

Showcase...from Page 1A

realty agencies and higher education, to small craft shops and specialty stores.

Though the showcase is only in its third year, many businesses that attended last year said they would not miss a chance to participate for a second time. One such business owner, Crystal Eller of Collage Boutique in Hiwassee, has been participating in the showcase since its inception three years ago.

According to Eller, it provides a perfect opportunity to let people know where the boutique is, what it has to offer and even hand out coupons and discount opportunities to future customers.

"We've been coming to the showcase for the last three years," said Eller. "It's been great and just keeps growing every year."

Eller opened Collage Boutique several years ago as a way to offer women in the area an affordable, trendy place to shop. Now, she has turned her store into a safe place to reinforce positive body image.

"When we first opened up, we really wanted to bless women," said Eller. "I didn't realize how negative we are on ourselves. So many women come into the store and they're always saying these negative things about themselves. I wanted a place where women could come and it just be a positive environment."

"I want our store to be an uplifting space for women to come and feel good about themselves."

As part of that promotion, Eller gave away coupons for free products during the showcase, proving that she truly does care about the community and the women in it.

"This is an important part of reaching out to the community," said Eller. "Even though we've been here seven years, we still have a lot of women that don't know that



Vendors from a wide variety of vendors attended the showcase. Photo/Lily Avery



The Blairsville School of Dance sent in a team of belly dancers to entertain visitors to the showcase. Photo/Lily Avery

we're here so we like to spread the word.

"Plus, we love to give out free stuff to people."

And for businesses that wanted a little extra incentive for patrons to visit, the event provided a passport card to everyone who visited the showcase. With the passport card, certain businesses had to be stopped at to receive a stamp in that box and when the entire card was full, the participant became eligible for a raffle drawing for \$200.

"There were 14 businesses that paid an additional amount to be included on the passport," said Lee. "This guaranteed that anyone who wanted in the raffle

drawing for \$200 would have to go and talk to that business to get their little square stamped. All the tables were marked with yellow balloons.

"This was just another way to get more people to their table and I think that everyone really benefited from it."

All in all, it was a business showcase for the books; with both patrons and vendors alike walking away knowing what all the North Georgia Mountains has to offer.

"This year was very successful," said Lee. "I can't wait to see how it'll grow next year."

City Hall...from Page 1A

annualized salary, a monthly salary and a weekly salary."

Mitchell went on to explain that, according to Georgia state law, the timeframe in which the council had to hold the second and final reading of the ordinance to change those salaries had passed since the salaries were being changed during an election year.

"Georgia state law provides that in order to change elected official salaries, there are things that have to be done," said Mitchell. "These things must be done by ordinance. There has to be an ad that is run three weeks before final action and final action has to be taken before qualification period of the election cycle in which the change is going to become effective."

"So, what that means is that the second reading needed to be done prior to qualifications in August."

While the advertisement ran for three consecutive weeks as per protocol, the second reading did not make it in on the agenda before qualifying on Aug. 21.

"The ad ran and there was a special called meeting on July 18," said Mitchell. "Final adoption was supposed to have been that night. The other three items on the agenda were millage rate, budget and planning moratorium. The simple fact is that the elected officials pay wasn't on the agenda and it wasn't voted on."

"So, since the qualifications have passed, the law does not allow for the city to make those changes this year. It will have to wait for the next cycle to be put into place."

As it stands, the mayor salary will be \$16,990 per year and the council salary will be \$100 per month. A change to these salaries can be voted on and approved by Council in 2018, and go into effect in



Economic Developer Dennis Tumlin visited the Sept. 25 Hiwassee City Council work session to talk about Lake Chatuge. Photo/Lily Avery

2019.

While the question of responsibility for the ordinance not being passed was a concern after the announcement and explanation, Mayor Pro Tem Anne Mitchell said that no one person was to be blamed for the oversight, that it was a council mistake as a whole.

"We are all to be held responsible," said Mitchell. "People make mistakes. We're not going to point fingers at anyone. It's been a difficult time with a lot going on and it slipped through the cracks."

Also during the work session, the council heard from Rhea County, Tennessee Economic and Tourism Council Executive Director Dennis Tumlin from Dayton, Tennessee to discuss economic development possibilities for lake communities.

While slightly larger than Hiwassee, Dayton is also home to a beautiful lake that the community takes great pride in, Lake Chickamauga. Over the last several years, Lake Chickamauga and Dayton have become a mecca for pro and semi-pro fishing tournaments, thanks to the help of Tumlin.

According to Tumlin, if Hiwassee wishes to use Lake Chatuge as a marketing point to bring tourism and

industry into the area, it boils down to decisive and selective branding.

But, before branding can begin, the community must have an intention or a staple that the brand is going to push, such as fishing tournaments, mountain biking, hiking and so forth. All of which, according to Tumlin, begins with accepting change.

"Get comfortable with change," said Tumlin. "Traditionally in a small town, we don't like change, but that's what's going to draw people to your area. And if you have people coming in, then you're going to bring bigger businesses and industry into the area. It may take a while, but be patient because it'll come."

Moving forward, Tumlin suggested investing in marketing assets by pursuing grants that would benefit the trademark that the community wishes to pursue and, with that marketing tool, tourism and industry will follow suit.

"When you do something, do it at such a high level, do it so well, that the competition doesn't even know that level exists," said Tumlin. "Then you'll be successful."

Corn Maze...from Page 1A

to get the maze ready for its primetime debut, and visitors will not be disappointed.

All information about the maze can be found at www.JDRComMaze.com, but basically, the maze features three levels for varying ages: the Niblet, the Cobb and the Kernel.

The Kernel is for older kids and adults, and contains three miles of natural corn maze goodness to explore.

Located just outside Blairsville, about a mile from Wendy's restaurant on Georgia 515, the Joshua Dream Ranch Corn Maze has a little something for everyone.

The Corn Maze, which is really something akin to an October festival, will feature a hayride, a raffle, and plenty of fun fall activities, including face painting, pony rides, a train ride, corn hole, pumpkin bowling, archery, animal petting and more.

Entry into the maze is \$10 per individual, and the hayride will be \$5 per ride, though kids ages 3 and under get both free.

Cash and credit cards are accepted, and for more detailed pricing information on activity bundles or group discounts for schools, churches, etc., check out the website.

"The Joshua Dream Ranch is a 501(c)3 nestled in the beautiful North Georgia Mountains," according to the website. "We are the only 'free' therapeutic ranch that gives animal interaction and experiences to families, children and adults with special needs and those with life-threatening illnesses."

Continues the website: "Our Corn Maze is designed



The entrance to the corn maze, with a bridge over the Butternut Creek, located on Georgia 515 a mile up from Wendy's restaurant.

as a fundraiser to support the ranch and our animals. We depend on our volunteers as we support families from all over the Southeast throughout the year. When you come to our Corn Maze, we want you to know that you are making a difference in so many lives."

Come the end of October, the Joshua Dream Ranch Corn Maze will embrace the Halloween holiday with "SpookTacular" events on Oct. 27, Oct. 28 and Oct. 31, from dark to 11 p.m.

Each "SpookTacular" evening will feature a Haunted Hayride and a Glow Maze in the corn, both of which promise to be spooky adventures in the spirit of good Halloween fun for the whole family.

Joshua Dream Ranch proprietor Gino Zalunardo and JDR Development Director Debbie Forcier-Lynn, along with all the volunteers who continue to come together in the name of the

ranch, are extremely excited for the opportunity to provide such a unique family-friendly venue for the community.

Zalunardo said recently that special needs schoolchildren from Union, Towns and Fannin County school systems will be visiting the maze for a special field trip, to explore the maze and enjoy all the activities for free.

Both Zalunardo and Forcier-Lynn are intensely passionate about the guiding light behind the ranch and the corn maze - Zalunardo lost his young son Joshua to cancer nearly a decade ago, and Forcier-Lynn's 7-year-old grandson is currently battling the illness.

Along with maintenance of the ranch, proceeds from the maze will go toward expanding the ranch in both size and scope, which will allow Zalunardo and friends to continue "Building Champions" in the North Georgia Mountains.

Tree...from Page 1A

really have a choice," said Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby. "There were some maple trees on Maple Street that were also dying, so we had them all cut down at the same time and got a better price."

Fortunately, with Christmas just around the corner, Mayor Gibby said that, even though the Christmas tree had to be removed, there's still good reason to hold on to Christmas cheer.

"We will still have a Christmas tree lighting and we'll have a Christmas tree," said Mayor Gibby. "We're looking at a couple of options. One, we've been trying to grow a tree.

"Several years ago, after former Mayor Dan Nichols passed away, a tree was planted in his memory, and it is in the process of growing. It's not quite big enough yet - we can put lights on it and it'll be a cute tree, but it's not a big tree yet.

"In the future, the plans are to use that tree. In the meantime, we're pricing some larger trees to see if we can plant something that will house our Christmas tree lighting. And we're also looking at a fake tree.

"I'm just trying to determine the best cost at this stage, and what will look good during the Christmas season, and what will be appropriate given how cute our park is during the Christmas season."

The ladies of the Enotah Garden Club always facilitate the tree lighting and program, so when the time comes, Mayor Gibby said she will call on them to help select a new location should a tree other than Dan Nichols' memorial tree be used for this year's program.

Dating back to 1970, the first Young Harris Christmas tree lighting was held across from the Young Harris Post Office on College Street.

The lighting continued there for several years, though it eventually moved from its point of origin to various trees along Main Street.

Finally, in the late 1980s, the lighting found its permanent home in Young Harris Mayor's Park after City Hall was built on the land that former Young Harris Mayor Irene Berry left to the city.

As for the maple trees on Maple Street, Mayor Gibby said that those trees had become a safety issue as well, and though they were beloved, they needed to be removed.

"Several years ago, we had cut down some other maple trees," said Mayor Gibby. "They've all been damaged, and it was just a decision we made because it was the right



The Dan Nichols Memorial Tree is a possible candidate for future Young Harris Christmas Tree. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



2016 proved to be the last year for the long running Young Harris Christmas Tree. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

decision at the time.

"This summer, we were awarded \$40,000 from (the Georgia Department of Transportation). The grant was specifically for safety, and we're going to use it for a sidewalk project on Maple Street, primarily to help the students, but it will be a sidewalk for the whole community to use.

"From the corner of Maple and Duckworth, we'll take that sidewalk and

continue it all the way down that side. So, we're using it as an opportunity - we took the trees out, and currently, a design is being engineered for the sidewalk, and in the next couple of months we'll be putting that in."

After the sidewalk is completed, sometime in the near future, the city will also put in some new trees along Maple Street, said Mayor Gibby.

Community Night to benefit TCREA

Community Night Dinner for TCREA

Brother's Restaurant at Willow Ranch will generously donate a percentage of the cost of your meal to Towns County Retired Educators Association (TCREA) in support of its community projects and scholarship programs.

Bring this ticket - one per guest check.
Thursday, October 12, 2017, 5 - 8:30 PM
6223 Hwy 76 West, Young Harris, GA,
across from Brasstown Valley Resort

The Towns County Retired Educators Association invites you to help them earn money for local scholarships.

Last year we were able to award three scholarships to local students who are majoring in education. We also awarded a scholarship to a local teacher who is working on an advanced degree. If you present this ticket on Thursday, October 12, Brother's Restaurant will donate a percentage of the cost of your meal to TCREA.

Efforts to continue awarding scholarships to local students and teachers. Clip the ticket you need only one per guest ticket.

VFW Auxiliary Spaghetti Dinner

The VFW Auxiliary is sponsoring an all-you-can-eat Spaghetti Dinner on Saturday, October 7 from 5 - 7 PM. Cost is \$8 per person. You can purchase tickets at the door. Post 7808 is located on Hwy. 288 in Hiwassee.