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Lanny Bodkins
Johnson City



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To Serve and Protect special edition issue!

Inside today's News & Neighbor be sure to see a salute to Johnson City's Police and Fire Departments.

Living with Juvenile Diabetes

In part three of our series on Juvenile Diabetes, we follow Russell England who was diagnosed with Juvenile or Type 1 Diabetes in 2006. Turn to page 5 for more.

Hazel Creek calls us back every season

By Harold Ross, Jr.
Contributing Writer / Photographer

(Editor's note: This is first of a two-part series by Harold Ross, Jr. on the Hazel Creek Fly Fishing Club's annual trip into the wilderness of the Great Smoky Mountains) All photography is courtesy of Harold Ross, Jr. You can visit his websites for more photos at: www.haroldrossjr.com and www.haroldrossjr.zenfolio.com)

For 25 years and counting, I have been leading the members of the Hazel Creek Fly Fishing Club to the back country of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Every year my group of 8-10 buddies prepares to spend up to seven days camping and fishing on the crown jewel of trout streams called Hazel Creek.

Beginning in January we meet at one of the club member's homes to plan the trip date. We try to set a date in May. That month is really the best of both worlds as far as weather for our camping trip. Historically we have warm days for fishing and cool nights for sleeping, which makes things more comfortable. This year's trip included Harold Ross, Jr., Jon Henry, Dubey Seivers, David Anderson, Bryan Averett, Jim Thigpen and Brad Seitzinger.

Once the date is set we plan all the logistics of the trip from who is driving to the menu. There is a lot more to planning a trip where you have to pack in everything you need from matches to toilet paper for a whole week.

This is not your ordinary camping and fishing trip to the local drive-up KOA campground. No my friends, this is back country camping in one of the most remote sec-



Local men experience seven days in the wilderness, fishing, camping and enjoying nature. They are, from left to right, Jon Henry, Dubey Seivers, Harold Ross, Jr., David Anderson, Bryan Averett, Jim Thigpen and Brad Seitzinger. (All photography courtesy of Harold Ross, Jr. www.haroldrossjr.com)

tions of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park -- no restroom facilities, no hot showers, no coke machines, no driving to the store if you happen to forget something. If you get homesick...sorry, no cell phone service. If you get injured, better hope its minor because it is a seven-mile hike down the trail to the lakeshore. Then... if you're lucky, you might catch one of the shuttles bringing over hikers from the marina or maybe a bass fisherman passing by. This is basic camping 101 where you carry everything in for a week of camping and fishing.

The trip starts by packing a covered trailer the night before departure. Everyone brings over their duffel bag or pack with personal items, clothing and fishing gear. Next we pack the community camping gear which includes, stove, kitchenware, camp chairs, axe/saws, tarp, tents, food, bear-proof chuck box, bear-proof cooler and a survival tool bag. To haul all this gear up the trail, our group has two customized aluminum pull carts made just for this trip. The carts are heavy duty and are capable of holding over 700 pounds of gear each. Did I say we had to haul these seven miles to our campsite?

At 5:30 a.m. sharp the group pulls out of Johnson City and heads over the mountain by way of Interstate 26 through Asheville to Fontana Lake in North Caro-

lina. We always like to stop by a greasy spoon restaurant to load up on calories for the physical test of prowess ahead. It is also of extreme importance to be well hydrated for the trek up the mountain to our campsite. Once we arrive at the marina three hours later, we unload everything on the boat ramp and wait for "Miss Hazel,"

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On their way to Hazel Creek by ferry across Fontana Lake. The stress of everyday life is left behind.



On the trail up to their campsite are from left to right, Harold Ross, Jr., Brad Seitzinger, David Anderson, Jim Thigpen, Jon Henry, Dubey Seivers and Bryan Averett. The custom-made camp cart can hold 700 lbs. of equipment.



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