

North Georgia News

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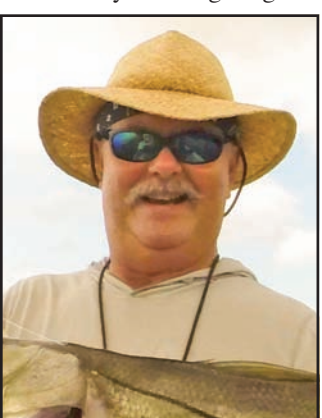
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Wednesday, October 20, 2021

NTSB investigating cause of Collins' fatal plane crash

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The National Transportation Safety Board is currently investigating the



Michael J. Collins

cause of a fatal plane accident involving pilot Michael J. Collins, 71, who died Oct. 13 when his Piper PA-24-260 aircraft crashed on the shores of Lake Nottely inside The Grove at Highland Park subdivision.

Collins was the only casualty.

Despite heavy fog conditions, it is too early to say what caused the accident, especially considering witness reports that the airplane may have been experiencing a mechanical issue. More information will be available when the NTSB releases a preliminary report in the coming weeks.

Such investigations are incredibly thorough and can take up to two years to

officially conclude at Blairsville Airport Assistant Manager Dan Firebaugh, who said the NTSB, an independent federal agency tasked with investigating civil aviation accidents, has ways of testing for engine trouble and/or emergency medical events that may have contributed to the crash.

"We don't really know what happened (at this point)," Firebaugh said. "The pilots that know him, know him to be a safe and very thorough pilot, especially due to the fact that he would always come out the day before a long flight and fly the airplane just to make sure everything's working. And most pilots don't do that."

See *Plane Crash*, Page 3A



Local first responders surveying the wreckage from the Oct. 13 morning plane crash that killed pilot Michael J. Collins. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Spiva alerts neighbors, friends about UCSO scam

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

REALTOR Deborah Spiva of REMAX Town & Country Blairsville has a message for all Union County residents — be careful not to get taken advantage of in the latest phone scam targeting locals.

"Had a call today from the Union County Sheriff's Office saying they were giving me a courtesy call before they sent a squad car to ARREST me," Spiva wrote on Facebook Oct. 13. "Very, very convincing. Knew my address, (age) and phone number."

Spiva reiterated just how



Deborah Spiva

convincing the "deputy" was over the phone; he appeared to have the lingo down pat,

and he knocked her guard down right away with an initial series of dropped calls that got her heart racing considering all the terrible news he was trying to impart, made even more terrifying by the fact she coincidentally couldn't reach her children at the time.

When she learned that she was to be "arrested" for failing to appear in court, she immediately made her way to the Sheriff's Office. Once she informed the scammer of her destination, he hung up and stopped calling her, because he realized the jig was up.

"I knew it was a mistake but I didn't want

See *UCSO Scam*, Page 2A

Fundraiser provides \$5,000 for Morris Family Rebuild



Frank and Kim Alexander hosted their neighbor Angela Morris for a fundraiser contributing to her "Rebuild Fund" after the Sept. 12 propane explosion that destroyed her home. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

People constantly say what a great area North Georgia is to live in, more specifically Union County. But

occasionally, when disaster strikes, that phrase is proven out in spades.

Little did Angela Morris know what a huge outpouring of help from her friends, neighbors, and fellow human

beings her tragedy would trigger.

On Sunday, Sept. 12, Morris' house on Trackrock Gap Road was destroyed by a propane gas explosion.

See *Morris Family*, Page 8A

City of Blairsville set to star in miniseries documentary



"The Secret Legends of Blairville." L-R: Bill Rahn, Director/Producer; Loretta Durden, Executive Producer; and Chris Adams, Writer. Photo by Jeremy Foster

By Jeremy Foster
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Oct. 14, Tri-Rahn Pictures hosted a public information session at

the Community Center on an upcoming five-part miniseries documentary called "The Secret Legends of Blairville," to be produced in the coming months.

The feature will focus

on Thomas Jefferson Haralson, who came to Blairsville when he was 23 and decided that this was where he wanted to call home all the way up to his death in 1899.

See *Miniseries*, Page 2A

Vote early now thru Oct. 29 on TSPLOST referendum

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The first week of advanced in-person voting for the countywide Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum featured a smaller turnout than a typical early voting period, with 675 of the county's 20,058 active registered voters having cast ballots between Tuesday and Friday.

Union County Deputy Registrar Diana Nichols reported that there were no long lines at that point but that voting remained steady throughout the week, and that by Friday, 82 voters had been sent absentee-by-mail ballots.

On Monday, Oct. 18, standard early voting procedures were interrupted



About 3.5% of the electorate turned out for the first week of early in-person voting at the Union County Courthouse.

briefly when the ballot scanner stopped scanning at the Union County Courthouse, requiring the temporary use of an emergency ballot box while the

Union County Elections Board worked to transport a back-up scanner from the Board Office to the courthouse.

See *Early Voting*, Page 2A

Sorghum Festival closes for year, to return in October 2022

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The 52nd Annual Blairsville Sorghum Festival came to a successful close over the weekend, with plenty of freshly made syrup, homegrown music, family-friendly games and local shopping had by all.

And despite pouring rain and wind that threatened to uproot vendor tents early Saturday, the festival continued as planned in time for the clouds to clear and the weather to calm.

While some vendors left

and made way for new faces between the two weekends of the festival, others stayed all four days to sell their wares for the second weekend, too.

Thanks to Saturday's drop in temperatures over the previous weekend, blanket sales were particularly impacted, with Tracy Bagnato of Lavender Heart Boutique running to the tent next door to purchase a cozy, handmade shield from the cold.

Among the many vendors in attendance were several local organizations, with animal rescue group Project Chimps in particular standing out among

them. After lab testing on chimps was outlawed in 2015, Project Chimps provided a Morganton-based sanctuary in the comfort of the Appalachian Mountains.

The Project Chimps booth offered magnets, stickers, and adorable plush apes along with brochures highlighting the hiking trails encircling the facility, and volunteer Mimi elaborated on plans to expand the property to house more chimpanzees.

Located at the front of the lower field in Meeks Park, Enotah CASA, the new

organizers of the Sorghum Festival, set up a tent to take admissions, fundraise, and provide information for those curious about the child advocacy nonprofit.

According to Towns County Enotah CASA Advocate Supervisor Jenny Stowers, a lot of the workers involved in the syrup making were some of the original festival managers.

And though they have been able to maintain their craft to provide delicious sweet sorghum syrup during the festival, Stowers said they simply became stretched too

See *Sorghum Festival*, Page 8A



A Rock Throwin' contestant having fun in Saturday's Sorghum Festival Games. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Vol. 112 No. 43
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: T-Storm Hi 68 Lo 56
Fri: Cloudy Hi 68 Lo 47
Sat: Cloudy Hi 67 Lo 45

Arrests 7A
Church 3C
Classifieds 3D
Opinion 4A
Legals 5D
Obits 4C
Sports 2B

Inside

SPORTS
VOLLEYBALL
10/20 5:30 PM STATE 1ST
ROUND VS. PEPPERELL
SOFTBALL
STATE SWEET 16 VS. TOOMBS
10/19 4 & 6 PM

Habitat for Humanity
Towns/Union Counties, Inc.
Habitat for Humanity Home
See page 2A

Appalachian Brew, Stew & Que Festival
Oct. 23
See page 6B

PTO Yard Sale
Oct. 23rd
1st UMC
See page 7A

UCSO Scam...from Page 1A

a squad car to come in my driveway,” Spiva said. “Long story short, it was a scam but super convincing. I went to the sheriff to make sure it was a scam and was told this is happening a lot in Union County.”

At the jail, Spiva spoke with a Sheriff’s Office representative who informed her that multiple complaints had come in recently about the same con, including from one woman who contacted local law enforcement after being unrecoverably scammed out of hundreds of dollars.

“Had I stayed on the phone rather than run up to their office, he would have settled it with the civil court for \$500,” Spiva said she was told. “He didn’t have the chance because I was so close to the jail by then.”

“I thought I couldn’t be scammed, but SURPRISE, I would have been if I hadn’t been in town close to the jail. Be careful. They had me.”

Following her ordeal, Spiva recommends that people who receive similar calls “hang up right then and call the Sheriff’s Department.”

Phone scams are growing more common these days – and more sophisticated. Phone number spoofing and

instant access to all kinds of personal data via the internet make it increasingly easy to rip people off without being caught, and there’s not much local law enforcement can do.

All it takes is a little bit of criminal initiative, some free time to do research, and at least one victim payout every so often to make the endeavor worthwhile to would-be scammers.

And that’s what almost happened to Spiva, though she did the right thing and independently checked the information out for herself.

This particular scam is not new to the area, though it

has seemingly returned after a couple-year hiatus.

The way it works is, a “deputy” with the Sheriff’s Office calls up and says that the person being called has missed a court summons, like for jury duty, which has triggered a bench warrant for their arrest.

Either the “deputy” can swing by and make the arrest, or the victim can pony up money in the form of untraceable gift cards right there over the phone.

“This is not the way we or any other Sheriff’s Office does business,” UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn said in an Oct. 6 Facebook post. “Also, the names of the deputies (currently) being used are not employed by the Union County Sheriff’s Office at this time but

have been in the past.

“Basically, this is a SCAM. Just hang up the phone, or if you’re not familiar with the number calling, ignore it, and if it’s important, they will leave you a voicemail.”

Osborn has invited people who receive suspicious phone calls to place a call themselves to the official Sheriff’s Office number at 706-439-6066 to verify what they’ve been told, and he re-emphasized the fact that the Sheriff’s Office would never call anyone to collect money.

“If we’ve got a warrant on you, we’re not going to call and ask you about it,” Osborn said. “We’re going to come knocking on your door in official uniform with an officially marked squad car.”

Early Voting...from Page 1A

Early in-person voting continues this week and will run weekdays through Oct. 29 in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse, to include an additional day of Saturday voting on Oct. 23.

All advanced in-person voting will take place between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day, even during lunchtime.

This is an off year for countywide elections, so the only item on the ballot for this Special Election called by Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris is the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, or TSPLOST.

As previously reported, TSPLOST is a proposed additional 1-cent sales tax that, if passed, would result in Union County sales taxes increasing from 7 cents to 8 cents on the dollar effective April 1, 2022.

The tax is projected to generate between \$5 million and \$7 million per year over five years, with collections to go toward local roads and bridgework, including safety improvements around the county and maintenance for the more than 600 miles of county roads.

Per the Department of Revenue, sales tax in Georgia is imposed on the retail sales price of tangible personal property

and certain services, like the sale of accommodations, in-state transportation of individuals (e.g., taxis, limos), sales of admissions, and charges for participation in games and amusement activities.

Election Day voting will take place Nov. 2 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the 11 pre-assigned precincts of Union County.

Voters may pick up a copy of the new “Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot” from the Union County Registrar’s Office located at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville or print a copy at https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021_Absentee_App.9721_2.pdf.

“Georgia law allows for absentee-by-mail ballots to be requested no earlier than 78 days and no later than 11 days prior to an election,” per sos.ga.gov. “Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or in-person to the local County Board of Registrar’s Office.”

People are encouraged to request and return their absentee ballots early to give their ballot “enough time to travel through the mail and resolve any issues that may arise when voting by absentee ballot,” per georgia.gov.

For the November election, the deadline to return absentee-by-mail ballot applications is this Friday, Oct. 22. Folks wanting to utilize the official drop box to turn in their absentee ballots can find it in the Jury Assembly Room during early voting hours.

Voters can also bring completed absentee ballots to the Registrar’s Office through Election Day.

The mask mandate that has been in effect for the Enotah Judicial Circuit was lifted last week, so early voters will no longer be required to mask.

Early voting in the nonpartisan Blairsville Special Election to fill the unexpired term of Councilwoman Betty Easter will likewise continue each weekday through Oct. 29, and on Saturday, Oct. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at Blairsville City Hall.

Candidates are Teresa Moore, Kayla Phillips Hemphill and Frank Pack.

Through Friday of last week, only six of 299 total registered city voters had cast ballots in the municipal election, with zero requests for mail-in ballots by press time.

The last day to request an absentee ballot by mail in the city’s Special Election is Oct. 22, and City of Blairsville Election Day voting will take place on Nov. 2 inside City Hall from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 62 Blue Ridge Street.

Miniseries...from Page 1A

T.J. Haralson helped to expand Blairsville in the 1800s, as he was one of Union County’s pioneer builders and a local protector during the Civil War period.

Bill Rahn is the Hiwassee-based owner, producer and director of Tri-Rahn Pictures, which has filmed other projects in the area using local talent. He hosted the Oct. 14 event to give people details on the miniseries, including how they can get involved in the production.

Sign-up sheets included the chance to be a cast member, production assistant, hair and makeup, wardrobe, script supervisor, grip team, lighting, camera department, set design, props, locations, transportation, drivers, catering, cast support, meals, housing and motorhomes for traveling.

Rahn, who is already an accredited producer of one series, “The Hatfields and McCoys,” and the movie “Oro Arrowhead,” hopes to accomplish this new project to be something even bigger than a miniseries.

“We have a lot of information here to possibly make this two or three seasons rather than just five episodes,” Rahn said. “And we also have this vision of being able to turn this into a school curriculum for students to watch this and study from it to learn the history of Union County inside their very own history classroom.”

“(This) could involve tests, field trips and other creative activities that could help spark the interest in learning about the heritage of the community where they have their roots, all with appropriate funding of course.”

Added Rahn, “The history of Blairsville means different things to different people, and our mission is to be as true to life, according to what information we have, and be inclusive as much as we can, and that is why we are developing this project.”

“We want this to be more than just a series of facts and figures, but an exciting drama that helps people feel the passion and discouragements

that were a part of everyday life in and around Union County during this era.”

Rahn is planning an investors’ meeting for anyone who is interested in getting involved with this project, though event particulars were still being decided upon at press time.

“Telling the story of historic Blairsville is a major responsibility,” Rahn said. “and having the proper funding and support from those who are leaders in the community is critical, and this miniseries project is endorsed by Union County and the Chamber of Commerce.”

The upcoming meeting will provide details on budget options, return on investment, distribution, incorporation, and impact on the county and future benefits.

To RSVP or request additional information, email brahn@tri-rahnpictures.com.

More info can also be found on “The Secret Legends of Blairsville - Mini-Series” Facebook page.

Interested in applying for a Habitat for Humanity home?



The next house by Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties, Inc. will be located on Gumlog Road in Towns County.

Here’s some basic information about being a Habitat Homeowner:

The homeowners must have lived in Union or Towns Counties for 2 years, or worked in Union or Towns Counties for 4 years. They must meet income requirements, pass a background check, have a reasonable credit score, and the family must contribute 350 hours of “Sweat Equity,” that is, work on either their home, in the ReStore, or with another Habitat Project. There is a small down payment required.

Anyone who is interested in applying MUST attend one of the four upcoming orientation sessions:

Nov. 6 @ 10 a.m. and Nov. 9 @ 7 p.m. at the Towns County Civic Center, 48 River Street, Hiwassee, GA 30546

Nov. 11 @ 7 p.m. and Nov. 13 @ 10 a.m. at First Baptist Church, 296 Blue Ridge Street, Blairsville, GA 30512

Habitat people will be present at the orientations to explain everything and generally help participants with any

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Orientation

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Sat. Nov. 6th @10AM
Tues. Nov. 9th @7PM

Hiwassee Civic Center
48 River St. Hiwassee,
GA 30546

Blairsville

Thurs. Nov 11th, @7PM
Sat. Nov,13th @10AM

First Baptist Church
296 Blue Ridge St. Blairsville,
GA 30512

Children welcome at orientation

questions they may have.

Please call the Habitat Office at 706-745-7101 or email us at development@townsunionhabitat.org to be put on the list for one of the

orientations.

The Habitat Mission is: Putting God’s love in action. We envision a world where “everyone has a decent place to live.” NT(0x20Z6)CA

Plane Crash...from Page 1A

Collins is from Islamorada, Florida, and owns a residence in Morganton that he purchased with his wife Kym in July 2018. The couple had been staying at their Morganton home since the weather turned warmer earlier this year.

The Florida Keys Free Press described Collins as a "longtime fishing guide," saying he was "a former member of the South Florida Water Management District governing board and former commodore of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association."

On the morning of the crash, Collins had just taken off from the Blairsville Municipal Airport on what was supposed to be a routine business trip to Florida when the accident occurred, right around 8:17 a.m., about 2 miles north of the airport, per the Union County Sheriff's Office.

The pilot was known locally as a seasoned flier who regularly flew the same pattern — east from Runway 8 before making a 270-degree turn to the south. He had even been out the day before the crash to practice the flight path with no issues, when he also gassed up before going home.

Taking off from Runway 8 allows for a slightly downhill takeoff and more time to clear mountainous terrain than departing to the west on Runway 26, which is likely why Collins preferred this pattern, according to Firebaugh.

Collins showed up at the airport around 7 a.m. that foggy morning, having planned to leave more than an hour prior to his eventual departure time, though he ended up waiting until about 8:15 before taking off to allow for greater visibility after sunrise.

He was in the air for roughly two minutes, Firebaugh said, flying lower and faster than he usually flew during his initial climb on that particular traffic pattern, and he never reached out to the airport via radio to report any sort of difficulties prior to the crash.

Firebaugh said Collins had a hangar here, was well liked by his fellow local flight enthusiasts, and had earned an instrument-rating as a pilot, meaning he had extensive training and experience operating his aircraft under low visibility conditions that



Multiple agencies responded to the Oct. 13 crash, which is being federally investigated by the NTSB. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

require flying solely by use of instrumentation.

Such instrument-only conditions include nighttime flying, inclement weather and other low visibility situations, like heavy fog, which blanketed the North Georgia Mountains the morning Collins' plane went down.

Multiple witnesses reported hearing the crash, including a homebuilder inside The Grove at Highland Park who was working outside at the time, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The homebuilder said the plane flew directly over his position, and though it was too foggy for him to see the accident, he heard the plane's engine sputtering before it impacted several trees and then the bank of a nearby cove on Lake Nottely, according to the Sheriff's Office.

E-911 Dispatch received a call at 8:17 a.m., and first responders arrived on scene around 8:30 a.m., setting up a perimeter around the crash and confirming the death of the pilot.

Responding to the accident were Union County 911, Fire, Union General EMS, Sheriff's Office, Coroner's Office, Blairsville Police Department, Department of Natural Resources, Tennessee Valley Authority, Blairsville Airport, Union County Government and NTSB.

Collins had owned the Piper airplane since at least

2007, when the Federal Aviation Administration issued him a registration certificate for his N-Number, N9126P. The fixed-wing single engine aircraft was manufactured in 1966.

This same airplane was involved in a March 2008 accident at Palm Beach International Airport that resulted in structural damage to the bulkhead.

"The pilot stated that he was cleared to land on runway 27 and he did not use the checklist or visually ensure that the landing gear was down," according to the 2008 NTSB report. "He made a wrong turn and landed gear up on runway 31."

Continuing, "The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to follow the checklist resulting in a gear up landing."

On Oct. 3, an airplane crashed near Andrews, North Carolina, killing the pilot and his wife. It was a new airplane purchase, and the pilot had stopped by the Western Carolina Regional Airport for fuel before taking off in low visibility conditions and crashing into a mountain. The NTSB is investigating this accident as well.

The last Union County fatal plane crash occurred on Dec. 19, 2018, resulting in the deaths of Robert Atkinson, Michelle Seay and Renea Greiner, and the severe injury

of Brittany Thomas Whitener, who miraculously survived the accident.

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Morris Family...from Page 1A

Miraculously, no one was seriously injured or killed in the blast, which members of the family have attributed to divine intervention.

However, because her home insurance was suspended at the time of the explosion while the house was being renovated, the accident left Morris and her family displaced and lacking the resources to rebuild. So, Morris appealed to the community for support.

On Saturday, Oct. 16, her long-time neighbors, Frank and Kim Alexander, owners of Trackrock Campgrounds,

hosted a fundraising event at their property to help Angela and her kids rebuild.

Kim and coworker Mary Henderson solicited donations from businesses in Blairsville and all over Union County for items to place in both silent and live auctions, as well as raffles. Donations for the auctions came from friends, neighbors, and well-wishers, too.

Campground patrons jumped in to help, many of whom participated in the auction and raffles. The live auction was voluntarily conducted by campground

patron Sammy Haupt, who is a professional auctioneer from Cochran, Georgia.

Hamburgers and hot dogs cooked over a charcoal fire, coleslaw, sweet tea, and spring water from the Alexanders' well rounded out the activities, with the refreshments being donated by Foodland Grocery in Blairsville.

Many other businesses, too numerous to list, donated an amazing amount of auction items, and Morris said she never expected anything like what people have come together to do for her and her kids.

"I want to thank the Alexanders and surrounding community for their outpouring



Auctioneer and Trackrock Campgrounds guest Sammy Haupt volunteered his services to run the live auction at Saturday's Morris Family benefit. Photo by Mark Smith

Sorghum Festival...from Page 1A



The Collins Family of Blairsville performed a lively set at the 52nd Annual Sorghum Festival on Oct. 16. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

thin trying to manage vendors and other executive duties.

Explaining further, Enotah CASA Executive Director Della Lago said the community members who had run the festival for over 50 years "got to a point where their group became small, and they just were not able to sustain the amount of volunteers it would take to put this on again."

Not wanting the tradition of the Sorghum Festival to be lost, these festival forebears ultimately contacted Enotah CASA for support after COVID-19 shut down 2020's festival season – a first in the history of the Sorghum Festival.

"We got the opportunity to say, 'Look, we'll put it on, we'll do it,'" Lago said. "It was kind of last minute, and we are so proud of the people in this community who have said, 'We're going to help you do this. We're going to make sure this happens for Blairsville.' This is such an important event that we need it to happen."

Plans for future festivals include bringing back the annual parade around the town square and, when safety regulations allow, reviving the

popular squaredancing events.

The musical line-up for Saturday included the local Pressley Girls from Brasstown, North Carolina. The 25-year-old twins, Corie and Katie, are fourth-generation musicians and specialize in traditional Appalachian music.

Their mother Tipper Pressley and uncle Paul Wilson estimate that the girls have been performing professionally for about 15 years.

"We've probably been singing since we could talk," Katie remarked. "But then we picked up instruments when we were young teens."

This was the girls' first performance at the Sorghum Festival, and they hope to return, as it "feels better" performing close to home where there are more connections socially and culturally.

In fact, the Pressley sisters' grandfather was involved in sorghum production, and Tipper added that the family had grown up on stories about the old ways of making syrup and its role in mountain life.

While some families of old made their livings on music or sorghum, others turned to alcohol. Frank the Moonshiner

returned to his usual festival haunt beside the river, offering educational demonstrations in front of his still's layout.

Metal bits and bobs essential to creating the historical mountain drink decorated the park ground as, only a few feet away in a broad tent, Frank's family sold various flavors of moonshine jelly.

As for the games, despite having been scheduled for 9:30 a.m., the Biskit Eatin' Contest instead started at noon on Saturday. Volunteers were sparse, but eventually seven young contestants rose to the challenge.

The champion, 17-year-old Parker Grisham, said "peer pressure" drove him to take part in the competition. On trembling knees and with a rolling stomach, Grisham said he slightly regretted his decision, but he still took home a pint of sweet sorghum syrup – and bragging rights – for his victory.

People can go ahead and mark their calendars for the 53rd Annual Blairsville Sorghum Festival, to take place the second and third weekends in October 2022.



Action Dogs was a popular attraction during the 2021 Sorghum Festival. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Second Annual Ferst Concert for Childhood Literacy Thursday, November 4th at UCS Fine Arts Center

Make plans now for the music event of the year in Blairsville! November 4th at 7 at the UCS Fine Arts Center, recording artist, songwriter, producer, filmmaker, publisher and award-winning author Andrew Peterson will be performing.

Tickets are available on eventbrite.com for \$36 which is the amount needed to provide a free book every month to any registered child in Union County ages birth to five years and helps to promote literacy through early childhood reading.

Currently 350 children in Union County are receiving a free book each month. Through the support of Union General Hospital's Labor/Delivery staff which provides registration forms to parents as their babies are born, we are reaching more and more children.

As the Ferst Readers of Union County Childhood Literacy Program continues to grow, we are asking the community to support us in providing this opportunity for children to get an early start in learning and to be more successful in school.

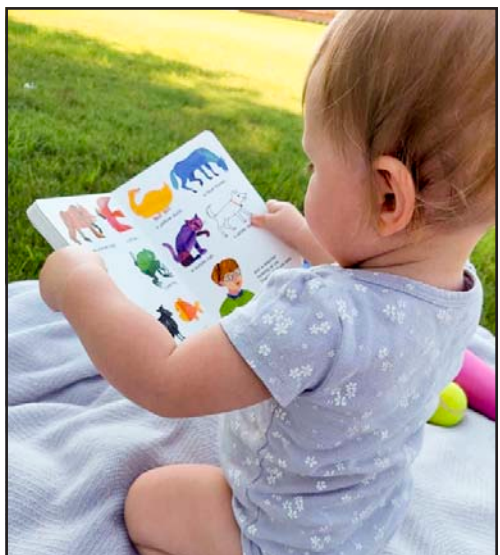
You can help by:

- 1) Purchasing tickets for the Concert on Nov. 4th.
- 2) Purchasing a sponsorship for the Concert as follows: \$500 = 4 free tickets, Verbal Recognition, Big Screen & Program Advertising; \$100 = Big Screen & Program Advertising.
- 3) Making a donation. All sponsorships and donations are tax deductible and checks should be made payable to Ferst Readers of Union County and mailed to P.O. Box 2743, Blairsville, GA 30514.

For more information, contact Martha Davenport at 706-897-0045 or Janice Cochran at 706-897-1259.



Andrew Peterson



Enjoying a good book from Ferst Readers!

of love and support," Morris said through tears of joy. "My family is truly blessed to be surrounded by old-fashioned 'neighbors.' We have felt very loved and cared for."

Frank Alexander said he and his wife, and even Trackrock campers and neighbors, only did what anyone else would do for a neighbor and friend in dire straits.

"Other than that, this isn't about me or the campground – it's about Angela and her family," Alexander said.

Henderson estimated that about 75 people showed up for the event on Saturday,

which raised over \$5,000 for the Angela Morris Rebuild Fund. About half the people were Trackrock Campgrounds campers and half were friends, neighbors, and well-wishers from the community.

"A special thanks to Sammy and Brenda Haupt, and Wayne Lee for facilitating the live auction, and to our Trackrock workers and campers who contributed their time and donated merchandise to our yard sale and auctions," said Frank and Kim.

For donation information, call Trackrock Campgrounds at 706-745-2420.

Another significant recent community contribution came from Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties Inc., which donated the use of a camper large enough to house the six people displaced in the blast.

People may also contribute by searching gofundme.com for the fundraiser titled "Help my mom and siblings rebuild!" by Mary Barnard, Morris' eldest daughter. By press time, this fundraiser had netted \$10,180.

Further, donors may make deposits to the "Angela Morris Rebuild Fund" at United Community Bank.