

UCSO...from Page 1A



UCSO investigators seized \$15,000 in controlled substances, 14 firearms, roughly \$14,000 in cash and more in a recent drug bust. Photo/Submitted

are sold legally as recreational products, most featuring advertising suggesting an appeal to children, such as popular cartoon characters, smiling pot leaves, and "Buttafingazzz" chocolate bar branding.

These illegally imported TCH products can be a lucrative black-market business, with people buying them legally out West in bulk for about \$10 per cartridge, for example, and turning around and selling them for \$40-\$60 apiece here, Narcotics Lt. Tyler Miller said.

Methamphetamine is still the No. 1 drug problem in Union County, but Miller said such marijuana-derived products with high THC concentrations are turning up at an increasing rate, though most local distribution sources appear to consist of small-time operators.

Taken into custody were Sundance Trey Bischof, 20; his mother Ann Boutwell Gunn, 46; and stepfather Timothy Alan Gunn, 39, all of 70 Union Drive; as well as co-conspirator David Austin Otwell, 19, of Tucker.

Bischof has been charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, two counts sale of marijuana, four counts sale of a controlled

substance, six counts possession of a controlled substance, possession of a firearm during commission of a crime, and possession of less than 1 ounce of marijuana.

Timothy and Ann Gunn have each been charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, five counts possession of a controlled substance, and possession of a firearm during commission

of a crime.

Otwell has been charged with possession of a firearm during commission of a crime and possession of a controlled substance.

The above individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Once the case has been adjudicated, the drugs in the case will be destroyed.

"This is a very substantial

seizure dollar wise, and all the result of someone pushing illegal and dangerous drugs in our county," Sheriff Mack Mason said. "As always, contact our narcotics officers or myself personally if you suspect illegal drug activity in your neighborhood. You can rest assured we will investigate, and you can remain anonymous."

BPD Flagpole...from Page 1A



Five patriots saying the Pledge of Allegiance after the inaugural raising of the new flag at the Blairsville Police Department. Not pictured: Mayor Conley. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

missing – a flagpole.

And that's how the donation came to be. Brad had been keeping an eye on the new police building, waiting for a flagpole to go up. There's always been one just next door at City Hall where the Police Department used to be headquartered, but not at the new station.

Having retired in 2009 as a lieutenant from the Fairfield Fire Department in Connecticut after 32 years on the job, Brad had grown accustomed in his past career to seeing flags outside of all municipal buildings.

Throughout his years of service, during which time he served as a first responder at Ground Zero on 9/11, he and his fellow firefighters raised and lowered the flag outside of his own firehouse each day.

These were the memories that prompted thoughts of a flagpole donation as he drove by the new Blairsville Police Department.

Brad discussed the idea first with his wife Jenny, herself an Army veteran, and she immediately went all-in on the idea. Next, he approached the Police Department, which said it would graciously accept the donation.

"We're blessed to live here, and we're blessed to have the civil servants that we have," Brad said. "Between the police and the fire service, the ambulance guys – those folks are all very dedicated."

"Being a firefighter for such a long time, I worked alongside cops all the time. We just have a great respect for what they do, especially at this time with as much difficulty

that's going on (around the country)."

Noting the high level of patriotism in Union and surrounding counties, Jenny said the donation was only fitting: "We wanted our local Police Department to be able to fly the flag high."

After getting the thumbs-up from Blairsville Police, Brad and Jenny contacted their friend Billy of Mountain Flagpoles, who had installed the flagpole in their own yard, and Brad and Billy went to the Police Department to find the perfect spot to plant the pole.

They decided that right next to the department sign out front would give the flag the best possible positioning. Being moved by the project, Billy asked Brad if he would allow him to go halves on the donation, and he installed the pole last week.

Billy started his flagpole-installing business about four years ago to realize his desire to see more flags flying in this area and to give back to his community and country.

He didn't serve in the Armed Forces, but he came up during the Vietnam Era, and Billy is especially appreciative of veterans and the patriotic nature of North Georgia Mountain residents.

"We have a lot to be thankful for – I personally have a lot to be thankful for – and this was a way just to make a small contribution paying back," Billy said, noting that the flag is a symbol binding all Americans.

"What makes America great is our freedom, the fact that we have our trials and tribulations and disagreements,

but we always come back together as one united nation," he said. "We're in a critical position right now, and it's time for patriots to stand up and attest to their support and faith in this country."

The telescoping flagpole features solar-powered LED lighting to illuminate the flag at night, can fly two flags at once, and easily transitions to flying at half-staff. And Chief Baxter could not be happier with the donation.

"It sets the building off and is just beautiful," Baxter said of the new pole and flag. "There's not a day goes by where somebody doesn't come up and tell us multiple times how much they appreciate us. We live in a pro-law enforcement community, and they're very supportive of law enforcement here."

"Patriotism and law enforcement – by any means, we're not the Armed Forces, but a lot of times, I think people look at us as a guardian just like the Armed Forces. We all appreciate that."

The donation by the Shermans and Mountain Flagpoles is yet another example of the community rallying around the Police Department, exhibited also in the Sept. 5 Rubber Duck Derby, in which individuals and businesses helped the police raise \$17,000 for Shop with a Cop for Christmas.

For more information on the Shermans' business, visit <https://safeguardlockandvault.com>. To inquire about a pole installation from the Made in USA-only Mountain Flagpoles, call 706-804-0949.



Jenny Sherman looks on as her husband Brad and Billy Toups attach Old Glory to the flagpole the trio donated last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard