

Community

Bible classes

Continued from page 1A

The Georgia Legislature made the courses possible when it passed a law last year that authorizes state-funded courses using the Bible, as literature, to be offered as electives in Georgia public schools. In March the state Board of Education voted to adopt the courses, leaving it up to each school district to decide whether or not to offer the classes.

Stephens said that it could happen in Union County Schools as early as the spring semester of 2008, but no timetable is set. He acknowledged that while some systems

may come out with it earlier, there are a number of things to attend to before such a change can be made. While that would likely include specific decisions such as which version of the Bible to use in the classes, Stephens said that much of the preparation simply comes down to integrating the class into the curriculum that the school already has.

"You have to interface it with your curriculum as it is now," Stephens said. "Basically, any time you add a course, you have to adjust your total curriculum to accommodate it. We don't want to get in

a situation where we have to tax the taxpayers to come up with the money for it. We want to integrate it into our curriculum in a way that won't be an additional expense. That will take some time in itself."

One aspect that likely will not be a problem for Union County High School is finding a teacher for the class. Stephens said that the school already has someone who is willing to teach it. "When the time comes I don't think we will have a problem [with that,]" Stephens said.

Critics have warned that the state is treading into dangerous

territory with the decision, though groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have thus far said that they will wait to see how the courses are implemented before considering what, if any, legal action to take. Stephens acknowledged that no one ever wants to be the guinea pig for such a lawsuit, and that he would prefer to see how the process fares in other schools systems first. "It has the potential of having a lot of oversight with it," Stephens said. "The state will have to make sure that whatever curriculum they give us is going to stand up to the law."

Education leaders in Muscogee County, Ga. are currently considering offering the courses, which would make the Columbus area one of the state's first major school systems to adopt the proposal. Their school board is scheduled to vote on the plan during an April 23 meeting.

The *Union Sentinel* asked Jerry Helton, Pastor of the House of Prayer Interdenominational Church in Blairsville, for his thoughts on the topic. As both a pastor and a former educator at Union County High School, Pastor Helton has a unique perspective

from multiple sides of the issue.

The pastor said that he is very excited about the potential of a Bible class being offered in Union County Schools. He feels that this type of step can benefit a culture which many believe has increasingly veered towards a lack of absolutes.

"To try to govern in a moral vacuum has led to chaos. We constantly see that showing itself in breakdowns of society," Pastor Helton said, pointing to the recent massacre at Virginia Tech as an example. "Any exposure to the Bible, whether as history or literature, is a positive, positive step."

House report

Continued from page 1A

In addressing lawmakers, he applauded efforts by the General Assembly to keep the PeachCare for Kids Program stable and said that it will be funded fully by Congress at the current level or even more. This was an indirect way of saying to the Georgia House that any cuts to the program that reduce eligibility and will add to the rolls of the uninsured, in the name of saving the program financially, are unnecessary.

Earlier this session, the House adopted HB 340 along a party line vote that reduces the number of families that could get health insurance for their children by lowering the eligibility for PeachCare for Kids from 235 percent of the federal poverty level to 200 percent. Estimates indicate that this could deny thousands of children the health care coverage they need.

An agreement was reached on HB 94, the supplemental budget for fiscal year 2007, which ends June 30. This week, a conference committee reached an agreement that strips out all "special projects" and would instead return the funds back to the taxpayers in the form of a \$142 million

property tax cut. Exactly how those funds will be distributed to the taxpayers remains under discussion.

The tax cut increases the homestead property tax exemption put in place by former Governor Roy Barnes from \$10,000 to \$12,750. HB 94 does continue to earmark funds for critical areas such as \$194 million for a 2.65 percent jump in K-12 school enrollment; \$81 million for the PeachCare for Kids Program; \$11 million in disaster relief for the City of Americus which was hit by a devastating tornado; \$40 million to assist in the startup of the new KIA Plant in West Georgia; and \$9 million for the Public Defenders System.

Unfortunately, the proposed property tax relief may force the state's adult literacy program to lay off all 246 instructors for two months. However, I am optimistic action will be taken in the General Assembly to prevent a lay-off of instructors.

Last week, the House Higher Education Committee heard testimony on HB 154, the intellectual diversity bill. If passed, the bill would require all institutions under the control

of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia to submit annual reports to the General Assembly on their efforts toward intellectual diversity.

Supporters said it's needed to protect college students from being chastised, intimidated and even threatened for their dissenting points of view.

Opponents consider the proposal needless political meddling.

The House Economic Development & Tourism Committee approved a package of Senate-passed bills designed to authorize infrastructure development districts labeled "private cities" by critics in Georgia. SR 309 calls for a referendum to amend the constitution authorizing the General Assembly to establish the creation and comprehensive regulation of infrastructure development districts. SB 200 is the proposed law governing the districts.

With regard to local legislation, the Senate adopted House Bills 501, 502, 509 and 727, which I sponsored. These bills would provide for a homestead exemption on ad valorem taxes. This places a 3% annual cap on residential property tax assess-

ments for most full-time residents. Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall requested the legislation which is applicable to and approved by local elected officials in Young Harris and Hiwassee. This legislation was also approved by the General Assembly as requested by the Towns County School System. The voters of Towns County will have the opportunity to vote of this local constitutional amendment in a referendum in November 2007. The details of these House Bills can be obtained from the Towns County Commissioner's office.

This is scheduled to be the final week of the 2007 session of the General Assembly, with

"sine die" adjournment coming Friday, April 20.

Rep. Charles Jenkins (D-Blairsville) represents the 8th District (Rabun, Towns, Union and White counties) in the

Georgia House of Representatives. Contact him at 411 Coverdell Office Building, Atlanta, GA 30334; by phone at 404-656-0126 or by e-mail at charles.jenkins@house.ga.gov.

Rich
LIFE & HEALTH AGENCY

Judy Hemphill Rich

Specializing in Long Term Coverage and Medicare Supplements

Call 706-781-1065

Experience
Community Banking



...At It's Best!



Community Banking is ...

- People you know
- Local decision makers
- Money invested locally
- Community involvement

Join us for cake and punch on Friday, April 13.

Blairsville: 236 Highway 515 • (706) 745-5571

Appalachian **Gilmer***
Community Bank **County Bank**

Also serving
Blue Ridge • Ellijay • East Ellijay
Dawsonville • McCaysville • Chatsworth
www.acbanks.net • Nasdaq Symbol: APAB



*A Division of Appalachian Community Bank.



Ebenezer Fain

Continued from page 1A

David M. Fain moved to Habersham in 1821 and Margaret Fain-Witzel-Thomas moved there in 1824.

Their proximity to the new Union County saw John Samuel Fain and David M. Fain settling there about 1832, and when they moved on in 1839 to Old Gilmer in what would become Fannin in 1854, they left behind the Fain name on a creek, a road and later a post office in Union (that part of last week's article was correct!)

Now, with corrections made, to use flashback, let us review some pertinent information about Patriot Ebenezer Fain (08.27.1762-12.29.1842). He was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania to Nicholas Fain and Elizabeth Taylor Fain. His parents immigrated from Ireland about 1749. Nicholas Fain was a peddler and about 1772, when Ebenezer was a boy of ten, the Fains moved on the Great Valley Road and settled on the South Fork of the Holston River at a place called Abingdon. That area is near the present location of Bristol (Tennessee/Virginia).

For descendants of Ebenezer Fain, it is interesting to trace his patriotic service.

At age fourteen in 1776, he enlisted in the Virginia Militia.

His job was to help quell an uprising of the Cherokee against the settlers whom the British termed "unruly western-frontier whites." This enlistment was for three months, June through August. Fain's service then involved two victorious battles against the Cherokee.

In 1778, Nicholas and Elizabeth Taylor Fain moved again, that time to Jonesborough, Washington County, North Carolina (now Tennessee). Ebenezer Fain served four more enlistments with the militia. In June, 1780, he was enlisted as a "light horseman" and showed extreme bravery in several confrontations from July 14 through August 8 of 1880.

His third enlistment began in September, 1880. Among other encounters, he was at the famed battle of King's Mountain where he received a wound in the leg.

In December, 1780, Ebenezer Fain enlisted for the fourth time, serving under the famed Colonel John Sevier. Their raids against the Cherokee (who were in alliance with the Tories and the British) burned towns, captured horses, destroyed crops and killed Indians. Ebenezer's fourth

enlistment ended in March, 1781.

His fifth and final enlistment began on April 1, 1781. For six months he was a mounted ranger, helping to guard the frontier in Washington County against Tories and Indians. It was during this enlistment that Ebenezer Fain and John Nicholson became close friends (note that John Nicholson migrated to Union County, Georgia after the war and was buried in the Pleasant Grove Cemetery, Blairsville). These two men served in the Georgia Legislature from the old Walton County, which Georgia claimed for awhile, along the contested North Carolina-Georgia line. But that is a story for another time.

The Fains loved the mountains and followed the ridges from Pennsylvania down through the Cumberlands to Virginia, to North Carolina (now Tennessee), to Habersham, some to Union County, Georgia, and then to Old Gilmer (now Fannin). With the peaceful fields of his son John Samuel Fain clustered along rushing Hot House Creek, and the ridges towering above the plantation, Patriot Ebenezer Fain died peacefully on December 29, 1842.