

North Georgia News

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To avoid bridge closure, GDOT comments due Sept. 8

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES – The energy around the room wasn't exactly positive at the start of last week's Detour Open House, held by the Georgia Department of Transportation in the auditorium of the Woody Gap School on Thursday, Aug. 25.

People were worried about their jobs, their kids, their health and safety.

If GDOT closes the Lake Winfield Scott Bridge for a year like it wants to in order to build a new and necessary bridge to replace it, what will happen to people who live in Suches or people who commute to work in Suches?

Of course, the bridge has to go. It's too old, having been

built in 1941, and no longer holds up to modern safety standards.

But why close SR 180 to around traffic, residents wondered in the open house. Why not keep one lane open, like the Dyer Bridge in Towns County, which successfully connected through traffic for Georgia 17/75?

The proposed detour would take Suches-bound commuters past SR 180 to go down the mountain toward Cleveland, to then take a right at Turner's Corner, only to make their way up Stone Pile Gap and several miles of inconveniently crooked road.

This adds a considerable amount of time to trips, especially for the businesses in Suches that require the use of big trucks.

There is also a busload of children that makes its way to Union County Schools every weekday, and because these children are traveling from Suches, they have to get up extra early in order to make it to school on time.

Just imagine how early these kids would have to wake up if they had to go down one mountain and back up another in order to get to school.

Other important functions moving both in and out of Suches would be severely impacted, such as any emergency services arriving from Blairsville or the rest of Union County (though thankfully Suches has a fire station).

In the open house, as

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Close to 200 residents of Suches, Blairsville and Union County attended the GDOT Detour Open House last week, and not a single attendee seemed in favor of closing the Lake Winfield Scott Bridge to through traffic. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Dyer to continue shooting for the stars

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When Austin Dyer went down to the 4-H State Modified Trap Competition in May, the then-junior knew it would be his second to last chance to fulfill a longtime goal.

Dyer had finished 10th in state before, and even shot a perfect score in singles only to get beat out in doubles – but ever since the seventh grade, he'd wanted to finish as a Top 5 shooter in the state.

So earlier this year on May 7, after shooting a perfect singles round to get into a double trap shoot-off with five other kids, which lasted several rounds and ended in a Second Place victory for Dyer out of nearly 1,000 other competitors, it was safe to say that he had done himself not one or two, but three better.

"When I started this, I had a goal of Top 5 in the state, so I exceeded that goal," said



Austin Dyer placed second out of more than 900 kids at the 2016 Georgia 4-H State Modified Trap Competition

Dyer, now at the beginning of his senior year at Union County High School. "If I get up there again I'd like to be No. 1, but if not, I'm content with where I am."

He said that, even though he placed second and is used

to that level of competition, that doesn't necessarily mean the next go round will be any easier, especially since the 2017 competition will be Dyer's last opportunity to be the top 4-H shotgun competitor in the state.

"You've got to stay focused and not think about it, and just do what you know how to do," said Dyer, explaining the mental aspect of the sport. "If you start thinking about it you'll mess up. I've practiced (doubles) before, but you've always got the nerves there, so you've just got to try to keep calm."

And it was just as important for Dyer, a true team player, that his team perform well also, and he was proud of their combined efforts having earned a Fifth Place victory as one of the Union County Shotgun Teams.

That winning team consisted of 4-H'ers Kaenon Young, Tara McCann, Blane Brown, Patrick Colwell and Dyer, and they scored a 96 collectively, with 100 representing a perfect score.

The young Dyer also had a chance to shoot in the 2016 National Junior Olympic

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Hiawassee man dies in two-car crash in Hall Co.

By Charles Duncan
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WAUKA MOUNTAIN – A Hiawassee man died and his wife was seriously injured in a two-car head-on crash last week in Hall County.

Samuel Dwayne Osborn, 61, brother of Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn, died when the 2009 Ford Escape he was driving was struck head on by a 2002 Mitsubishi Gallant driven by

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Samuel Dwayne Osborn

Vote for EMC directors ahead of Sept. 10 meeting



Ray Perren, Mickey Cummings and Larry Williams were elected to the BRMEMC Board of Directors in last year's annual meeting. Here they are with Director Charles Jenkins, who was elected in 2014.

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Longtime residents share a night of storytelling

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Appalachia has long been a place of traditions and storytelling.

Through the years, generations of Appalachians have passed down memories of hearth and home that have become historically important, though they are still shared through the simple act of gathering over a cup of coffee and reminiscing.

Local Union County residents continued this practice of oral history at the Sid Chandler home on Tuesday, Aug. 23.

Marion and David Lifsey hosted the event, serving up

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Longtime local residents share memories of yesteryears over coffee and lemonade – the group was small, but the stories were tall. Photo/Lily Avery

Watermelon dished up at Farmers Market

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Nothing pairs with a hot summer day quite like fresh watermelon, and the Union County Farmers Market had plenty to dish out on Saturday, Aug. 27, at its annual Watermelon Day.

Tin buckets full of fresh red and yellow watermelon lined the tables in the center of the market, ready for patrons to dig in and eat up.

"We've given away about 225 slices of watermelon today," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings.

Freddie Collins Farms supplied the juicy fruit, offering many market-goers their first chance to taste the two yellow varieties available.

According to Cummings, the only difference in the yellow melon was the color, though



Harold Berry rears back to deliver his Second Place 22 foot 7 inch spit at the annual Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday. Photo/Lily Avery

some patrons swore it had a sweeter taste.

While the watermelon tasting was a crowd pleaser, the

Seed Spitting Contest capped off the event, with many laughs shared by all those involved.

As contestants grabbed

their melons and prepared to spit farther than they had ever spit before, Cummings lent words of wisdom on the art of seed spitting.

"Now, here's the secret to spitting a good seed," said Cummings. "First, you're going to want to take a deep breath – through your nose and not your mouth, so you don't choke. Then you'll want to rear back and spit as far as you can."

Contestants were given one shot to show off their best spitting skills, and for some, it was really all they needed. Of the nine contestants who participated, ranging all ages, three went home that afternoon knowing they had bested the other six with their supreme spitting form and powerful lungs.

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Preventing bites key to avoiding Zika



This is an Aedes aegypti female, one of the mosquito species capable of carrying the Zika virus. Photo courtesy of David A. McKinney, a doctoral student in the University of Georgia's Mosquito Endocrinology Lab

By Shawn Jarrard
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Zika has made its way to each of the 50 United States through travel-related cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, though only Florida to date has seen local transmission of the virus via mosquitoes.

There is concern, however, that the virus could spread even in areas that

don't have locally infected mosquitoes, through sex with an infected partner.

And as of Friday, Georgia has four weeks to comply with a Food and Drug Administration directive that all blood banks nationwide screen donations for the infection.

Zika is a growing concern because of its mysterious connection with serious birth defects, which can occur with

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