

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Police Department to sponsor Rubber Duck Derby for 'Shop With A Cop'

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In an effort to raise money to take local children Christmas shopping, the Blairsville Police Department will sponsor its first ever Rubber Duck Derby on Saturday, Aug. 31.

The family-friendly derby will take place at 1 p.m. in Butternut Creek at the Union County Farmers Market, with proceeds going to the "Shop With A Cop" program.

"This year, we decided we would do something that hasn't been done locally," said Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter. "We had researched it a good bit and decided we wanted to do a rubber duck race."

"The more we looked at it, the more we felt like it would be popular, and it would be for a good cause."

For just \$10, anyone can

adopt a duck and get a ticket, at which point the ticket number will be written on the underside of a rubber duck.

At the beginning of the race, all the adopted ducks will be released into the creek and will float on the current to the finish line.

"The ducks will be shaken up in a big box, and we're going to dump them in the creek, and they're going to go for about a tenth of a mile," said Baxter. "The Top Prize is \$500 cash, second is \$250 cash and third is \$100 cash."

"We've got numerous gift cards from local businesses, gift certificates for food and drink. We've got one of these high-end coolers and several packages for golf at both golf courses, Old Union and Butternut."

"Our businesses have really supported us with these certificates, and we think it is

going to be a pretty big success. That's the biggest thing, it's all for the kids, and 100% of the proceeds are going straight back into Shop With A Cop."

Added Baxter, "The cause, that's the biggest thing - it's going to the cause to take these underprivileged kids and let them have a Christmas."

Shop With A Cop is turning 19 this year, and for nearly two decades, the program has been a huge success for Union County families, with over 1,000 children being helped since the start.

"That's a lot of shopping trips and a lot of lives that we hope we've impacted in a positive way," said Baxter, which Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer said has definitely been his experience.

"A lot of kids' outlook

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Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter, Officer Seth Dyer, Assistant Chief Shawn Dyer and Lt. Rusty Walker of the Blairsville Police Department. Photo by Mark Smith

Rachel Todd graduates summa cum laude from Princeton University

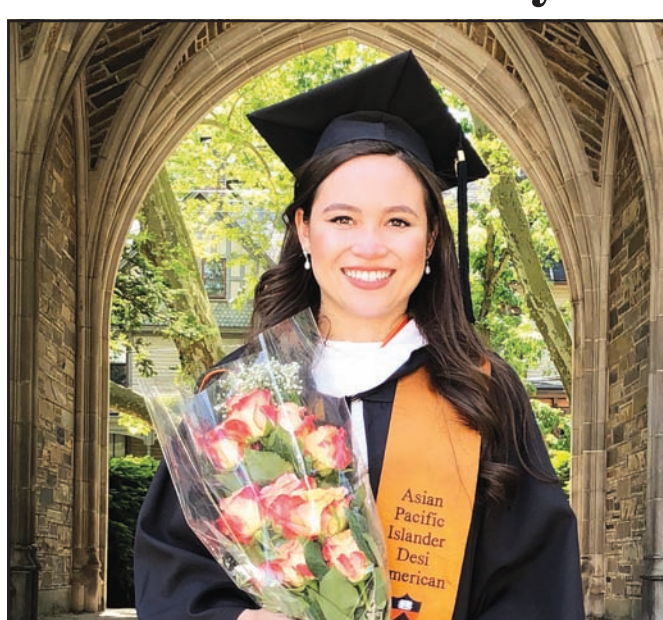
By Shawn Jarrard
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When Blairsville's own Rachel Todd moved to the Garden State in 2015 to begin her postsecondary education at Princeton University, she became the first female graduate of Union County High to attend an Ivy League school.

And four years later, on June 4, 2019, she made her community and parents - Phillip and Cynthia Todd - proud by graduating from Princeton summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Literature and Cultures.

The Union County native served as UCHS Class of 2015 Valedictorian and STAR Student, so it came as no surprise to her family and

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Rachel Todd

County hopes to benefit 4-H Shotgun Teams with land transfer, sale

By Shawn Jarrard
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In March 2014, the Union County Government purchased a 9.5-acre piece of land for \$151,578.07 to serve as the site of a 4-H shotgun range.

Unfortunately, those plans fell through in the intervening years, and now, that land is up for sale.

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris held a called meeting on May 23 to transfer the property to the Union County Development Authority, which will sell it for the county to help recover costs associated with the initial property purchase.

Located about 4.5 miles from the traffic light at Murphy Highway and Georgia 515, the land and proposed range

were to be used primarily as a practice area for the county's 4-H Shotgun Teams.

All told, the range project was estimated to cost about \$700,000, which was to be largely paid for using federal funds distributed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

The project got derailed for a couple of reasons, including a last-minute failed shot-fall test DNR conducted as a follow-up to the original study, plus new residential development in the area along a ridge about 200 feet up from the site's property line.

"That was the Thirteen Hundred development, and at the time, that property was all in bankruptcy," said Paris. "Nobody had any idea anything would ever happen



Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris in his May 23 called meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

to this property like what has happened, and so we started See Land Transfer, Page 2A

Blairsville native and Atlanta icon George Berry to speak at Old Courthouse

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Historical Society is proud to host Blairsville's own George Berry as a guest speaker on June 29 at 2 p.m. on the second floor of the Old Courthouse.

Berry graduated from Union County High in the middle of the 20th century, and during his time as a student, he was a member of the first Panther basketball team ever to make it to the state championship playoffs in 1955.

The Union County native is also a graduate of Young Harris College.

He left his mountain home in 1962 and moved to Atlanta to find work, where he was hired by the big city as a tax clerk.

There, Berry moved



George Berry, right, speaking with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Also pictured, former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson. Photo/UGA

his way up the ladder, finally directly his dream of working in the last years of his

administration.

Subsequently, Mayor Sam Massell chose Berry to be his See George Berry, Page 2A

Area seniors share opinions, offer ideas in Legacy Link public meeting

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Last week, the Legacy Link Area Agency on Aging serving the Northeast Georgia Mountains hosted a public meeting for local seniors to share their ideas on how to better the lives of seniors in the community.

The meeting took place on June 10 at the Union County Senior Center and brought together more than 40 seniors interested in seeing what the organization has to offer and what the Senior Center provides through the group.

"This Senior Center has the most programs, and none of the other centers have all the programs that this one has," said Legacy Link COO Don Colombero. "We even have people here from other counties that aren't even in our



Members of the Legacy Link Area Agency on Aging in a June 10 public meeting at the Union County Senior Center. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

district, and they come to this center because of the events and programs that are offered here."

Leaders within each of the Legacy Link programs sat on a panel at the meeting to See Legacy Link, Page 3A

Volunteer Fire Station No. 3 shows appreciation with community cookout

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Fire Department Volunteer Station No. 3 off Gainesville Highway held its annual Open House on Saturday, June 15.

Station 3 Lt. Bob Kirby and his team of firefighters put on a great hamburger and hotdog barbecue in appreciation of the residents of Precinct 3, who made possible the recent acquisition of a 1995 KME fire engine through their generous donations.

Station 3 services the area immediately south of Blairsville.

The Station 3 volunteers proudly showed off the new fire engine along with the other five apparatus that Precinct 3 is

home to.

People from all over Precinct 3 came to sample the burgers, hotdogs and beans, and to see how their donations have allowed Station 3 to upgrade its apparatus and equipment.

Firefighters and first responders came from all over Union County to help with the event, also.

Ken White and his wife, Edith, came out to have lunch and mingle with the firefighters.

White said he's a retired firefighter from Jacksonville, Florida, who moved to Union County just a few years ago.

"We live in a real log home, so there's issues with insurance sometimes, because it's an all-wood home," said White. "I felt good when I

talked to the chief and one of his assistants and they told me the amount of equipment that would be coming on initial response to any structure fire.

"And with the number of tanks and the number of engines, it made me feel good that (they'll) have enough response initially with enough water. If they get there quickly enough, they can put a stop on it."

Jerry O'Connell of the Moon Shadow Community was there with his wife enjoying the food and listening for their raffle ticket number to be called. O'Connell said he would like to see a better Firewise setup in Union County.

Amy Studebaker, another resident of Precinct 3, was See Fire Station 3, Page 8A



The members of Union County Fire Department Volunteer Station No. 3 during their June 15 annual Open House. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

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