

MOUNTAIN LIFE

Making reading Sweet

by Eric Tlongson
White County News

For Foundational Literacy, fundraising is a piece of cake. Literally.

On Saturday, March 9, the nonprofit organization Foundational Literacy hosted the Great Cake Bake at the Satee Nacoochee Center, a fundraiser for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. It was a milestone event for the organization.

"Everything we've done so far has been very small," said John Aiken, president of Foundational Literacy. "Just asking people for donations, that kind of thing. This is the first time we've had an event."

Cakes baked by professionals, amateurs, students and teachers from the community lined tables placed inside the Historic Gym, with the sweet scent of frosting hanging in the air. The highlight of the event was the cake competition, with bakers creating cakes based off of their favorite children's books.

The cake competition featured two divisions, one for professionals and one for amateurs and families. The winners of the professional division were Aunt B's Bakery in third place, Cindy's Tasty Cakes in second place and Melissa's Custom Cakes in first place. The winners of the amateur and family division were Summer Adams in third place, Lindsey Proctor in second place and Shanna Hill in first place.

Other activities included a face painting table, a bake sale, carnival games, a cakewalk, meet and greets with local children's authors and performances from "Dancing Pigs," the Chick-Fil-A cow and White County High School drama students.

Proceeds from the event will be used to provide free books to children through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

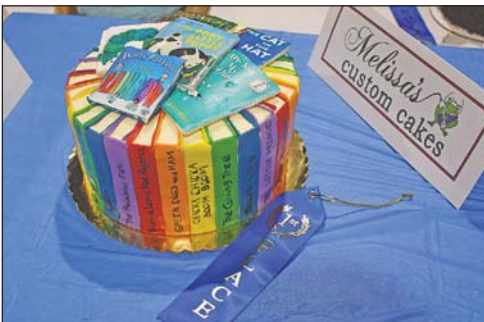
"The reason we went through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is for early literacy," said Vicki Aiken, co-founder of Foundational Literacy. "They get books from birth to age five, and children, by getting these books, will either be ready for kindergarten or they will be reading already."

Over 700 children have enrolled in Foundational Literacy since the organization's founding in 2022, already nearing their five-year goal of 800 enrollees.

Beyond the high enrollment numbers, the Aikens were grateful for the community turnout at the event on Saturday.

"We have had wonderful volunteers which have really helped us get everything set up," John Aiken said. "We've got a lot of people from the community coming in."

He also expressed his gratitude towards authors Emory Jones, Cynthia King Johnston and Wanda Obermeier for making appearances.



Tables set up in the middle of the Satee Nacoochee Center gymnasium displayed all of the cakes, left. Visitors, above, could vote on their favorite cakes baked by students and teachers with donations. (Photos/Eric Tlongson)

Melissa's Custom Cakes took home first place in the professional division of the cake competition.



"The Dancing Pigs," with a little help from the Chick-Fil-A Cow, cap off their dance routine to Dolly Parton's "9-5."



The face painting table was one of the most popular attractions at the Great Cake Bake.

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