

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Winter storms bring torrential rains, half-foot of snow

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The last week has been a crazy one for weather, with Mother Nature dropping upwards of 4 inches of rain and more than 6 inches of snow on Union County.

Fortunately, no major injuries resulted from that wild weather, as none were reported by press time.

Thunderstorms started rolling into the area late Wednesday into Thursday morning, ushering in flood conditions with heavy rainfall that caused local creeks and the Nottely River to swell.

"While there were a lot of flooding and several places where the creeks got out of their banks, we were very lucky," Sole Commissioner

Lamar Paris said last week. "We had rainfall measurements between 3.1 inches at the Experiment Station, to 4 inches at a home.

"Had it rained another inch or two Thursday afternoon, we very well could have had some serious flooding throughout the county. Usually, the major problems begin when we get 4-6 inches of rainfall and above."

Union County Schools closed early on Thursday to get kids home safely, and they remained closed Friday due to icy conditions and early morning snowfall in parts of the county.

On Friday, Feb. 7, low morning temps caused icy roads that resulted in two accidents on US 129 South. One car ran into a ditch near

Sunrise Grocery, and another car a little further south slid into a northbound semi-truck, knocking the truck's fuel tank loose and hobbling a tire.

There were no injuries in those accidents.

Union County's Emergency Management Agency held a special weather briefing by the Weather Service out of Peachtree City Friday afternoon, where snow totals of between 1 and 3 inches were forecast for most of North Georgia on Saturday, Feb. 8, between 6 a.m. and noon.

Due to a lingering weather pocket, Union County actually ended up well exceeding those snow totals, with 6 inches and more of snow – and reports of 7.5 inches in Suches – being quickly deposited between 9

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A county road truck plowing snow and spreading salt/gravel along Cleveland Street on Saturday morning. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Woody Gap students sell fruit to fund SkillsUSA trip



Woody Gap students have competed at a high level for several years in SkillsUSA competitions, as pictured here in 2018. Photo/North Georgia News

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES – Woody Gap High School students have done incredibly well competing at the state level in the SkillsUSA Program in recent years, and they'll be returning to state in 2020 following excellent regional performances.

The SkillsUSA State

fundraiser, the students are reinforcing their appreciation of SkillsUSA opportunities as they experience the lesson of earning one's way as opposed to being handed a ticket and stipend for which they didn't work.

Fruit prices are \$25 for 11 Florida oranges or \$30 for 22 oranges; \$25 for eight red grapefruit or \$30 for 15 fruit; \$25 for six oranges/five grapefruit and \$30 for 12 oranges/10 grapefruit; \$30 for 10 pounds of tangerines; \$20 for 7 ounces of milk chocolate almond toffee and 2 pounds of Mandarin oranges; \$20 for a half-pound bag of South Georgia pecans and 2 pounds of Mandarin oranges.

For more information about the Woody Gap School Fruit Fundraiser, contact SkillsUSA Advisor Coach Gary Butler at 706-747-2401, or email him at gbutler@ucschoools.org.

The students will be very thankful for anyone supporting the fundraiser, which, again, will go toward their travel costs as they compete in state-level

See SkillsUSA, Page 2A

Over 100 kings and queens crowned during 'Night to Shine'



Area special needs residents had the time of their lives Friday night during the annual Night to Shine event at First United Methodist Church of Union County. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On Friday, Feb. 7, the First United Methodist Church of Union County hosted its Third Annual "Night to Shine"

event in celebration of special needs individuals from Gilmer, Towns, Fannin and Gwin counties in Georgia, and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

For six years now, the

Tim Tebow Foundation has held hundreds of "Night to Shine" events on a single night of the year, in concert with hundreds of churches and dozens of denominations

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GDOT still acquiring right of way for Georgia 515 project

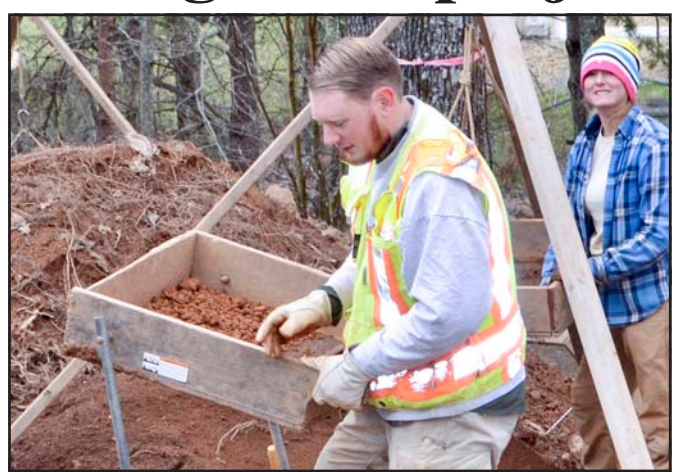
By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Georgia Department of Transportation has completed about 78% of the right of way acquisition phase ahead of construction on the Georgia 515 widening/relocation project for the upcoming corridor between Blairsville and Young Harris.

Project investment, including design, right of way and construction, is \$130 million – "a very significant amount of funding for this region," GDOT Communications Specialist Katie Strickland said.

"Currently, the project is

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GDOT archaeologists sift dirt for Native American artifacts ahead of new road construction in Young Harris. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Business owner petitions city for indoor gun range permit

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Tim Chambliss, owner of local gun shop iPatriot LLC on Young Harris Street, appeared before Blairsville City Council Members in their petition, Feb. 4, regular meeting to petition the city for a permit to construct an indoor pistol range.

Chambliss is licensed as both a federal firearms dealer and a gunsmith, and currently, he has no way of test-firing repaired firearms on-site. Federal regulations prohibit him from taking said weapons off-premises.

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Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley

UCSO's busy year continues apace with Walmart threat, arrests

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Sheriff's Office continues yet another busy year of law enforcement in 2020, making burglary and stolen vehicle arrests, as well as tracking down a man who'd threatened to shoot up the Blairsville Walmart, all last week.

A Murphy, North Carolina, man found himself on the wrong side of the law when he called up the Walmart Headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, and threatened to shoot people in the Blairsville store last Thursday, UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Why? He was upset

that Walmart had recently rearranged the shelves inside the store, Osborn said.

Around 10:40 a.m. on Feb. 6, Walmart HQ contacted the Sheriff's Office, which in turn responded with 11 deputies from all divisions – Criminal Investigations, Narcotics and Patrol.

Deputies arrived at Walmart within minutes and determined in short order that everyone was safe and that there was no immediate threat inside the store, though they took appropriate precautions and posted deputies at each entrance.

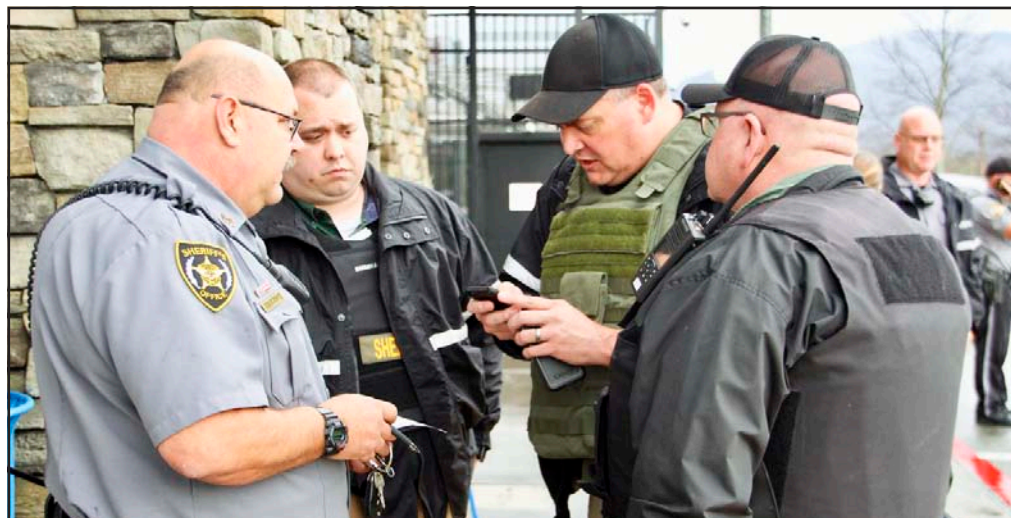
Thanks to a swift

investigation, Union County deputies located the suspect, Robert Theodore Lee, less than an hour after the 911 call came in, and they contacted the Cherokee County (NC) Sheriff's Office to request that Lee be picked up at his home in Murphy, Osborn said.

Lee, 59, has been charged with making terroristic threats, a felony, and he was transferred to the Union County Jail on Friday, Feb. 7.

Osborn and Staff Sgt. Lamar Dyer said they were both thankful for the prompt actions of Union County's first responders, including 911 Dispatcher, the Sheriff's Office, and Union General EMS,

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UCSO Capt. Craig Davenport, Sgt. Marc Pilote, Staff Sgt. Lamar Dyer and Lt. Daren Osborn were four of 11 deputies to respond to Walmart following a violent threat last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

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