

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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August 9, 2017

EMC board nominates rejected candidates to ballot

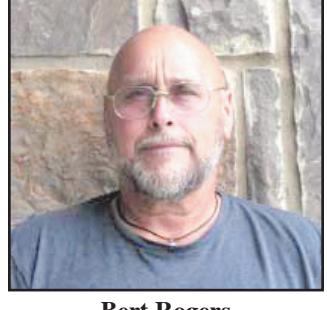
By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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Bert Rogers is now on the Board of Directors ballot of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's elections in September.

So are Preston Cabe, Karen Pirie, and Tommy White.

Surprised? Don't be. An Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court judge granted an injunction to put a halt to the upcoming September elections at the request of Bert Rogers' attorney, Larry Sorgen, who previously served as legal counsel for the EMC board.

Rogers wasn't happy with the "members in good standing" interpretation by BRMEMC's legal committee, so he hired Sorgen, who promptly sought an injunction to halt the



Bert Rogers
Towns County, GA

election and let a superior court judge decide the "members in good standing" rule.

There is no such mention of the definition of that rule in the bylaws.

Results of that hearing were not available at press time.

So, back to the drawing board and four candidates added in the three counties represented



Karen Pirie
Union County, GA

in Georgia and North Carolina with seats up for election by the membership.

Again, two incumbents will face opposition on the Board of Directors ballot of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's elections in September.

And Jason Waldroup, a 15-year resident of Towns County, will now face Rogers

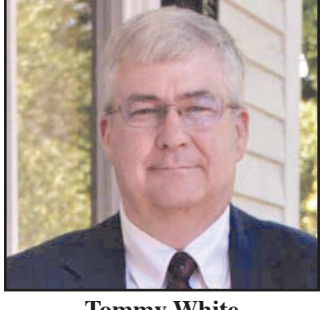


Preston Cabe
Clay County, NC

in the seat that Vice Chairman Steven Phillips resigned from for personal reasons.

Danny Henson will seek to unseat Incumbent Charles Jenkins as one of the Union County representatives on the BRMEMC board. However, he now has two other candidates seeking that seat.

And Jeff Ledford hopes



Tommy White
Union County, GA

to unseat Incumbent Chris Logan as one of the Clay County, North Carolina, representatives on the BRMEMC board. He also must beat Preston Cabe.

Henson was a board member for a short while in 2015. The BRMEMC Board of Directors disqualified him because of a business partnership with then fellow

board member Greg Owenby. Henson had been appointed to replace Union County board member Bob

Ensbly, because of his failing health. He made the board aware of his business relationship with Owenby before he was appointed.

The BRMEMC bylaws prohibit board members from serving if they have a business partnership with another board member.

"I didn't try to hide anything," Henson said. "I guess the board members thought that everyone had done their due diligence. The ball was dropped somewhere, however."

The board appointment to Henson that he was appointed to the board, stating that it was nothing personal, "it
See EMC, Page 2A

Gowder indicted 50 times by White County Grand Jury

By Charles Duncan
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A White County Grand Jury handed up a 50-count indictment against former hospital CEO Mike Gowder on Aug. 1, White County Superior Court records show.

Gowder was indicted on 25 counts of fraud in obtaining a controlled substance, and 25 counts Violation of Georgia's Controlled Substance Act for illegal possession of oxycodone, the indictments show.

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley presented the case for indictment last week before grand jurors in White County,

White County Superior Court records show.

It brings the number of indictments in North Georgia and North Carolina to 91 against the former hospital CEO, according to court records in both states.

On July 10, a Union County Grand Jury handed up a four-count indictment against Gowder.

In addition, the same grand jury handed up a 45-count indictment against Dr. James Heaton, who is alleged to have written the prescriptions used by Gowder in Union, Towns, and White counties in Georgia, and in North Carolina, court records in both states show.

Meanwhile, Gowder



Mike Gowder
was indicted July 5 in Towns County on charges that include 16 counts of fraud in obtaining a controlled substance, and 16
See Gowder, Page 2A

City of Blairsville to lower millage rate to 1.945 mils

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

During the monthly meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 1, the Blairsville City Council approved the city's 2017 millage rate and tackled some

grit issues at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Last year, the city's millage rate stood at 2.0 mils, however, due to recent reevaluations and reclassifications of property, ordered by the state, the city's annual tax digest reflected a tax increase.

To avoid advertising an increase in tax rates, though, Blairsville City Clerk Kaye McCann explained to the



Blairsville City Attorney David Barrett, Mayor Jim Conley and City Clerk Kaye McCann. Photo/Lily Avery

council the necessity for a decrease in the city's millage rate.

"When I did the initial tax digest and the five-year history and left the millage rate

at 2.0 mils, it showed that we were going to have an increase in our taxes," said McCann.

"I started doing research and realized that the digest from the
See Millage Rate, Page 2A

Union County native Dixon hailed as hero in Greenville, SC



L-R: Sloan Sutton, Maddie Sutton, Caren Senter, Nate Dixon, Jenni Dixon, Katie Dixon and Joyce Kelly.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Nate Dixon didn't know he just knew she was in a bad way and needed help.

It was June 17, and Dixon, a general foreman

for Midwest Powerline, was out inspecting power poles before his crew got to work on a project.

Midwest Powerline is a union contractor, and Dixon is a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. As such, he finds himself working all over the

country.

His current assignment has him operating out of Greenville, South Carolina, blissfully closer to his home in Union County than he's used to working, which is how he came to be within earshot of Senter's desperate screams.

See Dixon, Page 3A

Walker honored by Historical Society

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Shirley Walker has been honored with a singular distinction as "Volunteer of the 21st Century."

Presented by the Union County Historical Society, Walker received the award in recognition of her tireless dedication and devotion to the historical society over the last 15 years and for always being just a phone call away if ever the society was in need of her.

"I'm blown away," said Walker. "This is such a huge honor and I can't believe it. I'm so humbled by this award."

Each year, the Union County Historical Society selects an individual who the officers believe has gone above and beyond helping out with the museum, events and making sure that the history of Union County continues to be preserved and cherished.

This year, not only was Walker crowned the



Shirley Walker

Volunteer of the Year, but also of the century for her steadfast constancy to the historical society throughout the years.

"Shirley is always there when you need her," said Joanne Sales, Historical Society member. "She's one of the most reliable volunteers we've ever had."

Walker, originally from Wiconsin, moved from

Atlanta to Blairsville with her husband in 2000 after falling in love with the area after a brief visit. According to Walker, the two knew that Union County was the home they didn't know they had been looking for.

"It's really funny, I'd lived in Atlanta for 30 years and I'd never even been to Blairsville," said Walker. "This woman that my husband
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Students, teachers embrace start of 2017-2018 school year

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools are back in session, and students had no problems settling in after a long summer vacation.

Student drop off and pick up went as smoothly as it has in recent years, which parents know tends to be a little congested, but that's normal.

No kids missed the bus or boarded the wrong one, and fortunately, there were no surprises, according to Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield.

"I would like to thank

all of our staff for a tremendous amount of preparation over the summer and during "reexplaining," said Dr. Rayfield. "Especially for our custodial, maintenance and grounds staff, there was a lot of work above what we consider to be normal summer maintenance."

"It was just a lot more to accomplish, and they really did a good job of that ... working around construction and cleaning up behind that."

Last week was a busy week for the school system, as teachers prepared for their students to return, and students attended Meet Your Teacher night on Thursday, Aug. 3.

All schools opened

their doors that Thursday afternoon to allow students to familiarize themselves with their surroundings just prior to the first day.

Second-grader Kensley Payne visited the primary school with her mom, Vickie, during Meet Your Teacher, and while Kensley said her summer went swimmingly - with trips to both the pool and the beach - the 8-year-old student added that she was excited to be with all her friends again.

Becky Dyer, the system's new full-time Parent Engagement Coordinator, recruited parent volunteers during Meet Your Teacher

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Union County Primary School kids getting off the bus for their first day of school. Welcome back, students! Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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Fri: T-Storms Hi 80 Lo 63

Sat: Cloudy Hi 83 Lo 64

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Classified 2C

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Legals 5D

Obits 7C

Sports 2C

PANTHERS

SOFTBALL

Thurs. Aug 10 vs. North Hall

FOOTBALL

Fri. Aug 11

MEET THE TEAM 6 PM

NO ONE SHOULD FACE CANCER ALONE

See page 6A

ALLEGHENY MASONIC LODGE

"Big Country/First Responder and Military Recognition Breakfast"

Saturday, August 12th from 7 AM - 11 AM

at the Allegheny Masonic Temple

Behind Cabin Coffee Co.