

LOCAL NEWS



“First, I simply took some chicken wire and made a nugget-like structure”

► Don Kinder, member of the First Night committee

► The First Night Dahlonega 2016 event will include well-known musical acts around downtown Dahlonega. The event benefits North Georgia Interfaith Ministries.

High school students help bring new New Year's Eve to life



This year, there's a new New Year's Eve celebration in town.

Perhaps the most special part of the First Night Dahlonega event will be as everyone gathers together outside the Welcome Center to celebrate the dawning of the New Year at midnight with the “Nugget Drop.”

To prepare for the “Nugget Drop,” the fundraiser committee reached out to the Lumpkin County High School construction and art classes to help create such a structure.

Don Kinder, a retired-high school principal and member of the First Night committee volunteered to help oversee this part of the project.

“First, I simply took some chicken wire and made a nugget-like structure,” Kinder says.

Next, he let the young professionals step in. “I handed the structure over to the art students to papier-mâché it and make it actually look like a nugget,” Kinder adds. “If all goes as planned, it will have lights inside of it and everything.”

There was also a back drop that needed sprucing up.

With the supervision of art teacher, Kelly White-Bryant, a handful of art students had the privilege of painting it.

LCHS junior Rhiannon Smith and sophomore Kayleigh Chambers have undertaken the project of helping build the wooden frame and cart that the “Nugget” will drop into.

It is Smith's third year taking Jeff Bearer's construction class. Earlier this year she helped put together the flag cases for Veteran's day.

Chambers says it's a great feeling being able to help with the project. “We'll hopefully both be there to see it drop.”

A YEAR IN THE MAKING

Dan Harding, director of this North Georgia Interfaith Ministries fundraiser event, says that they have been preparing for First Night Dahlonega 2016 since the beginning of January 2015.

“My wife and I had been to various first nights around the country and thought it would be a great opportunity for Dahlonega to start a family-friendly tradition for New Year's,” Harding says.

First Night Dahlonega is grabbing attention around town for the extensive set list of local and regional music talent that the night will include for only \$10 per person. Plus, active duty military and all children (12 and under) are free.

The performances are set to be held across town in various locations: the Welcome Center Promenade, Dahlonega United Methodist Church, Dahlonega Baptist Church and the Holly Theatre.

The list of indoor performers includes Amy Ray, Mark Stokes, Sweet



▲ LUMPKIN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL junior Rhiannon Smith (left) and sophomore Kayleigh Chambers helped create part of what will be the “Nugget Drop” in construction class.

Tea & the Blue Grass Boys, Feed the Dog, Hope Rising, Pick & Bow, Creekstone Music, Tom & Julie, Kurt Thomas, Bad Habits Band, More Wah, Gabe Russo, Joe Mackrovitch, North Georgia Symphony, Arielle Crumley and Fr. Neil.

A collection of other outside performances and helpers only sweetens the deal, including appearances from the Silver Singers, Dahlonega Action Dogs, Cloggers, Wayne's Trains, the Dahlonega Zoo, Lumpkin County Sheriff's Department and local EMTs, plus Boy Scout Troop 303.



▲ Rhiannon Smith is in her third year of construction class. Some of her other projects include helping build the boxes for the flags this past Veteran's Day.

“It's really amazing when you think about it, how many people have been willing to volunteer their time and efforts

► Event director Dan Harding

ALL FOR THE CAUSE

“All of the performers are on a volunteer basis only,” Harding says. “So all proceeds will be going directly to The North Georgia Interfaith Ministries. It's really amazing when you think about it, how many people have been willing to volunteer their time and efforts to the cause of helping our local homeless community.”

So far 100 tickets, or in this case “buttons” have been sold across town to people who are excited to spend their New Year's Eve here in downtown Dahlonega.

Ultimately, the committee is hoping to raise over \$50,000 dollars with the event between the tickets and sponsorships.

“First Night is a wonderful opportunity to start a new tradition and support a most worthy cause at the same time,” said Amy Booker, Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce President.

With the hope of First Night becoming a tradition in Dahlonega, Harding notes, “I've seen towns where the buttons for events like this even become collector's items.”

GOING WELL

So far, much like The North Georgia Interfaith Ministries project itself, First Night Dahlonega appears to be a positive team effort.

“We're extremely happy with how everyone and everything is coming together,” Harding says. “I hope our inau-

gural event is packed full of people. And when the people get here I hope they find it to be a wholesome experience.”

Harding added that he wants people to “leave the event saying they were glad they chose to spend their First Night of 2016 here with us and the Interfaith Family in Dahlonega.”

Folks can purchase tickets online at DahlonegaFirstNight.com or at participating businesses including BB&T, United Community Bank, Community & Southern Bank or the Fudge Factory.

Tickets will be limited, based on the available number of seats at each venue.



▲ MAKE IT GILT: LCHS senior Oscar Murillo helps spray paint the “Nugget” gold for the nugget drop.

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