

Farmers Market..from Page 1A

which will begin on Friday, Dec. 4, from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m., and conclude on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

"It's Christmas-themed, and we'll probably fill all three buildings with vendors," said Peney. "We'll have entertainment, Santa, s'mores. Santa is always here, and one of our highlights is that the Union County High School Chorus Ensemble comes and sings every year."

The Chorus Ensemble is for advanced students of the chorus program, and students must audition to be considered for placement.

Vendors interested in selling at the market during Kris Kringle can still apply, though space is limited as only a few spots remain available.

Admission and parking to Kris Kringle is free.

Joy Nywening of Stitches of Joy is sure to be at the Kris Kringle Mountain Market, making available her one-of-a-kind, hand-sewn goods of all sorts and varieties.

"I locally make, on my own, all the handmade handbags you see here – the quilts, kids' toys, all the little goodies," said Nywening, who has been a Farmers Market vendor since its days in the Union County Courthouse parking lot. "A lot of people ask, where do you get your bags from? And I say, oh, no, no, no – I make all these, right here, in Blairsville."

Nywening's handbags are of the finest quality, and her patterns are all unique creations

designed personally by her.

For Kris Kringle, she'll have several Christmas-themed handbags to complement her popular college football collection, as well as different toys and quilts sewn specifically for children.

One of Nywening's big sellers is her fabric chalkboards, which can be unrolled and used by children pretty much anywhere, complete with chalk holder and eraser.

Nywening is also known for her iPad Pillows, which make the perfect gift for anyone who enjoys sitting and relaxing with a tablet computer.

Joining her every Saturday is her mother-in-law, Marie Nywening, who makes for a more than competent salesperson, and Stitches of Joy

takes cash, checks, credit cards and PayPal.

"Thank you for coming out this year and supporting us at our great Farmers Market," said Joy Nywening in a message to the community.

Loy Cook of C&C Snacks will also be attending Kris Kringle, selling his delicious pork rinds in a plentitude of flavors.

Cook is a seventh-grade science paraprofessional at Union County Middle School, and he only cooks his pork rinds on the weekend at the Farmers Market, though his son, the other half of C&C Snacks, also makes pork rinds at Mercier Orchards in Blue Ridge.

"It's really good at school because a lot of the teachers give them candy or something, and I give them pork rinds that are better for

them, because these are all protein, no carbs," said Cook. "The kids love them, and they come here to buy pork rinds all the time."

Following Kris Kringle, the Farmers Market will remain dormant until March, at which

point Market Manager Micky Cummings will begin taking applications for the 2016 season to start in June.

The last day to can goods at the Union County Canning Plant are Nov. 12 and Nov. 17, unless a day is added in December as needed.

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advisor and agriculture teacher at Union County High School. "I was a little worried about the rain, a little worried about whether or not, especially on the equipment side of things, there would be the demand for two auctions a year.

"The auction surpassed expectations once again. As far as the numbers and turnout, it's hard to estimate down there at the Farmers Market, but the crowd was as large as or larger than what we had in the spring. We had 251 registered bid numbers that were issued, so there were that many people alone that registered to bid."

Those 251 bidders represented numbers from both the livestock and equipment sales, and the equipment sale featured more than 300 individual items up for consignment, which exceeded the number of pieces consigned in the spring by at least 70.

"From the business aspect, whether or not two auctions a year can be successful or not, you really have to look at the numbers to determine that," said Pettit. "And for the two sales combined, the gross sales this time were a little over \$139,000. Back in the spring auction, the gross was about \$70,000. To say that our expectations were exceeded again is kind of an understatement. It continues to grow, and people are happy. They're asking when the next one is."

The Blue & Gold Auction, which is a student-run nonprofit, will receive a cut of the gross sales, and while it's too early to say what that number will be, the students' cut will be in the thousands of dollars.

Pettit gives credit for the overwhelming and continued success of the Blue & Gold Auction to the hard work of students, of a community that has showed nothing but support

for the kids, and also to the FFA Alumni.

"It takes a team, it takes a lot of people to pull off what happened Friday and Saturday, so to those FFA Alumni members that helped out, to our Alumni President Andy McClure – the help that all those people offered is much appreciated," said Pettit. "And to say it's appreciated, I guess that's another gross understatement. It couldn't happen without those people."

During Friday night's livestock sale, Auctioneer Justin Duncan of Blairsville worked the crowd that was gathered to purchase chickens, market hogs, rabbits and other small animals, as Union County FFA and 4-H students took turns holding up or walking the animals around for inspection.

Each market hog, which on average netted \$1.16 per pound, was first a show hog project of an FFA or 4-H student. The whole process, from raising a show hog to taking it to competition, to then selling it for its meat, is just one example of the practical education approach of the FFA and 4-H programs.

Tanner McGee, a 10-year-old 4-H member, brought his show hog Lulu, a 250-pound gilt, to the auction.

"It's such a good thing for kids," said Linda McGee, Tanner's grandmother, of agriculture education in Union County. "It teaches them everything. It teaches them how to be good, productive adults, ones that work hard."

Austin Dyer, who is vice president of the high school's FFA program, said that he and his fellow students spent many a late night preparing for the livestock sale, cleaning the FFA Barn and getting all the animals where they needed to be.

"We have two a year, and this is one of the things we look forward to because it's something everyone can



ATVs up for auction



Vanna Chambers with FFA Sentinel Sissy Carlton's market hog

enjoy," said Dyer. "Come out with your family, and you can watch something that doesn't happen a lot. Us kids enjoy working it and just being around the animals."

And Dyer is fully aware that he and his cohorts are the future of agriculture in Union County.

"Not everyone has agriculture in the county – some people have it on a different scale, but on a certain scale, you're a part of it in some way," said Dyer. "I don't have it on a big scale, but I have some cattle and some chickens in the backyard, and that's just a little form of agriculture that can eventually grow into something bigger."

Duncan returned as auctioneer for Saturday's huge

equipment sale, and Andrew Collins, FFA reporter for the high school, said he was glad for all of the community support.

"This helps you learn business, and just kind of what equipment is worth," said Collins. "My favorite part is just going around and looking at all the old equipment, seeing what's there and seeing if there might be anything I want to buy."

So far this school year, Collins has won the regional FFA Tractor Driving Competition, and he will be heading to the state competition in December.

Proceeds from the Blue & Gold Auction help to send students like Collins to compete in competitions, and generally support the trips and endeavors of Union County FFA students.

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