



Megan Broome/The Clayton Tribune

Shannon Robinson stands beside the "Blessing Box" stocked with canned food items and other foods like peanut butter, canned fruit, rice, cereal, beans and other essential items available for free to anyone in need.

'Blessing Box' meant to be a blessing to the community, Robinson says

By Megan Broome
Staff Writer

CLAYTON— There are many reasons to count your blessings, and they come in many shapes and sizes and in many different ways.

In Rabun County, many of those blessings will come to people from a brown wooden box that holds food items and other essentials for anyone in need.

A "Blessing Box" located in Clayton provides an opportunity to give back to the community and those in need, said Shannon Robinson, who spearheaded the project.

Robinson said that the concept is similar to a "Little Free Library" but instead of books is stocked with basic necessities that anyone in need can take at their leisure.

It is currently stocked with canned food items and other foods like peanut butter, canned fruit, rice, cereal, beans and many more "non-perishable" foods. "It's not just food.

There's also essential items," Robinson said. There is no cost to utilize the service.

Items like toothpaste, shampoo, washcloths, soap and much more are also stocked in the box, which is several rows deep.

Robinson said that anyone passing by can stop and take any items they need but can also add items to the box to pay it forward and spread the love as they feel led. Although, users are not required to add items if they take any.

"Anything that you think people might benefit from," Robinson said about materials that can be added to the box. She said that it is not limited to Rabun County residents, but open to anyone who needs the service.

Robinson emphasized that it is completely anonymous and patrons can go at any time of the day or night to retrieve items.

The "Blessing Box" is located in an area

on the right side of the MedLink Rabun facility on Highway 441 in Clayton.

It is in an accessible place but hidden enough so patrons can be discreet when utilizing it.

"We thought it would be a good location and help give back to the community," Robinson said.

"It would be very easy for people to get to."

She explained that some people might feel uncomfortable accepting items with others around, and this is a way for them to receive their items without anyone knowing.

Robinson said that she got the idea while listening to the radio one day.

"I brought the idea back to the office here [MedLink]. Everyone liked the idea," Robinson said. Robinson practices as a nurse practitioner for MedLink.

She said that the planning stages took some time, but that the idea came to fruition in perfect timing.

"For some reason it just seemed right about the time we put it up," Robinson said. This was just prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 where many people lost their jobs and needed these essential items to help stay afloat.

"We have replaced some food in there," Robinson said about how the box has already been used by many. She said that the box is checked periodically to ensure it stays stocked.

The box was built by Jessie Fountain, a MedLink employee, and her husband Stevie.

"We just want to help people out," Robinson said about the concept for the "Blessing Box." She said that if this box does well there are plans to build a bigger one and expand the project.

The box will remain available indefinitely to help in times of need and remind everyone to "take what you need, leave what you can, and above all be blessed."

DILLARD

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Story said that he is visiting each city to talk to respective council members about Forward Rabun and give them more information about it. He said that each city will be able to decide whether they want to use hotel/motel taxes to fund Forward Rabun.

At the Development Authority of Rabun County meeting Monday, board members discussed the city of Dillard and how to help them obtain a long-term lease with the Farmers Market.

This is the space across from Dillard Methodist Church on Highway 441.

The property is owned by the Department of Agriculture and Story

said that he worked to put city officials in contact with the department to obtain a lease on the property.

In other DARC business, board members discussed a revolving loan that will help fund local businesses.

Story said that a grant was given from the Department of Commerce to Rabun County and then the county passed it on to the DARC to create a loan.

The DARC needs a new recipient of the loan because it has to be utilized or it is at risk of being taken away.

This revolving loan fund can be reused for different businesses and is designed for companies that might not meet criteria to receive a traditional bank loan.

Board members also discussed job creation and noted that more people are moving from urban areas to more rural areas to work and live.

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Local students earn degrees at UNG

DAHLONEGA, Ga. -- For the spring 2020 semester, the University of North Georgia awarded more than 1,600 degrees and certificates. Ceremonies were canceled due to COVID-19, but UNG hosted a virtual celebration on the UNG commencement website starting May 8, which would have been the first of back-to-back days of commencement ceremonies:

Collyn Archer, Clayton, Bachelor of Science - Elementary and Special Education. Cum Laude

Taylor Asman, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science - Biology.

Frederick Barnes, Dillard Bachelor of Science - Kinesiology with sports medicine concentration. Cum Laude

Emily Church, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science - Biology.

John Corbett, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science

- Biology. Summa Cum Laude

Samantha Cragg, Lakemont, Bachelor of Arts - History.

Victoria Crane, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science - Nursing. Magna Cum Laude

Justin Davis, Riverdale, Bachelor of Science - Criminal Justice with POST certification.

Jonathan Delugach, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Business Administration - Management. Magna Cum Laude

Katharine Dolph, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Business Administration - Marketing.

Kaitlyn English, Clarkesville, Associate of Science - Early Childhood Education Pathway.

Ethan Johnson, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science - Biology. Cum Laude

Alyson Nix, Rabun Gap, Bachelor of Science - Middle Grades Education. Cum Laude

Jasmyn Ruddell, Clarkesville, Associate of Arts - General Studies Pathway. Distinction

Christine Slotkoff, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Science - Physics.

William Sperin, Clarkesville, Bachelor of Business Administration - Marketing and Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages with Chinese language and literature concentration. Cum Laude

Meredith Talley, Clayton, Bachelor of Science - Elementary and Special Education.

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