

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Annual Union General Health Fair draws huge crowds

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union General Hospital held its annual Health Fair on Saturday, Sept. 21, and the event was a popular community outreach effort as usual, with people lining up at the check-in tables as early as 5 a.m.

The Health Fair is a community service event that the hospital offers to not only Union County residents, but to residents of surrounding counties as well.

There were 68 stations and displays lining the second-floor perimeter corridor that stretched all the way around the building, Hospital Administrator Leslie Daniel said.

Those stations and displays by hospital staff and partners included everything

from the performance of free medical services to the provision of information about Medicare, supplemental insurance, home health care, hospice, Hands-Only CPR and everything in between.

"We try to benefit the entire community, both underprivileged as well as (the self-sufficient)," Daniel said. "There's a lot of free screenings at the Health Fair. There will be bloodwork for substantially less cost than normal. We just want our community to be healthy."

"We do offer it to the surrounding communities, so it's not just Union County. We do a lot of things throughout the community to keep health in the forefront of people's minds. And with the Health Fair, that's a huge benefit."

Added Daniel, "The big advantage for the hospital is we get 500 extra people in our facility to be able to see what Union General Health System is all about."

One of the main draws was the hugely discounted bloodwork, with a comprehensive lab panel costing a mere \$30. Plus, Health Fair guests could partake in other discounted blood tests, including the prostate-specific antigen, hemoglobin A1C and vitamin D tests.

Normally, those blood tests cost several hundred dollars combined, though all four cost just \$70 total on Saturday.

Incidentally, 12-hour fasting was required for the blood testing, which is why the

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Members of the Union General Hospital family at the Sept. 21 annual Health Fair. Photo by Mark Smith

Paris talks property reassessment process, stalled double gym construction

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said in his Sept. 19 monthly meeting that the state-mandated reassessment of county properties is underway and should be completed by 2021.

"We are doing countywide reassessments, and we're going to be doing those over the next two years," Paris said. "They're going all over the county."

"They're evaluating every house and every lot in (the county). We're not going to change any property values until they get through with all of it, and then that will put us back in compliance with the state."

Basically, if current property sales amounts are generally more than 40% above or below current county



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris

property valuations, then the state requires property valuations to be recalculated.

And according to the state's annual sales ratio study, current valuations for properties in Union County are too low.

"But once we do the

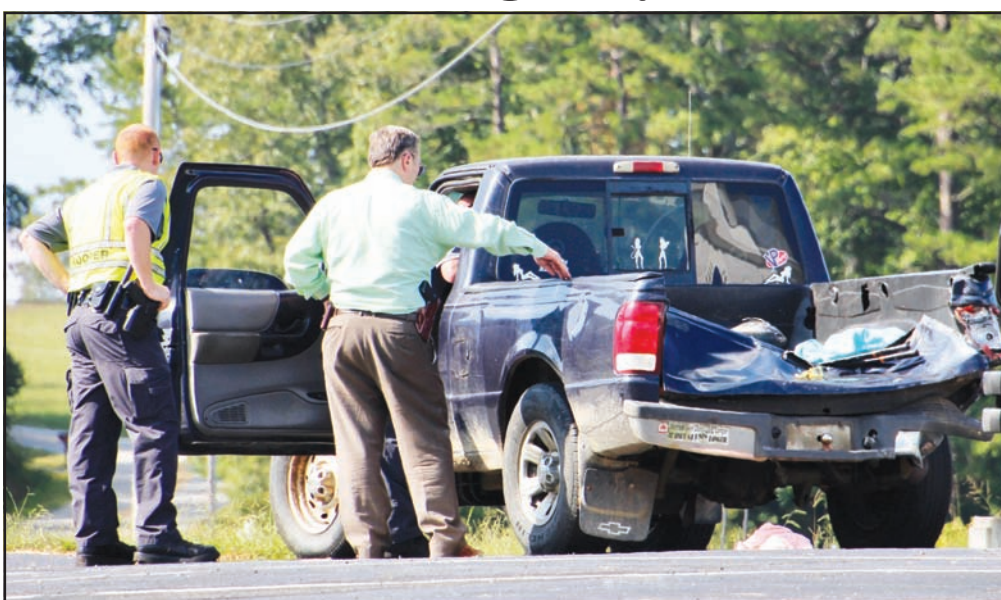
reassessment of all the county properties, which is required to get us in compliance with the state, which will be 2021, then the millage rate should go down to approximate (the expected increase in property values)."

Lowering the millage rate would mitigate much, if not all, of the financial impact of a property valuation increase in the county.

"It's not something we're doing to get more money," Paris said. "It's a hard time, because nobody likes to have their property reassessed. The last time I had to do it was 2010. There was a lot of unhappy people. Assuming I get back in office for another four years, we're going to be real fair about it."

During his Commissioner's Comments See Paris, Page 8A

Taylor, 16, killed in two-vehicle accident on Old Highway 76 last week



Georgia State Patrol investigators and local Assistant District Attorney Buster Landrum inspect the truck involved in the crash that killed Matthew Deven Taylor on Sept. 17. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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Matthew Deven Taylor, 16, of Blairsville, was killed in a two-vehicle accident the afternoon of Tuesday, Sept. 17, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Taylor was driving a Suzuki motorcycle that collided

with the rear of a blue 2000 Ford Ranger pickup about 800 feet west of Hidden Lake Road on Old Blue Ridge Highway around 12:45 p.m. that Tuesday, according to GSP.

The truck was traveling east toward Blairsville on Old 76 when it pulled into a private drive to make a U-turn and head back west, at which point

it re-entered the roadway in front of Taylor's westbound motorcycle, according to GSP.

Lowell Taylor, 74, of Blairsville, was driving the Ford Ranger at the time of the crash, according to GSP.

Because the accident involved a fatality, the Georgia State Patrol dispatched its See Taylor, Page 8A

BRMEMC to hold annual meeting at Young Harris headquarters Sept. 26



Gene Mason of Union County

By Shawn Jarrard
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YOUNG HARRIS - Now in its 81st year, the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation will hold its annual membership meeting with board director elections on Thursday, Sept. 26, with the day, time and



Cory Payne of Clay County, NC

location differing from years past.

The 2019 meeting will take place in the covered truck parking area of EMC headquarters in Young Harris. Voting will start at 1 p.m., to be immediately followed by the business portion of the meeting at 3 p.m.

In recent years, annual



Ray Cook of Cherokee County, NC

meetings have been held on Saturday mornings at an external venue - the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center in 2017 and 2018, and for years before that, at the Anderson Music Hall inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Earlier this year, the See BRMEMC, Page 2A

Middle, high school gyms to get new flooring; BOE mulls elementary upgrades

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 17, members of the Union County Board of Education approved a \$180,585 bid to install new flooring for the middle and high school indoor tracks and weight rooms.

Assistant Superintendent David Murphy and Facilities Director Chris Crow have been working on this SPLOST-funded project for several months.

"We only have one bid to submit to you today, and it is for the Union County Middle School and Union County High School gymnasium flooring," Murphy said. "It did come back with an on-spec bid this time, so we were happy about that."

"It came in right where we were expecting at \$180,585. This is a much safer floor for the athletics that are taking place, with the running and weights and all."

Of the 138 vendors who received requests for proposals from the schools, "the only vendor that actually bid was AAA Commercial Floors," Murphy said.

Crow said the new flooring material will be a specialty two-ply rubber material manufactured by Roppe Corporation USA, specially designed for indoor track and weight room use.



Pioneer RESA Facilities Consultant Doug Fields conducting board training in the pre-board work session of the Union County Board of Education on Sept. 17. Photo by Mark Smith

In other school board news, Pioneer RESA Trainer Doug Fields and Crow took up most of the pre-board work session that Tuesday with board training on the Capital Outlay Planning System, or COPS, and school entitlement earnings in the form of state grant funds.

The Union County School System is working with the Georgia Department of Education on the eventual construction of a new second-grade through fifth-grade elementary school building, with the state expected to

participate in a substantial portion of the project.

"Early projections estimate that the state would fund almost half of the cost," Crow said after the meeting. "This would take that burden off the local taxpayer."

"While it's a little early to be certain of the exact amount, DOE officials estimate approximately \$8 million of state funds could go toward this local project."

"Union County Schools is also considering options on See Board of Education, Page 8A

July Term 2019 Union County Grand Jury Indictments continued

The following individuals were indicted during the July Term 2019 of the Union County Grand Jury, which met again in September:

William Trannies Jones, burglary in the first degree; theft by taking; obstruction of an officer.

Thomas Elijah Hogan, theft by taking; making a false statement.

Benjamin Lee Stanley, theft by taking.

Cynthia Lynn Smith, theft by receiving stolen property.

Tristen Gregory Stratton, theft by taking.

Joel Newman Taylor,

obstruction of an officer.

Sharon Elizabeth Veach, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; improper headlights.

Sarah Leigh Copeland, two counts aggravated assault; two counts aggravated assault, Family Violence; two counts obstruction of an officer.

Dylan Taylor Kephart, three counts burglary in the first degree; aggravated assault; aggravated assault, Family Violence; false imprisonment; battery; battery, Family

Violence; theft by taking; two counts criminal trespass.

Edwin Raymond Smith, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Raymond Lee Blount, aka Raymond Lee Blount Jr., Jonathan Heath Stokes, possession of methamphetamine.

Brian Edward Smith, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Lisa Ann Richards, theft by taking; financial transaction card fraud; unauthorized use

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