

North Georgia News

2 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, July 24, 2024

History buffs wish Old Courthouse happy 125th

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

For 125 years, the Old Courthouse on the Blairsville Square has stood as one of the defining features of Union County, having spent much of that time serving as the official seat of county business.

Nowadays, it serves as a symbol of the rich history of the region, and that was celebrated by the Union County Historical Society on July 13.

Thanks to Full Throttle Ministries, a special lunch preceded the event around 11:30 a.m., offering guests a plate of barbecue, coleslaw, chips and dessert for \$12. Plenty of folks enjoyed the food, and the funding went to a good cause, as revealed by Historical Society President Mickey Cummings before the scheduled talks pertaining to the courthouse's past.

"We're trying to raise funds to reconstruct a cabin that's recently been donated to us by the F.C. Collins family," said Cummings, adding that the cabin in question was originally built sometime around 1850 or 1860. Collins, who is in his 80s, was actually born in the cabin.

Cummings also took a moment to thank Steve Rowe, president of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, for his role in organizing the "birthday party" and luncheon, along with River City Bank for its sponsorship. Clayton Reeves of Full Throttle Ministries also received thanks.

After lunch, guests entered the upstairs courtroom of the Historic Courthouse to hear from multiple guest speakers. Kicking off this portion of the celebration was Jack Lance Jr., who told the story of how the courthouse came to be.

As an attorney, there was no better person than Lance to relate the happenings of a historical murder trial so infamous that it inspired a book detailing the tragedy and subsequent events.

In early 1890, Rev. John Henry Lance was brutally murdered in Wolf Creek, supposedly by members of the Swaim family, who made their business in moonshining.

Frank Swaim was eventually found guilty of the murder and handed a life sentence, though his father, Tom Swaim, believed a trial filled with circumstantial evidence wasn't fair.

As Tom Swaim sought signatures for a petition to free his boy, the son of the murder victim, Jim Lance, swore vengeance on the Swaim family. In an altercation that ended in Swaim being stabbed, Lance was arrested for

attempted murder.

According to legend, members of the Lance family convened from all over the county at Choestoe, and before Jim Lance's trial could take place, the people of Union County awoke one morning to find fires raging in the mountains north of Blairsville.

Conveniently, the town's courthouse also happened to burn down while many folks were distracted by the wildfires.

"The Lances' story on that was ... that it was very unfortunate that there were embers coming from over there and landing (on the courthouse) - just horrible luck," relayed Jack Lance Jr. to a giggling audience, adding that the rest of the Swaims saw the act as a fiery warning and fled to Texas.

With no one to testify and no courthouse, the charges were dropped, and Jim Lance



As a past president of the Union County Historical Society and one of the original members, Bud Akins was a perfect guest speaker for the 125th Birthday Celebration for the Old Courthouse this month. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Sinkhole repair entering final stages, per GDOT



Slowly but surely, the area that opened up in a sinkhole last August is starting to resemble its former state at the intersection of Murphy Hwy and GA 515. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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Approximately 80% of the earthworks have been accomplished at the sinkhole repair site at Murphy Highway and State Route 515, and the Georgia Department of Transportation is estimating

that the project is now about five weeks away from completion.

By the time the project concludes, it will have been roughly a year since the 40-foot sinkhole opened in a rainstorm Aug. 29, 2023, which collapsed two manholes and disrupted the state's gravity-fed stormwater drainage system as well as

sewer lines used by the City of Blairsville.

Visually, the repair has made much progress in recent weeks, with the installation of multiple manholes and movement of tons of dirt.

Beneath the surface, the project has also wrapped up the

Butternut Creek Festival gets creative at Meeks

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Butternut Creek Art Festival had another successful run over its 25th anniversary, filling up Meeks Park with hobbyists and shoppers July 20-21 for the annual fundraiser that gives back to the community by purchasing supplies for youth art classes.

Among the regular art vendors, guests enjoyed demonstrations of blacksmithing and woodcarving, and could also sit down and listen to live bands during the festival that is always juried to ensure quality.

Food was available from local favorites like the Chill and Fill and My Pop-Pop's Nuts, and returning for another year from Atlanta was Red Hills Catering's Chef Tony to bring some island spice to the mountains with authentic Jamaican dishes.

While their primary



Creativity took centerstage at the annual Butternut Creek Festival over the weekend, featuring tons of fun artwork like these metal woodland creatures inside Meeks Park. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

purpose was to sell raffle tickets, the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club enjoyed quite a bit

of popularity for the vehicles parked alongside their prize. See *Butternut Creek Fest*, Page 6A

Stan Gunter honored with portrait dedication ceremony

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

"This is a great day in Union County," said Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris before unveiling a photographic portrait of retired Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge N. Stanley Gunter inside the Union County Courthouse on July 18.

The new portrait hangs outside Courtroom B next to the portrait of Gunter's father, the late Judge Jack Norman Gunter of the old Mountain Judicial Circuit.

Everyone from courthouse staff to county employees and residents came out last week to pay their respects to Stan Gunter, who is well known in Union County and even beyond, as evidenced by his current role of District 8 State Representative.

Attendees of the unveiling, along with Gunter's family, stood by as Paris gave



Hugh Stone showed up to support Stan Gunter at the latter's portrait dedication last week. Both men served as chief judges for the Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court before retiring, and Stone has a portrait hanging in the courthouse as well. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

a brief rundown of Gunter's impressive history. Born and raised in Habersham County, he earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry at North Georgia College before finding employment with the

Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, Gunter pursued another degree at the Woodrow Wilson College of Law in Atlanta, and in 1991, he established a private

See *Gunter Honored*, Page 7A

Home & Garden Shows provide one-stop shopping

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - The 10th Annual Home & Garden Show, presented by Expo Management Inc., attracted 61 vendors and more than 2,500 visitors to the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center over the weekend to

showcase home improvement products and services.

"Any company that has something to do with a house, whether it's the roof, floor, back yard, front yard or anything in between, they are the types of businesses that are here," said Bill Anderson, president of Expo Management Inc. "What the homeowners like about this

is, it's one-stop shopping. They can find everything they need in one place."

The two-day event on July 20-21 showcased the latest furnishings, accessories, decorating and remodeling ideas, marketing opportunities, raffles and door prizes.

While Expo Manag- See *Home & Garden*, Page 7A



Blue Sky Flagpole out of Hendersonville, North Carolina, set up a patriotic display for the Home & Garden Show in Young Harris over the weekend. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



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Sinkhole Repair...from Page 1A

laying of new storm drains and wastepipes, though the city still needs to finish up another part of the project before everything can be connected.

The city has secured one of three property easements required to relocate a sewer line that runs under the Blairsville Quick Stop next to the repaired sinkhole, and the remaining easements are expected to be finalized soon.

Once all the city easements are in hand, Pittman Construction Company, which is overseeing the entire project, will get to work installing new sewer lines around the Quick Stop to connect at the site.

The Blairsville City Council approved a cost estimate of \$139,086 for this portion of the project in March, though final costs could come in differently when the work is completed.

In the meantime, Pittman Construction will be placing more dirt at the site and paving the replacement driveway to reestablish the SR 515 entrance to the Quick Stop and Sherwin Williams Paint Store.

The project has taken longer than anticipated to complete, as GDOT initially estimated that the repair would be finished around Jan. 1.

Last November, GDOT revised the completion timeline to February 2024, and then again in January to late April, with the most recent estimate aiming to see a complete restoration "this summer."

The repair has consisted of filling in the sinkhole, driving steel piles into the ground to get a retaining wall in place, shoring up the dirt so crews could safely excavate the area, working to determine what went wrong, and replacing the infrastructure there, including new road boring.

Soil saturation from the storm and a burst stormwater pipe softened the ground that rainy evening in August, but an ultimate cause of the failure may remain unknown, as the pipe is so old that clear records of it could not be found, according to GDOT.

The state-owned property that makes up the sinkhole site is an important piece of right-of-way for GDOT, as the infrastructure channels stormwater across 515. That's why this has been a priority project for the state.

Estimates from earlier in the year put total project costs at about \$5.1 million, though the state said last week that updated budget figures were

not yet available.

As noted above, two manholes collapsed in the sinkhole, one owned by GDOT and the other by Blairsville for sewage transport, and since then, stormwater has been pumped from the First Baptist Church side of 515 to the downstream side of 515 into the pipe under Murphy Highway.

The city has been pumping sewage from the manhole behind First Baptist to another one up the highway, bypassing the affected area until Pittman Construction can restore the city's sewer access.

GDOT said last year that, "once completed, the area will be the same as it was originally."

Student Parking Information for 2024-25 School Year

Student Fee/Parking will be sold to Union County High School Seniors on Tuesday, July 30, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and to Juniors and Sophomores on Wednesday, July 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Parking/student fee sales will be open to all on Thursday, Aug. 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Students with a last name beginning with A thru M will report on their designated day between 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Students with a last name beginning with N thru Z will report on their designated day between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. The sales office will be in the cafeteria on the first floor of the High School.

There are 414 numbered parking spaces available to students. Parking is sold throughout the school year. There are

always spaces available: 12th - Graders: \$100; 11th - Graders: \$80; 10th - Graders: \$60; 9th - Graders: \$40.

To obtain a parking permit, students MUST HAVE their driver's license, current proof of insurance, and vehicle registration (tag receipt) for the vehicle they will be using. All fees are non-refundable.

Students must have all outstanding charges and fees paid and cleared before parking passes will be sold. This includes charges for any Chromebook, Chromebook case, Chromebook charger, hotspot, and/or any repairs completed where money is owed. Students will have the opportunity to clear any debt or return items at the same location prior to purchase of a parking pass.

Students who want or

need parking have to be present to read and sign all the documents. Cash and personal checks will be accepted. You are also able to pay online at <https://tinyurl.com/ucstudentfee>.

Please check the expiration date of all documents. The point of contact for this document is Art McCann, who may be reached at amccann@uc-schools.org or 706-745-2216, ext. 1112.

Additionally, the Union County Health Department will be present at Union County High School on Wednesday, July 31, to administer required vaccinations for Junior students.

Students may receive their vaccinations at the High School on July 31, by visiting their doctor, or going directly to the Health Department.

What hosting an Exchange Student is really like!



ENRICHING OUR WORLD THROUGH CULTURAL EXCHANGE

When people think of exchange students, those who haven't hosted in the past, sometimes they think of ones they've seen in movies.

Students come here with the same misconceptions about America and Americans as we have about other countries and cultures. They see American movies and assume that's what things will be like, and go home having had their own unique experiences.

Real exchange students, although they have their share of funny moments, are so different than what we see portrayed in the media. Most are 15-17 years old, although there is sometimes the student who hasn't quite turned 15, or is already 18 upon arrival. They come from countries all over the world, like Austria, Brazil, Hong Kong, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and so many others.

There is a student for every family, and a right family for every student too. Empty nesters and single parents can be amazing host families. So can families with young children, who end up looking up

to their new big brother or sister. There are athletic students, who might be great fits for active families, but there are also students who just want to be in band, or are more homebodies that enjoy family game nights. Our students have so many favorite activities.

Think You Can't Host?

Here are some things many don't know about hosting an exchange student:

Nervous about a commitment? Consider hosting a 5-month semester student.

No extra bedroom? No problem! Exchange students can share a room with a same-sex student, or convert an office into a cozy bedroom.

Worried about expenses? Students come with their own spending money for things like sports, activities, travel, and their own cell phone, and they have their own insurance.

No kids at home? Empty nesters make great hosts, as do single parents! You can even host two students if there's space available.

Don't travel much? Exchange students are here to live with a family and experience American life. They have the option to go on ICES-sponsored trips or explore through their local school. (But if you do travel, they can totally join and cover their own expenses!)

Young children at home? Many exchange stu-

dents have younger siblings and can easily connect with and support your family's little ones. They make great big brothers or sisters!

Now may not be the perfect time, but you can still help! Refer other families and spread the word about hosting - you can get \$300 for a family you refer who hosts!

Right now, International Cultural Exchange Services, a nonprofit that has brought students to the U.S. for over 30 years, says they have over 400 students still waiting to find out who their host family will be for the upcoming school year.

Families choose their student by reading letters written by the student and their parents. The students want to become a part of your family and not be treated as a guest. You have support from the local coordinator during the entire stay of your student.

All students attend the host families' local high school, have their own health insurance and money for their expenses. They speak excellent English, and have local community support. A host family is responsible for providing caring guidance, a room and quiet place to study, and meals at home.

For more information, contact District Representative Donna Bell at dbell@icesusa.org or via phone at 828-421-8843.

Tri-County Women's Connection Fashion Show a major success!



(L-R): Maggie Magistro, Abby Weaver, Megan Foster, Zaydee Webster, Casey Potts, Deanne Webster, Blair Foster, Ila Bragg

Over 100 ladies gathered together for Ladies Night Out on Tuesday, June 25. It was a beautiful setting at the Union County Community Center overlooking the mountains and Butternut Creek Golf Course. Chef Christian prepared a delicious dinner with great service from Steven Jarard and his staff, April, Blake, Nikki and Stephanie.

Many thanks to The Josephine Boutique owner, Abby Weaver and her lovely models. Kudos to Krista Elayan of Athens who directed and gave

the show's fashion commentary. To Alicia Ivey, soloist and guest speaker, thank you for sharing your beautiful story.

Save the date for our next Ladies Night Out event!

Third Annual Quarter Auction FUNDraiser on Thursday, August 22, 6 PM - 8 PM. Start saving your quarters now to bid on fabulous items. Additionally, there will be a Silent Auction of "Getaways" to Dahlgonega, GA and Orlando, FL!

In addition to dinner and door prizes, our Program will feature musical guest Beverly

Sutton and guest speaker/author Patti Gard, "Living Right-Side Up In An Upside-Down World".

Look for complete event details in the North Georgia News July 31st edition.

For over 40 years, Tri-County Women's Connection, in affiliation with Stonecroft, has planned and hosted events for women that provide a positive, upbeat time of fun, food and friendship. Invite a friend, she'll be glad you did.

Join us! We look forward to connecting with you!

Courthouse Birthday ...from Page 1A

was allowed to resume his life as a free man. There was no evidence properly tying the Lance family to any of the fires, either.

What is now known as the Old Union County Courthouse was built in 1899 where its predecessor once stood.

Unable to participate in the gathering due to the passing of a close family friend, Commissioner Lamar Paris left notes for Lance to share on his behalf. Paris' mother Edith was particularly instrumental when it came to preserving the courthouse after it was condemned decades ago.

Finally, longtime Historical Society Member Bud Akins came to the podium to share several stories from Blairsville's past, remembering a time when the Old Courthouse was still operational as a seat of law. Along with tales from the courtroom, he shared a bit about what it was like living in Blairsville during the 1950s and beyond.

Among other examples, Akins pointed out where old properties once stood, using current landmarks as guides, such as the mountain just in view from a top window in the old courtroom. He recalled his grandmother living on the other side of that mountain, and although the property is unfortunately no longer in his



Jack Lance Jr. gave a riveting account of the origins behind the Old Courthouse during the building's "birthday party" on July 13.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

family's name, he retains the fond memories.

Akins also worked in the courthouse for a time and even witnessed a prominent murder trial involving a man from Suches. A more humorous story Akins shared involved a drunk trying to prove his sobriety in court; rather than walking in a straight line, the man attempted to crawl.

After delving into the history of the Old Courthouse, the party continued downstairs

where members of the Historical Society served a birthday cake to guests.

From there, folks were welcome to have a look around the various exhibits at the Courthouse Museum, whether to learn more about Union County's soldiers who participated in the World Wars or the very first inhabitants of the mountains, the Cherokee.

Here's to another century and, hopefully, many more to come.



Guests of the courthouse celebration enjoyed a fundraiser luncheon outdoors prior to the speaking portion of the Historical Society's birthday event.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Butternut Creek Fest ...from Page 1A

car. A robin's egg blue vintage pickup caught the eyes of more than a few people.

The goal of the nonprofit group is to sell enough raffle tickets to help maintain their more than \$50,000 in annual giving to area communities during events like Shop With A Cruiser, Shop With A Cop, and to benefit local veterans.

The raffle results will be announced on Nov. 2, and tickets can be picked up from Cruisers and by stopping by United Community Bank as well as at Tanner's Towing.

Jason Hamilton was one of this year's on-site demonstrators, carving a surprisingly delicate and detailed owl with a chainsaw. His business, I Saw a Bear, also carried many pre-made pieces featuring its namesake animal in a variety of whimsical poses.

"Whenever the Recession hit, I ended up losing my job and had to find a way to make money," said Hamilton, revealing he's been carving for 12 years now.

Despite being artistically inclined, he had never tried using a chainsaw in woodcarving before. Although initially nervous, he caught on and turned his persistence into a business. Between the carving, sanding, painting and sealing, it can take upwards of about a week to finish a piece.

"It's just a matter of how much detail I'm looking to put in it, what (I'm) having to deal with ... There's a lot of different factors that (go) into how long it takes me to do it," said Hamilton, who was attending his second Butternut Creek Festival and plans on returning next year.

Perhaps one of the coziest tents belonged to Christine Thornton of Hills to Hollers Creations, whose passion for macrame started in the '90s when woven bracelets were popular. Today, she makes everything from wall decorations, jewelry, headbands, plant hangers and pacifier clips.

"I absolutely love this festival. I like the setting, and of course, you have some of the best crowds, as far as everybody is so nice," noted Thornton with a gentle smile, fitting in well among her pastel-colored labors of love. "I appreciate all of the support with the community, and I love seeing everybody and talking with everybody."

Thornton has found that the festival is a great way to drum up business as well as to make connections. Fellow macrame artists have

approached her before, leading to valuable friendships or just pleasant conversations.

Rosalie "Rosie" Merkel is of a similar opinion. Owner of Jiggy's Wood Art, Merkel brings to life everything from cows and wolves to dapper lion men in tuxedos on wooden canvases. Though valued at higher prices, she's lowered the cost of her works to better share them, if only because she understands the value in happiness stemming from sharing and creating art.

"The thing that stands out most is the people – they are so nice," said Merkel, who has come to embrace the festival every year. "Hospitable, kind, courteous, we love the people here. Everyone is family here, it seems – vendor family."

Not only that, but Merkel sees value in holding the festival yearly. For artists like her, the event helps foster friendships with people who understand the importance of crafting something meaningful, and it remains invaluable for finding an audience in customers.

"There's unity in the community. You have support and backup, and you don't have to worry. That's how I feel (about Butternut)," Merkel said. "When you talk to someone, everyone is so laid back and kind, and they're interested in you."

Kim Bierds and her family aren't strangers to Blairsville, nor do they consider themselves artists, but they were immediately drawn to visit the Butternut Creek Festival when they saw the signs. Taking a chance, they decided to check out what the festival had to offer – and they weren't disappointed.

"Supporting each other and being involved in your community is important," said Jessica Bierds. Kim agreed,

adding, "I think we like all of the raw art – the raw wood and the pottery. It's not all just commercialized, over-done art. It's real art, you know?"

One thing that stood out to them was that "everything is different," and that each booth stands as a reflection of the artist selling their wares within.

"You can tell the energy and the heart that these people have for their work," Jessica said, and Kim confirmed, "We're definitely going to come back; we're going to look for it. You can't pick a more beautiful setting."

Certainly, P.J. Moon's booth reflected her interests also. Wander Yonder Folk Art specializes in vibrant depictions of fish and birds in a variety of mediums. Inspired by the style of the Southwestern U.S. where she grew up, Moon continues to sell her creations in the mountains, where they are gaining a following.

"Everybody's named on the back," noted Moon, explaining that she uses "found items" repurposed from thrift stores to bring characters like Gramps Greyfeathers – a wading bird sporting a lovingly-crafted pair of glasses made of twisted wire – to life.

Ken and Joyce Wiegand loved the festival so much last year that they came back in 2024, and like the Bierds, they plan on making it a tradition. Sitting in the gazebo with fresh homemade ice cream, they were of the opinion there was nothing they didn't like about the event.

"I loved it," said Joyce, with Ken noting his favorite part of the festival was the people themselves. Joyce put their shared thoughts into words by saying, "It's interesting to see how talented people are with all the things that they make."



Blacksmithing was one of several demonstrations provided as entertainment for the shopping public at the Butternut Creek Festival Saturday and Sunday. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Gunter Honored...from Page 1A

legal practice in Blairsville, specializing in real estate disputes. He earned the respect of the community, and in 1999, he was elected as Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney.

Gunter's own father swore him in, and an old copy of the North Georgia News featuring a photo and article regarding the historic moment was brought to the event and passed around by a few parties.

Judge Jack Norman Gunter was an impressive man in his own right, a World War II veteran, Shriner and State Representative of District 11, among other achievements. He was a familiar face in local courtrooms and left enough of an impact that his own likeness was erected in the courthouse.

"When admiring the portrait of the elder judge, the idea to continue the tradition of dedicating (portraits) to local judges came to mind," said Paris, addressing the inspiration behind honoring two generations of Judge Gunter's in the Union County Courthouse.

And of course, Stan Gunter's achievements don't end at the local level. In 2011, he became the Executive Director of Georgia's Prosecuting Attorneys' Council, leading to "a lot of time" spent at the state capitol.

There, he championed transparency and focused on networking, and just a year later in 2012, former Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal appointed Gunter as a Superior Court Judge for the Enotah Judicial Circuit, to which he was elected twice thereafter.

"It's important that you understand also that by 2018 - now, he retired in 2019 - he became the Chief Judge of the circuit. He created what is now known as Drug Court in 2013, and he also became involved in the Mental Health Court," Paris said, talking briefly about how the accountability courts have meant a world of difference for locals facing such immense struggles.

In 2020, Gunter's hard work culminated in his election to the Georgia House of

Representatives, representing District 8 - Towns, Union and part of White County.

Now in his second term, he heads up the Judiciary Committee and serves on the Appropriations, Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Economic Development and Tourism, and the Ethics, Health and Rules committees.

"Nobody that I have ever known of ... has done as much as he has done and accomplished in such a short time," Paris said.

When given the chance to speak, Gunter admitted that while he was "truly honored," he didn't want to take all the credit. He thanked those gathered for the roles they have played in getting him where he is today, as a supportive community stands behind a hard-working judge.

"The whole idea is to keep everybody safe and do the right thing," Gunter said. "It's a recognition that perhaps I did a good job."

As guests enjoyed light refreshments, Gunter and his



Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was honored to dedicate a new judicial portrait for Stan Gunter inside the courthouse on July 18.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

family helped hang the portrait next to his father's. Afterward, Gunter, remembering fondly the man who helped set him

down his path, said he believed Jack Gunter would be proud of having his son's portrait take the space beside his.

"We both have a life in public service," Gunter said. "And that's my calling, it's what I like to do."

Home & Garden...from Page 1A



Chef Graham Skardon of Kitchen Craft Cookware enjoyed putting on a live cooking show for Home & Garden guests on Saturday and Sunday.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

ement has hosted Home & Garden Shows for nearly four decades, the 2024 edition marked the 10th year in Towns, coming on the heels of the third annual Blairsville show in April.

And over the last decade, Kitchen Craft Cookware, represented by Chef Graham Skardon, has been a staple at

the Towns County shows.

"It's the quality of the show and the location," Skardon said when asked what brings the business back year after year. "Good people live in the mountains, and they love good Southern cooking."

"So, every time we're in an area like this, we get a lot of positive feedback, and when

people own our cookware, it acts as an endorsement for the cookware.

"We love being in the mountains. Our owner has a home in Blairsville, and there is no place like North Georgia. That's what keeps us coming back. I moved to North Georgia in 2008 and found no reason to leave."

These events offer businesses an opportunity to meet face-to-face with potential clients and allow them to promote their products and services all under one roof. While hosting these events, Expo Management collaborates with local businesses and promotes the event to the public.

Originating in Southwest Florida, Anderson's Expo Management operates Home

& Garden shows in Tennessee, South Carolina, Florida and Georgia.

"We started in Florida but then I moved to Western North Carolina, and that's what started (this show)," Anderson said. "We have shows from Naples (Florida) to Knoxville (Tennessee). In all, we've been doing this for 38 years with 671 shows."

Another vendor at the show in Young Harris was

Adam Bash of Renewal by Andersen Windows.

"We love coming here and meeting people," Bash said. "Everyone is talkative, in good spirits and super polite, and that is what keeps us coming back."

For more information, and to keep an eye on the events calendar to see when the shows will be returning to the area in 2025, visit <https://expomanagementinc.com/>.

Georgia mail delivery ranked worst in the nation by US Postal Service

By Dave Williams
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA - Georgia ranked worst in the nation in on-time mail delivery during the second quarter of this year, according to a new report from the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General.

Only 63.7% of first-class mail in Georgia was delivered on time in April, May, and June, the agency reported. On time is defined as within two days.

Georgia's score was well below the national average of 86.8% for the quarter and even farther below the target goal of 93%.

Still, Georgia's second-quarter performance was an improvement over earlier in the year. At a U.S. Senate committee hearing in April, Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga. revealed statistics showing that only 36% of first-class mail processed at a regional mail processing and distribution center in Palmetto was being delivered on time.

During the April hearing, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy blamed slow mail delivery on problems encountered during the rollout of a restructuring plan last February aimed at making the postal service economically self-

sufficient. The plan was first implemented at mail processing and distribution centers in Palmetto and Richmond, VA.

Responding to those delays, DeJoy announced in May that the postal service would pause the plan at least until next year to give the postal service a chance to determine what went wrong and fix it.

In the meantime, the agency brought in more than 100 additional workers from other mail processing centers to Palmetto and revised transportation schedules between the Palmetto center and other local mail processing facilities.