

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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November 8, 2017

School, VSOs to host Veterans Day programs Nov. 10

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

American veterans know better than anyone on earth that freedom isn't free. And since talk is cheap, they decided as young men and women to put everything on the line to safeguard the freedoms of this great nation. Many of these brave Americans paid the ultimate price for freedom by dying at the hands of enemy combatants or by other means in service to their country. For the millions of veterans now leading civilian lives, it's not too late to say, often and humbly, "Thank you for your service." That's what the Union County High School does

every year with its Veterans Day Ceremony, in recognition of the Veterans Day holiday. Everyone in the community is encouraged to attend the Nov. 10 ceremony, especially veterans and their families, as the event is meant to promote patriotism and veteran awareness all throughout the county and school system. The student-run service will take place inside Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium at 10 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 10, the day before Veterans Day, with parking adjacent to the football field at the Union County Elementary School. High school seniors will assume responsibility for conducting a majority of the ceremony, including giving

the invocation for the event, offering opening remarks, delivering a special tribute to veterans, and leading a Quilts of Valor ceremony for three veterans during the program. Students and staff districtwide will be in attendance for the Veterans Day program, and UCHS seniors involved in running the ceremony will be Madelyn Hood, Emmi Schakat, Coleson Daniels, Hunter Nix, Adrian Shaw and Buddy Viera. High school and middle school band and chorus classes will perform patriotic music during the ceremony, and the Future Farmers of America, BETA Club and Kelly Helton's Sign Language class will all play their parts, too. See Veterans, Page 3A



Army veteran Chuck Honaker in Iraq circa 2003. Honaker will emcee the 2017 Veterans Day Luncheon at First United Methodist Church.

Safety concerns bring changes to GA 515 entrance at Walmart

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Georgia Department of Transportation has marked out a right-turn only lane using orange road barrels at the Georgia 515 exit of the Blairsville Walmart. These barrels effectively stop people from making a left out of Walmart and across the four-lane, all in the name of maximizing safety by minimizing the directions of traffic drivers must pay attention to. Fortunately, the large plastic barrels are only temporary, as GDOT will be working in the coming weeks on several big changes in that area. Union County Sole



A view of the new right-turn only out of the Blairsville Walmart at Georgia 515. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

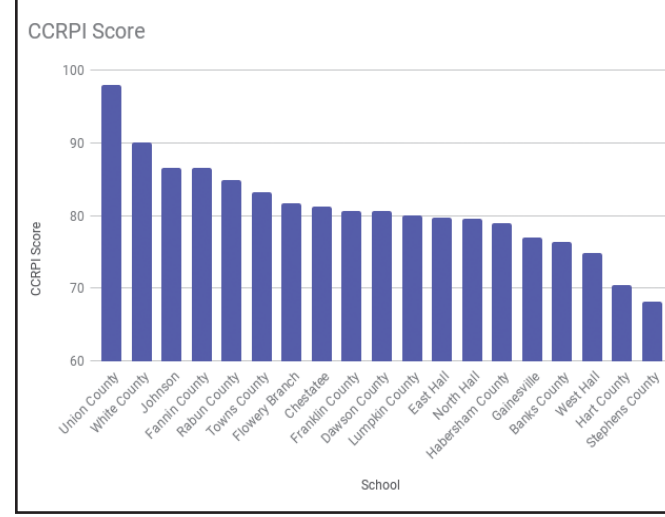
Commissioner Lamar Paris said he is hoping that GDOT can finish the project by the end of the year, though the construction schedule will rely on weather and the coordination

of multiple crews for the department of transportation, which is perpetually busy around the state. These changes come on See Walmart, Page 8A

Union County School District, UCHS are No. 1 in CCRPI

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

How do you improve when you're already No. 1? That's easy - you outdo yourself. For the second year in a row, both the Union County School District and Union County High School have achieved the rank of No. 1 in CCRPI scores among the 15 school systems in the Pioneer RESA. This means that, for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, the Union County School District as a whole outperformed all other school districts in the Pioneer RESA with the College and Career Ready Performance Index, and the high school did



The high school earned its spot among the best schools in the state with a CCRPI score of 98, an improvement over its already outstanding CCRPI score of 96.7 from the See CCRPI, Page 7A

Blairsville Cruisers open up new clubhouse on Murphy Highway



The Blairsville Cruisers with the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce for the Oct. 20 ribbon cutting at the Cruisers' new clubhouse on Murphy Highway. Photo/Lily Avery

doors to the group's brand new clubhouse for an official ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, Oct. 30. Located on Murphy

Highway beside Sweet Spot, the parking lot was lined with classic cars on Monday morning with club members and interested

See Cruisers, Page 2A

Community celebrates Halloween together in downtown Blairsville

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

More than 2,000 people converged on the Downtown Blairsville Square on Halloween for an evening filled with fun and sugar. Candy flowed freely that mild fall evening, thanks to 70 vendor tables that lined the corners of the square and encircled the Historic Union County Courthouse. The combined efforts of business owners, their employees, churches, civic organizations, student groups and others culminated in the biggest Hometown Halloween yet, in terms of both attendance and vendor participation. Darren Harper, program manager of the Blairsville



The 2017 Hometown Halloween on the Square was a huge, spooky success. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Downtown Development Authority, organized the event, and he was thrilled with the 2017 turnout. Despite minor electrical

problems earlier in the evening - ghosts in the machines? - Harper and a few helpers successfully revamped the See Halloween, Page 2A

Junior Firefighters are fired up for safety

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The future of Union County firefighting is in capable hands thanks to the Junior Firefighter Program, brand new to the county. Union County Fire Chief David Dyer and Lt. David Ueltzen have teamed up to kickstart the volunteer unit, and already, they've recruited 12 young men and women who have been eagerly learning all about fire safety and the department. Previously, the chief had included the Junior Firefighter program in the fire department's most recent strategic plan, and he'd hoped to start it up in the next year or two. He and Ueltzen, who heads the volunteer youth program, decided to begin the Junior Firefighters early, however, after considering the tremendous need



The first group of Union County Fire Department Junior Firefighters.

for more volunteers both now and in the future. Of course, the fire

department is always recruiting volunteers to perform life-saving duties within their own communities, but the Junior

Firefighters are an effective way to build a feeder program of See Firefighters, Page 3A

National Firewise reps recognize mountain communities

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

As so many North Georgia came to understand last fall, wildfire is not a matter of if, but when. And just as people living on the coast must prepare for the eventuality of hurricanes, so must those in the mountains prepare for wildfire. That's where Frank Riley comes in. Riley is the executive director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council, and he's kept busy for nearly a decade building a nationally recognized Firewise program out of Towns County.



Tom Welle of the National Firewise Association. Photo/Shawn Jarrard To date, the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition - led by community See Firewise, Page 3A

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PANTHERS
Basketball
Tuesday, November 14th
@ Hayesville, NC
5 and 6:30 PM

Blairsville Special Election Results will be available at www.nganews.com following the election and in the Nov. 15 edition of the North Georgia News

FFA Annual Fruit Sale
See page 7A