

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Board of Education sets millage

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Millage rates and board training were the big ticket items at this month's Union County Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 16.

Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield began the monthly meeting with an update of school progress since the beginning of the new school year.

According to Superintendent Rayfield, this year's overall enrollment has increased from 2,766 students last year to an astounding 2,900 students this year, including pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

"Everything is going very well," said Superintendent Rayfield. "Traffic is starting to level off, which seems to be an



Union County Board of Education members Patrick White and Tony Hunter discuss enrollment rates for the 2016-2017 school year in the Aug. 16 meeting.

annual situation. "Our growth this year is a very positive indicator, especially since in FY11, the total enrollment was 2,611

students. Overall, we're showing growth, and that's positive both from a monetary standpoint as well as in terms of community growth."

The board met in July to propose the school system's millage rate, and approved the rate in the August meeting.

Essentially, the millage rate will be the same as last year's - 11.787 mills. While the rate is staying the same, the school system will be collecting \$90,363 more in property taxes over 2015, due to an increase in property values over the 2015 tax digest.

Also during the meeting, the board renewed the Alternative Education Program Contract with the Towns County School System. Under the contract, Union County School System will provide an alternative setting education program for both counties, of which Towns

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Carr highlights high points of Georgia economy



Prominent local and state leaders attended the August Power Lunch, sponsored by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and Chick-fil-A.

By Lily Avery
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Staff Writer

Georgia Department of Economic Development

Commissioner Chris Carr made a visit to the Union County Community Center on Tuesday, Aug. 16, to speak on matters

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GDOT to replace bridge, close SR 180 to through traffic

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES - The Georgia Department of Transportation is looking to replace Lake Winfield Scott Bridge, and in doing so, will need to close SR 180 to through traffic for roughly 12 months.

Such a closure will add significant travel time for residents driving to and from Suches - what was once about an 8-mile drive from Lake Winfield Scott to a Vogel State Park will now require a 23.5-mile detour.

GDOT encourages residents to attend its "Detour Open House" on Thursday, Aug. 25, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Woody Gap School in Suches.

According to GDOT, the purpose of the Detour Open House is "to provide the public with an opportunity to view the proposed detour, ask questions, and to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the project and the proposed detour."

"This project proposes to replace the State Route (SR) 180 bridge over Slaughter Creek near Suches, Georgia," according to a GDOT release. "The new bridge would be realigned approximately 400 feet to the north of the existing bridge. The proposed bridge would be 100 feet in length and would consist of two 11-foot lanes with 6-foot shoulders.

"It is necessary to close SR 180 to through traffic for approximately 12 months in order to construct the bridge. The use of a temporary detour route would be required for the duration of the closure. The signed detour would be about 23.5 miles for those travelling from Suches to the Vogel State Park area."

According to the GDOT project description, the bridge was built in 1941 and no longer passes muster according to state standards.

The bridge has been assigned a Sufficiency Rating of 56.4 out of 100 based on its current condition, which puts it



The Georgia Department of Transportation is planning to close the SR 180 Bridge, also known as the Lake Winfield Scott Bridge, for 12 months while a new bridge is constructed. Photo//Lowell Nicholson

on par with 8.2 percent of bridges in similar condition in Georgia, according to a recent study by the Georgia Section of The American Society of Civil Engineers.

"The sufficiency rating is determined by evaluating

factors which indicate a bridge's sufficiency to remain in service," according to the Georgia ASCE report. "The rating is a percentage in which 100 represents an

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4-H'sers hold banquet with Friends of NRA



The Union County 4-H BB Team competed at the national level this summer. Proceeds from the banquet fundraiser go toward supporting shooting sports around the state. Lily Avery/Photo

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County 4-H Shooting Sports Teams coordinated with Friends of National Rifle Association to host a banquet at the Harlson Memorial Civic Center on Saturday, Aug. 13.

The banquet served as a fundraiser for grants

that are given by Friends of NRA throughout the year to organizations such as 4-H teams as well as other shooting sports groups across the state.

Friends of NRA is an organization associated with the NRA Foundation, with the sole purpose of encouraging shooting sports among youth by providing programs, grants,

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Reece Society serves up 'Maters and Music

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

CHOESTOE - No community is complete without an honorary local celebrity, and the Byron Herbert Reece Society is here to make sure no one forgets Appalachia's favorite poet.

As one of their yearly events promoting the life of the late poet, the Reece Society celebrated its Third Annual 'Maters and Music day on Saturday, Aug. 20, at the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

"We're always trying to think of different events to do," said Keith Jones, Byron Herbert Reece Society Chairman. "Someone had the idea three years ago to have



Tomato sandwiches are the highlight of the 'Maters and Music social event, hosted by the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center. Photo//Lily Avery

a big tomato sandwich day and give away free tomato sandwiches.

"We kept talking about it in the events committee,

bouncing it around like a football, until someone came up with 'Maters and Music. So, Shady Grove came out with one other band for

that first year. Since then, we've had two groups come and perform each year, one of them always being Shady Grove Bluegrass Band. This year we had the bagpipes as well.

"We've been lucky to have the people at Rock Hill Farms donate the tomatoes every year. So, we buy the bread and mayonnaise and whatever else we need, and give out free sandwiches to anyone who wants to come by and get one."

Rainy day aside, visitors and Reece Society members gathered early Saturday morning, enjoying the melodic skirling of the Appalachian Saint Andrew's

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85th Reece family reunion



Weldon Reece, 85, was the oldest Reece present for the 85th reunion. Jimmy Reece III was the youngest at 20 months old

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Every family has a legacy. It could be ownership of a family business, attendance at a specific college, or, if you are the Reece family, it could be an annual reunion.

For 85 years, the Reece family has come together from near and far every second Sunday in August to celebrate

the legacy of a name and all the wonderful stories that come with it.

While the Reeces have been gathering for holidays and family events for quite some time, the first official Reece Reunion did not come about until August 1931, making it the oldest family reunion in Union County.

This year, approximately See Reece, Page 6A

Moore talks watershed in county meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
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Callie Moore headlined the August meeting, outlining the work of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition for those in attendance.

"The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition is a 20-year-old conservation nonprofit organization that works in a four-county area, which is Towns and Union here in North Georgia, and Clay and Cherokee counties over in Western North Carolina," said Moore, who is executive director of the HRWC.

Those four counties, Moore said in the Aug. 18 meeting, include "all of the waters that flow into the Hiwassee River at the Tennessee/North Carolina state line. So, pretty much all the



Callie Moore is the executive director of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, and she spoke to those gathered at the Aug. 18 Union County Commission meeting.

streams in Union County go either into the Nottely River or the Toccoa River, and both of those rivers flow north and ultimately end up in the Hiwassee River at some point, either in North Carolina or

Tennessee."

These counties in particular share the distinction of being a single watershed, in that the four-county area of land all drains to a common point, in this case the Hiwassee River.

"Our mission is to sustain good water quality in rivers, lakes and streams in that watershed area, which is the Upper Hiwassee River Watershed," said Moore. "Anything that goes on in the landscape has the potential to impact water quality, either positively or negatively. So, all the activities that go on in the landscape, the coalition has the potential to be involved in."

The major HRWC program areas include water quality monitoring, the restoration of streams and lakes, education of local residents and students, and outreach to increase interest in local waters.

"Without the monitoring program that the coalition runs and operates, we would only have data from four locations in Union County from the state,

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Weather

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Fri: T-Storms Hi 88 Lo 66

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7th Annual Tractor Show & Parade

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Young Harris Art Fest

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Boy Scouts Troop 101 BBQ Fundraiser

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Softball

Wed. Aug 24 vs. White Co 6 PM

Thurs. Aug 25 @ Fannin Co 5 PM

Football

Fri. Aug 26 vs. Gilmer Co. 7:30 PM