaty with binding limits of production of greenhouse gases to help combat the climate change issue," said Dr. Dixon.

Dr. and Mrs. Dixon marched with a group called Green Faith, and Rouse went as part of the Citizens' Climate Lobby. These groups were two of about 1,100 in attendance, with estimates ranging between 300,000 and 400,000 total marchers from all over the planet.

"Green Faith is an interreligious organization, and it believes it is our moral duty, our sacred duty, that we need to care for the Earth or else it won't be able to sustain us," said Dr. Dixon. "I'm head of the Green Faith organization in our local church, in Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church (Hayesville, NC)."

The Dixons moved to Towns County in 2000 from Albany, Ga., where Dr. Dixon had held his own psychiatric practice for 24 years. Once in town, he began working for Avita Community Partners, which is a mental health clinic in Blairsville, and he retired this April.

The husband and wife team have always been leaders in the church, teaching Sunday school in Albany. They relocated to Towns County to take advantage of a quieter lifestyle to help them concentrate on one of their biggest passions, which is contemplative, centering prayer.

"Centering prayer is a way of learning to quiet the mind," said Dr. Dixon. "It's a kind of Christian meditative



Dr. Vernon Dixon and his wife Mary Joyce Dixon rally in New York in support of a climate change resolution by the United Nations at the People's Climate March.

process to open to God at the deepest level."

About four years ago, Dr. Dixon had a revelation of sorts through prayer.

"When in deep prayer, you realize your connectedness to everything, the environment and all people and all generations, and that it's our duty to take care of them, and that climate change is one of the single biggest things that's endangering all that," said Dr. Dixon.

Climate change is certainly a hot-button issue here in the United States, but Dr. Dixon is clear where he stands.

"How much do we care about our future generations, our children and our grandchildren?" said Dr. Dixon. "If we care deeply about them, if we think that they are very important, we ought to take this very, very, very, very seriously."

Atmospheric oxygen and nitrogen, Dr. Dixon explains, are not considered greenhouse gases because they only contain two molecules, whereas carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas, contains three molecules.

"The sun comes down to the earth in photons," said Dr. Dixon. "It goes right through everything, warms the earth, then re-radiates back out. And the greenhouse gas that we have, that carbon dioxide and water vapor, these things that have more complex molecules, they

absorb it and send a certain amount of it back down to earth to warm it up. The more carbon dioxide that you have, the more it's absorbed, the more it comes down."

Carbon dioxide occurs naturally, but it is also introduced into the environment through the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas.

The latest scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change paints an alarming picture.

"Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850," said IPCC Chairman Rajendra K. Pachauri in a statement at the UN Summit Sept. 23.

"Greenhouse gases in our atmosphere have increased to levels unprecedented in the past 800,000 years," said Pachauri. "Our time to take action is running out. If we want a chance to limit the global rise in temperature to 2 degrees Celsius, our emissions should peak by 2020. If we carry on business as usual, our opportunity to remain below the 2-degree limit will slip away well before the middle of the century." And there will be dire consequences in the next 50 to 100 years if the earth continues to warm with no action taken to curb the rising trend in temperature.

"Severe drought, se-

vere heat waves, rising tides, rising oceans, more wildfires, more severe health problems, coastal flooding, extinction of 50 to 60 percent of the species across the world by the end of the century, because they can't tolerate this rapid change," said Dr. Dixon.

And there are many steps people here in Towns County can take to help curb climate change. According to Dr. Dixon, residents can elect people who want to make a change, businesses, households and schools can turn thermostats up, better insulate buildings, install more energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems and investigate solar energy.

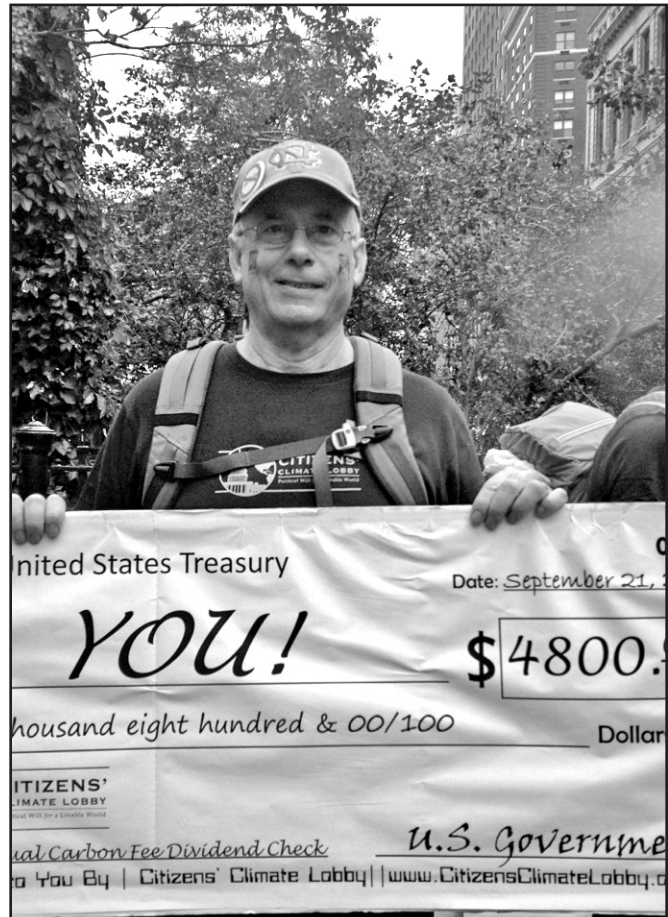
"We've got solar cells on our house, and we're making money off of that," said Dr. Dixon. "We put in a geothermal unit, and it'll pay for itself in about five or six years. Just some simple things like this that people don't know."

Dr. Dixon informs his faith with science, and he and his wife have chosen to live a lifestyle that reflects both faith and science in the formation of their worldview.

"I think we were made on this earth to do good, to leave the world a little bit better place than we found it – to show love and kindness, and to emanate that to God's people," said Dr. Dixon. "And I believe that working on this issue is a very strong way of doing that."



Dr. Vernon Dixon and Mary Joyce Dixon of Hiwassee, with the Rev. Fletcher Harper, who heads Green Faith, an international interreligious organization who members believe it is a moral duty to care for the earth. Rev. Harper led the interfaith service held prior to the start of the Peoples Climate March in New York City.



Brad Rouse of Hiwassee represented the Citizens' Climate Lobby at the People's Climate March.