

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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September 14, 2016

New directors, rate increase highlight EMC meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE – Two new directors emerged from the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC annual meeting of the membership – Gene Mason of Union County and Cory Payne of Clay County, plus the return of Director Ray Cook of Cherokee County.

The meeting took place on Saturday, Sept. 10, in Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Out of 41,452 eligible voters within the EMC, there were 4,973 paper ballots cast, 950 online votes and 90 ballots cast in person at the annual meeting, for a total count of 6,013 member votes in the election, or 14.51 percent of

the membership. Mason won in Union County with a plurality of 35 percent of the vote, stating after the meeting that he decided to run because he wanted to give back to his community.

"I just want to try to do what's right for the members, the employees and the company," said Mason.

Payne won his contest in Clay County with 42 percent of the vote. Payne runs the Blairsville facility of Advanced Digital Cable, his family's business, and he hopes to bring his industrial manufacturing and business management expertise to the table.

"As far as the board, I hope to bring some stability to the situation that they've had going, and just make sure that they make decisions

in the right direction, for the good of the members and the employees of the co-op," said Payne following his election victory.

Cook returned to the board following his election at this year's annual meeting. He was selected by the board last year to fill the seat of Kenneth Lance, who resigned after the 2015 annual meeting.

"I think everybody's long-term goal would be to either maintain the rates or lower them if possible," said Cook, speaking on what he'd like to accomplish in the next three years. "Keep a good environment for the employees, get the debt paid off – just try to keep everything going in the right direction."

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Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, Gene Mason of Union County, and Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina – all three won their races, announced at the annual meeting of the members on Saturday, Sept. 10

'Ride to Remember' commemorates Sept. 11

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Fifteen years ago, the United States suffered a horrific tragedy at the hands of terrorists who, acting unprovoked and as cowards, enacted their evil will by falling New York's Twin Towers with airplanes on Sept. 11, 2001.

Thousands of innocent Americans were murdered that day, and we will never forget.

That fateful day hurled America into a war that would be the longest in her history, causing thousands more to lose their lives in the name of freedom and liberty.

The continuing sacrifice for the greater good of all American citizens will not soon be forgotten, and regional motorcyclists hope to play a part in this act of remembering.

In conjunction with honoring the nearly 50,000

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Around 900 motorcycles, including first responders and veterans from around the region, took part in the 'Ride to Remember,' which began in Athens and ended in Blairsville on Sunday, Sept. 11

Friends of the Library 20th anniversary

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

CHOESTOE – Friends of the Union County Library celebrated its 20th anniversary since inception with an afternoon of food, fellowship and reminiscing at the Historic Choestoe School House on Saturday, Sept. 10.

Like every prosperous committee, it all began with a dream shared by like-minded individuals. On April 23, 1996, Pattie Hamilton and Judith Vaughn met with then-director of Mountain Regional Library System Teresa Haymore to begin the founding process for a Friends of the Library in Union County.

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Former Mountain Regional Library System Director Donna Howell congratulated Union County Friends of the Library for 20 years

UC Fire department conducts water training



The Union County Fire Department routinely holds training exercises for its various departments. Here, the firefighters are training on pulling a "patient" out of swift, moving water.

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Always wanting his men to stay up on their training, Union County Fire Chief David Dyer recently held a swift water training event in the Meeks Park II area.

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During his training, several of his firefighters got to try out their new NRS dry suits, which are equipped to keep a first responder dry, and as warm and protected as possible in swiftly moving, murky waters.

Fifth-grader Babb saves schoolmate by performing Heimlich maneuver

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

John Babb is not your average fifth-grader.

Yes, like many of his young peers, he does watch cartoons and enjoys going outside, especially to jog.

But John Babb is more than your average fifth-grader. John Babb is a hero. And he proved it by saving a life.

During lunch hour at Union County Elementary School on Thursday, Aug. 25, a student started to choke on a piece of candy, putting his hands to his throat, showing

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John Babb was honored in a school assembly on Thursday, Sept. 8, for saving a schoolmate's life using the Heimlich maneuver. Union County Fire Chief declared the young man an "Honorary Firefighter for a Day"

Transfer station renovated; convenience center now taking glass containers

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Many residents may have noticed the 12-foot-tall fence that has been erected next to the recycling building at the Union County Transfer Station off Deep South Farm Road.

This new fence isn't meant to hide anything, necessarily, but to act more as a divider, separating the commercial side of things from the brand new facility that has been built for day-to-day household trash, which Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris hopes to have open by Monday, Sept. 19.

For years, both residential and commercial trash customers have been driving over the scales at the

transfer station, and people throwing away household trash have had to either toss their bags into a compactor or into the commercial trash building, neither of which offered the most pleasant of experiences.

As the community has grown in recent years, this mixing of business between commercial and residential has caused an unwanted backup of vehicles from time to time, making hauling trash for businesses and average households alike more than just a simple chore.

The new facility has been built with the overarching goal of creating a cleaner environment that allows people to get in and out faster than ever before.

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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris has finally fulfilled one of his longtime goals for the county – to renovate and clean up the Union County Transfer Station.

Blairsville man wanted for sex-related crimes

From Staff Reports
North Georgia News

Jason Wayne O'Neal, 32, of Blairsville is wanted for child molestation and sexual battery on a 12-year-old girl, according to a release from the Union County Sheriff's Office.

He disappeared on Monday, Sept. 5, after authorities discovered the alleged crime, according to the sheriff's office.

O'Neal's last known address is 168 Red Oak Lane in Blairsville, and he may be

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Jason Wayne O'Neal

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Allegheny Masonic Lodge #114
Semi-Annual BBQ Fundraiser
Sept 30th, 2016
Plates are only \$7
Whole Butts Available

CRUISE IN On the Square

See page 1C

Beans and Cornbread night

See page 8C

PANTHERS Softball
Tues Sept 13 @ Dawson Co 6 PM
Thurs Sept 15 vs. East Hall 5 PM

Football
Fri Sept 16 @ Banks Co 7:30 PM