

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Teen vaping trend sweeps the nation, comes to Union County

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Listen up, parents – many of America's youth have secretly taken up a dangerous habit called "vaping," and it's happening right here in Union County.

Since the start of the school year, the Union County Schools Police Department has uncovered evidence of vaping in nearly all grade levels, including at the elementary school.

This is a problem because, just in the last month, at least 10 students have received medical treatment – some requiring hospitalization – after vaping in nearby mountain counties.

Locally, the school

system is working hard to stay on top of the problem.

"(On Sept. 13) at the high school, we decided to go walk around the parking lot and just look inside vehicles, in plain view, and this led to multiple infractions with vapes and/or nicotine," said School Resource Officer Chad Berry in the Sept. 18 regular meeting of the Union County Board of Education.

Usually, School Police Chief Chad Deyton is the one to address board members in their regular monthly meetings, but Berry stood in for Deyton on Sept. 18 because the latter was away at training.

"One of the things that led us to looking into cars was a bust incident when a middle schooler had vape, and

that's what led us into the high school," said Berry. "And, unfortunately, we've even got information that there's been vaping in the elementary school."

For those who aren't familiar with vaping, it's mostly done using electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, which are battery-powered devices "that can deliver nicotine and flavorings to the user in the form of an aerosol," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The term "vaping" comes from the aerosol nature of the heated liquid, or "vape juice," which produces a vapor that is inhaled like smoke.

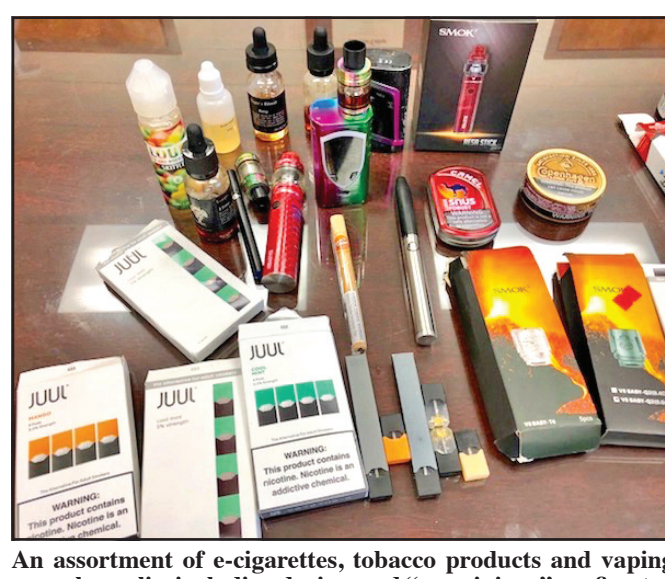
Vape juice usually contains nicotine and various

other chemicals, including flavoring that makes it appealing to adults and children alike, though many people also vape marijuana and other illicit or dangerous drugs.

Concerning recent nearby incidents, at least 10 middle and high school students in Fannin, Gilmer and Pickens counties received medical treatment after vaping, some with synthetic cannabis oils with effects that have been compared to heroin and LSD.

Fortunately, none of the vaping devices confiscated here have tested positive for controlled substances such as marijuana, but it's likely just a matter of time.

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An assortment of e-cigarettes, and vape products, including paraphernalia, including e-cigarettes and "vape juices," confiscated recently at Union County High School.

## Arnold crowned 2018-2019 UCHS Homecoming Queen



Senior Aladriel Arnold being crowned 2018-2019 Homecoming Queen by 2017 Queen Jessica Palomo. Pictured here with father Dave Arnold. Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Senior Aladriel Arnold was crowned the 2018-2019 Union County High School Homecoming Queen in front of a packed house at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday, Sept. 21.

Instead of crowning the new queen under the lights at halftime, as in years past, this year's homecoming ceremony took place prior to kickoff.

But that didn't curb the buzz around the stadium leading up to the moment everyone was waiting for.

At the conclusion of

introductions, senior Madeline Tanner was announced as Second Runner-Up and fellow senior Carolyne Up was named First Runner-Up.

For more on Union County's Homecoming festivities, check out the Sports Section in this week's paper.



Jim and Sharon Whittle, left, with dispatchers at Union County E-911 Center.

## Parents of Derrick Whittle show appreciation for 911 dispatchers

By Shawn Jarrard  
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An entire community of first responders went into mourning on Sept. 18, 2011, when Union County Sheriff's Deputy Derrick Whittle died from injuries sustained in the line of duty.

While en route to a domestic call involving a gun, his vehicle went off the road in a sharp curve and struck a tree, causing his fatal injury.

It has been seven years since Whittle's tragic demise, and to honor his memory and share a special appreciation,

his father and mother, Jim and Sharon Whittle, visited with dispatchers of the Union County E-911 Center on Thursday, Sept. 13.

That evening, dispatchers had gathered for a regular monthly meeting of the 911 staff, and they welcomed the Whittles with open arms.

For their part, the Whittles wanted to communicate a message that they understood the importance of 911 dispatch, even if most people never give any thought to the person behind their emergency phone call.

"You normally don't hear the community's side of what happened when you send them

help," said Mrs. Whittle in the meeting. "Unless, of course, they don't think you did your best job, or if they think it took too long to get help there. Then they complain."

"Along with lots of other things, affects the response time. We want you to know how much your 911 department means to us. We can't do without you."

"Second, you all need to know how important your job is. When someone is in distress or needs help, the first thing they think about is 'Call 911.'"

"Derrick's crash resulted

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## Family of boy injured in car crash: 'Please continue to pray'

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The family and friends of a young boy in the community are asking for prayers following a car accident on Thursday, Sept. 20.

According to posts made by the family on Facebook, the 10-year-old boy, Lassiter Windsor, is being treated for a head injury he sustained following the Sept. 20 accident.

As of press time Monday, Lassiter had been experiencing pressure in his brain due to swelling caused by his injury, and health care professionals had put him in a medically-induced



10-year-old Lassiter Windsor Photo/Facebook

## Paris reviews millage rate decision, thankful Florence went north

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said he was glad to be done with tax hearings in his Thursday, Sept. 20, regular monthly meeting.

Paris held six public hearings on the 2018 millage rate increase in the last month, and though he initially proposed raising the county portion of property taxes nearly 15 percent, he ended up dropping

it down to about a 6.69 percent increase.

"We've had a real issue with our budget this year, and we're continuing to have a real issue with our budget," said Paris. "Last year was the first time since I've been in office where we really felt like we had to struggle a little bit."

"That's why we felt like we had to raise taxes. I probably should have left them at where I'd originally said I was going

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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris

## UCSO recovers more than \$220,000 in stolen property this year

By Shawn Jarrard  
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From Jan. 1, 2018, to the present, the Criminal Investigations Division of the Union County Sheriff's Office has recovered more than \$220,000 in stolen property.

Of course, it's all in a good day's work for the employees of the Sheriff's Office, who pledge, day in and day out, to maintain peace and protect the lives and properties of the residents of Union County.

The most recent recovery of lost stolen property occurred last week, when investigators got a tip from deputies out of Cherokee County, North Carolina, that led them to a home in Union County.

"Late in the evening on Sept. 17, Union County Sheriff's Deputies responded to 356 Sawmill Road for suspected stolen property," said UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

At the home on Sawmill Road, Deputy Ginger Cosgro, Staff Sgt. Bradley Glass and Lt. Julio Cruz recovered a 2006 Honda CBR1000 motorcycle that had allegedly been stolen out of Cherokee County, according to the Lt. Osborn.

"While they were there, they were told by the property owner, Jason Meeks, that there were some other items that a



Jason Meeks



Aaron Patterson

guy named Aaron Patterson had brought and left there, and he didn't want it on his property," said Osborn. "So, the deputies also left with a Honda Rancher four-wheeler, a Honda pull horse trailer, and two very nice-looking tires and wheels."

Once the deputies confiscated the property, Lt. Osborn with CID got involved in the case, and he quickly discovered that not all was as it seemed at the home on Sawmill Road, according to Lt. Osborn.

"After further investigation, I learned that the homeowner, Jason Meeks, was actually in possession of the 2006 Honda motorcycle for the last two or three weeks, riding it," said Osborn. "Evidence proved that he and

Aaron Patterson had painted the motorcycle at his house."

Subsequent to his initial investigation, Lt. Osborn took out warrants on both Meeks and Patterson for theft by receiving stolen property from another state regarding the Honda motorcycle, according to Lt. Osborn.

The only problem was that Patterson had a Simpsonville, South Carolina, address, and authorities were unable to locate him right away, according to Lt. Osborn.

"On the evening of Sept. 18, around 8 p.m., Sheriff Mack Mason made a traffic stop off Kiutuestia Creek Road for loud mufflers on motorcycles, and he came in contact with

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