

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Union County Schools announce 2018-2019 Teachers of the Year

By Shawn Jarrard
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Congratulations to the 2018-2019 Union County Schools Teachers of the Year: Tammy Aaron, Brandy Hamby, Caleb Paul, Dixie Conger and Ashley Pruitt.

Teachers of the Year are determined by faculty vote among fellow educators at each of the schools in the system, after which the process to select a System Teacher of the Year begins.

This year's System Teacher of the Year is expected to be announced in the Oct. 23 regular meeting of the Union County Board of Education.

Tammy Aaron is a second-grade teacher at Union County Primary School, where she has taught for the past 16 years, and she is thankful to her coworkers for having chosen her.

"We have so many recognitions that deserve this recognition at the primary school, so it is a great honor to be selected Teacher of the



Ashley Pruitt

Year," said Aaron. "Our students are our future. While teaching is an important and honorable profession, it demands a high commitment.

"As a teacher, I have the opportunity to impact each of my students' lives in a positive way. That is a huge privilege that I do not take lightly."



Brandy Hamby

Brandy Hamby is in her 14th year with Union County Elementary School, and she teaches Reading/Language Arts, Math and Social Studies to fifth-grade students.

"I feel that before you can teach a child academically, there has to be a mutual level of respect and a good rapport," said



Caleb Paul

Hamby. "I want my students to know that I genuinely love and care for them and have their best interests in mind.

"All students can learn, but before that, they need to feel that their learning is important and what they do matters."

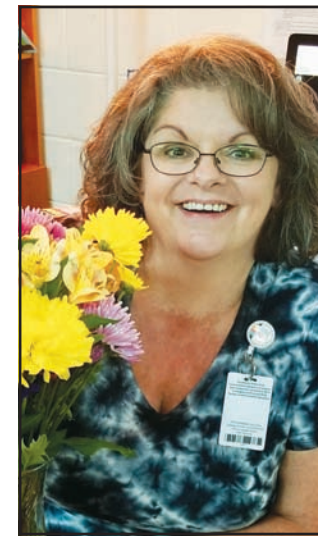
Caleb Paul has taught seventh-grade math at Union



Dixie Conger

County Middle School for six years now, and he counts being able to teach Union County kids as a blessing.

"I believe that all students have the potential to be successful," said Paul. "I try to focus on their potential and point them in the right direction in order to be successful adults."



Tammy Aaron

Dixie Conger is the Teacher of the Year for Union County High, and what is particularly neat about her selection is that she and her mother, Tammy Aaron of the primary school, are serving together as 2018-2019 Teachers of the Year.

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Early voting begins Oct. 15, runs three weeks through Nov. 2

By Shawn Jarrard
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Early voting for the Nov. 6 General Election begins on Monday, Oct. 15.

Every weekday between Oct. 15 and Nov. 2, during the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., registered Union County voters will be able to walk into the Union County Registrar's Office to cast their votes.

The Registrar's Office is located within the Union County Courthouse at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville, and it will remain open to voters even during lunchtime.

There is one weekend day set aside for voters at the Registrar's Office, which will be Saturday, Oct. 27, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., for those who find themselves too busy to vote during the scheduled weekdays of voting.

Election Day will be on

Tuesday, Nov. 6, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the 11 pre-assigned Union County voting precincts.

A valid ballot can be obtained at the Registrar's Office and at www.mvp.sos.ga.gov, which also features valuable voter information personalized to each resident.

"Georgia law requires registered voters to show photo identification in order to vote

in person," according to the Georgia Secretary of State's Office. "When you vote in person, you must show one of the following photo IDs:

"A Georgia driver's license, even if expired; any valid state or federal government issued photo ID, including one issued by the Department of Driver Services or your Voter Registrar; valid U.S. passport; valid employee photo ID from any branch, department, agency, or entity of the U.S. Government, this state, or any county, municipality, board, authority or other entity of this state; valid U.S. military photo ID; valid tribal photo ID."

Voters looking for absentee ballots will need to contact the Registrar's Office in the courthouse, or call (706) 439-6016.

Tuesday, Oct. 9, was the voter registration deadline to be eligible to cast a ballot in the

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SPLOST continuation to appear on General Election ballot

By Shawn Jarrard
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Early voting for the Nov. 6 General Election starts on Monday, Oct. 15, and voters will want to keep an eye out for the SPLOST continuation referendum on the Union County ballot.

The referendum will appear as a Special Election at the tail end of the ballot, with the heading "Continuation of Sales and Use Tax."

A SPLOST is a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax that amounts to a 1 percent sales tax applied countywide to finance voter-approved capital outlay projects.

Each SPLOST lasts six years, and the current SPLOST – SPLOST IV – has about two and half years of collections left before expiring at the end of March 2021.

By the time SPLOST IV



Lamar Paris

ends, Union County will have had a continuous SPLOST in place since 1997, and it will continue through March 2027 should SPLOST V pass.

It's important to point out that voting for the SPLOST will not mean a tax increase, but instead, a continuation of the 1 percent sales tax that has been in place for more than 20

years. Continuing the SPLOST would keep the sales tax in Union County at 7 percent, or 7 cents on the dollar.

Union County's 7 percent sales tax is composed of the following: a statewide sales tax of 4 percent; a Local Option Sales Tax, or LOST, of 1 percent; a SPLOST of 1 percent; and an ESPLOST of 1 percent for the schools.

All but five counties in the state collect LOST revenues, and all but three counties collect SPLOST revenues.

SPLOST collections help to keep property taxes down by more fairly distributing the tax burden to everyone who purchases goods and services in Union County, including out-of-town visitors.

Should it pass in the General Election, SPLOST V will pick up in April 2021, and like SPLOST IV, it is estimated

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Blairsville Sorghum Festival turns 49 this weekend at Meeks Park

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Blairsville Sorghum Festival has honored the heritage of the North Georgia Mountains for 49 years, and in so doing, the festival has become a tradition in its own right.

Held every second and third weekends in October at Meeks Park, the festival returns this year on Saturday, Oct. 13, and continues on Sunday, Oct. 14, then Saturday, Oct. 20, and Sunday, Oct. 21.

Parking for the festival is free at Meeks Park, and admission is \$5, while children 12 and under get in free.

So, what's there to do at

the festival? Plenty!

Starting at 9 a.m. every day of the festival, volunteers with the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club begin grinding the locally grown and harvested sorghum cane at the mill next to the Blairsville Sorghum Festival building, before sending it over to the huge cooking pan for live demonstrations of syrup making.

At the same time, more than 100 arts and crafts vendors start demonstrating and showcasing their unique handmade wares, and live music starts around 10:30 a.m.

And on the first Saturday only, on Oct. 13 at 11 a.m. in town, the 2018 Sorghum Festival Parade will make its circuit from the Old Middle School Gym, around the

Blairsville Square, down Blue Ridge Street, up Hunt-Martin Street, across Cleveland Street to Kimsey Street, and back to its starting place at the old gym.

People can post up anywhere in the main downtown area for a good view of the parade, which will feature the theme of "Our Local Heroes" in memory of USMC Master Sgt. Eric England, who passed away earlier this year in April.

Of course, there will be cash prizes for floats designed by charitable organizations, nonprofits and churches, and even businesses and individuals are encouraged to get in on the float-building fun and can donate their prize money should they win.

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Brock Kelley grinding sorghum cane to make syrup at the mill at Meeks Park. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

City Council authorizes loan for wastewater treatment project

By Staff Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville City Council has approved a resolution authorizing the execution of a Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loan agreement for the purchase of a grit removal system at the city wastewater treatment plant.

For months now, councilmembers have been expecting final approval from GEFA regarding the loan agreement, and they voted

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Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley in the Oct. 2 regular city meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

Hunter to celebrate 93rd birthday at Huddle House; all are welcome

By Shawn Jarrard
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Charlie Hunter turns 93 on Friday, and everyone is invited to attend his birthday party at the Huddle House in Blairsville on Oct. 12 at 2 p.m.

Hunter helped the Huddle House get off the ground more than two decades ago, and while he is excited for people to stop in to celebrate his birthday with him, he has asked that guests just bring themselves and no



Charlie Hunter

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