

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Iwo Jima Veteran turns 91, remembers the island

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Milton H. Nielson can't stand it when people trample on or burn the American flag.

"A lot of good people lost their lives to keep America free," said Nielson recently, who has always been intensely patriotic. "They fought hard to raise that flag in Iwo Jima."

Of course, that's something Nielson knows all about, seeing how he was part of the first wave of Marines to rush the black beaches of Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945, attached to the 27th Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Division.

He turned 91 last month on Feb. 24, and he celebrated with two dozen raw oysters, delivered fresh to his home compliments of Mike Gurley, owner of Mike's Seafood.

And though Nielson has been living in Union County for nearly 50 years, currently with his daughter Janice Pouncey,

he is originally from much further away, a place called Rensselaer, New York, located right across the Hudson River from Albany.

When he was 2 years old, Nielson's mother left the family. His father couldn't work and keep the children, so Nielson, his twin brother Niel, and their younger brother Richard moved into a Catholic orphanage, though they kept in touch with family over the years.

The twins turned 17 in 1943, and by then, the U.S. had been fighting the Axis powers for more than a year, having been drawn into the war by the Japanese sneak attack at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Milton and Niel decided they wanted to do their parts and serve their country, so they left the orphanage and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on June 14, 1943 – Flag Day.

The twins weren't old enough to enlist at 17, so their

father helped them to lie about their ages, and off they went to Parris Island, South Carolina.

Following boot camp, where the Nielson brothers were one of 11 sets of twins, the two went for more training, eventually splitting up along the way.

Nielson trained next at Quantico, Virginia, then traveled to Camp Pendleton, California, for more training. In June of 1944, he and his unit ventured to the Hawaiian Islands, where they spent eight months preparing for combat on Japanese-controlled islands in the Pacific Theatre.

"When we left (Hawaii), we all knew we were going in, but we weren't sure just where it would be," Nielson told the *Albany Times Union* in 1945, after returning home from the war. "None of us had been in action before and we kidded and joked during most of the



Nielson with several items detailing his military service and time on Iwo Jima

See Nielson, Page 8A

## Mock Trial Team finishes successful season

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

LAWRENCEVILLE – The Union County High School Mock Trial team made history yet again with their outstanding performance last weekend during the State Finals at the Gwinnett County Justice Center.

More than 100 mock trial teams opened the season in October with dreams of ending up in Lawrenceville in March, and when the dust settled, Union County had gone the distance, finishing as one of the top four teams in the state.

"We begin each season knowing that our team's success depends upon many factors: the time the students are willing to put into the case, the valuable mentoring from our attorney coach and veteran team members, and the strong relationships our



L-R: Senior Nick Atkinson, junior Clay Pickelsimer, sophomore Lulu Morris, junior Stephen Normyle and sophomore Alex Bailey

team members form with one another, the generous support of our sponsors and community – the list goes on," Union

County Mock Trial Coach Amy Payne said.

The first round matched Union County up against Atlanta

International School and sophomores Lulu Morris and Alex Bailey won courtroom

See Mock Trial, Page 2A

## Sen. Wilkinson wants to offer voters a choice

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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Georgia voters could soon experience a blast from the past as members of the Georgia House of Representatives weigh Senate Resolution 192, introduced by District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson.

The resolution proposes an amendment to the Constitution so as to authorize the General Assembly to provide by law for election of local school superintendents by members of local boards of education by grand juries, as an alternative to appointment of local school superintendents



State Sen. John Wilkinson, District 50

See Wilkinson, Page 2A

## Comprehensive planning moves forward for city and county

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Stakeholders for the Blairsville and Union County Comprehensive Plan met to discuss results from public surveys and determine focal areas to move forward with when constructing the comprehensive plan on Monday, March 6, at the Union County Community Center.

A comprehensive plan is the product of a comprehensive planning process that determines goals and aspirations in terms of community development within a specific municipality or county. The plan typically covers a 10-year span, including a five-year earmark for amendments to be made to goals within the plan that have already been



Union General Hospital's Leslie Daniel with Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley in the Monday, March 6, Comprehensive Plan meeting with GMRC.

accomplished.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is assisting Union County and Blairsville with revising their respective

comprehensive plans.

During the last public hearing pertaining to the upcoming comprehensive plan, residents

See Planning, Page 3A

## City talks water agreement with Notla, updates alcohol ordinance

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

An update to the city's current alcohol ordinance and upcoming water improvements were hot topics at the Blairsville City Council monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 7.

During last month's meeting, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley proposed an idea to the council concerning an agreement between the city and Notla Water Authority. This agreement would give the city the opportunity to provide water and sewer to a commercial property on Pat Haralson Drive that is currently unable to have such.

Since, Mayor Conley



Blairsville City Councilwoman Martha Cone, right, with City Clerk Kaye McCann.

has spoken with Notla Water Authority concerning the arrangement and Notla Water Authority has agreed to provide the city with water for a discounted rate. According

to Mayor Conley, providing the commercial property with water and sewer will greatly increase the chances for the

See City, Page 3A

## General Manager Nelms continues to update community on Blue Ridge Mountain EMC

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms wants everyone to know that the EMC has turned over a new leaf.

He delivered this message at the Rotary Club of Union County weekly meeting on Thursday, March 9.

"We're coming out of some of the darkest times, based on what I can tell, that EMC has ever experienced," said Nelms, who has been busy getting to know all the employees of the EMC since

coming on board last July. "You have a very dedicated staff of employees.

"We have roughly 200 employees over there – that's an awful lot of people. And 99.5 percent of those employees had absolutely nothing to do with what was going on over there.

"We just had a really unfortunate event that came to light, and it's taught us all a hard lesson on how you address things. You don't hide from it, you don't run from it, you just address it."

Elections conducted by the EMC membership in



BRMEMC Jeremy Nelms speaking at the weekly Union County Rotary Club meeting on Thursday, March 9.

See BRMEMC, Page 3A

## Law firm to look for claimants against Windstream in March 16th meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

An Alabama law firm called Beckum Kittle LLP is inviting current Union County customers of Windstream Communications to attend an informational meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 16.

The 7 p.m. meeting will be held in the Choestoe School House, and will feature an update in ongoing consumer claims handled by Beckum Kittle against Windstream.

Beckum Kittle is currently accepting claimants

for consumer action against Windstream, according to their Facebook page.

"The action centers on claims by current customers that Windstream has repeatedly failed to deliver the service (specifically internet speed and quality) for which those individuals have paid," continued the Facebook post.

According to the law firm, the attorneys have two goals in mind for their claimants: one, to improve the internet service provided to residents of Georgia; and two, "to make a claim for refunds on behalf of current Windstream customers (on the basis that a

service has been paid for that has not been delivered)."

Since at least June of last year, the law firm has held at least 19 of these informational meetings in both Alabama and Georgia, including earlier this week in neighboring White and Pickens counties.

And Beckum Kittle has had its eye on Windstream for some time, considering a March 2015 blogpost at BeckumKittle.com that reads:

"In February 2014, Windstream Communications, a national internet service provider, settled claims with the

See Windstream, Page 2A

Vol. 108 No. 11

4 Sections 28 Pages

Weather

Thurs: Sunny Hi 47 Lo 25

Fri: Cloudy Hi 55 Lo 44

Sat: Showers Hi 55 Lo 32

Arrests 7A

Churches 2C

Classifieds 4D

Opinion 4A

Legals 4D

Obits 6C

Sports 2C

See page 6A

Book Sale Fundraiser American Legion

See page 6A

American Cancer Society

Memorial Service Date Set

See page 7A

9th Annual Trackrock Motorcycle Trials

March 18 & 19

See page 3C

PANTHERS SOCCER

Fri Mar 17 @ East Hall 5:30 & 7:30 PM

BASEBALL

Wed Mar 15 @ Lumpkin 5:55 PM

Fri Mar 17 vs. Lumpkin Co 5:55 PM