

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

April 30, 2014

## 4-H Shotgun team heads to state

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Union County 4-H brought 33 shooters to the District Shotgun Meet off Airport Road.

The group was the largest contingent at the meet. And yes, all 33 shooters are going to state on May 10 at Rock Eagle.

Union County hosted the District Shotgun Meet for the third consecutive year, and 124 shooters from Pickens, Barrow, Rabun, Oglethorpe and Union counties lined up their sites as they attempted to make it to Eatonton for the state meet.

The qualifying process takes place throughout all of Georgia on the same day," said Gene Margelli, one of the shooting coaches for Union County 4-H.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris welcomed the crowd of almost 400 and surprised the



entire audience with a new banner that identified the new 4-H and Union County shooting sports complex that will include BB gun, archery and shot gun. Then, the shooting

begin. Union County 4-H Junior Squad 1 included Patrick Colwell, Emily Rankin, Kanon Hemphill, Tara McCann, Jacob McClure, Dakota Havard,

and Reese Patterson. This team finished second in the District Shotgun Meet, scoring 112, Margelli

See *Shotgun*, 3A

## State approves Union's charter school status

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The State Board of Education has approved Union County Schools for Charter School Status, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams said.

"We were approved by the State Board of Education and will begin operation as a Charter System on July 1," Dr. Williams said. "Aside from the initiatives indicated, the focus is placed on local governance through School Governance Teams."

"The Union County Board of Education will continue to operate as they do now, but we will be adding an additional layer to ensure we continue to move our schools and students in the right direction," Dr. Williams said.

The school district will receive increased flexibility through state waivers, Dr.



Dr. Jeremy Williams

Williams said.

"The four foundational pillars of this initiative include flexible service models, integrated STEM partnerships, increased post-secondary opportunities and global engagement through Portuguese Language," Dr. Williams said.

While all pillars are currently being implemented in

See *Charter*, 3A

## Fine Arts Center construction begins



By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Schools broke ground on the new Fine Arts Center expected to open

at school year of the 2015-16 school year.

"This has been a long time coming," said Union County Board of Education Chairman Gary Davenport.

"I want to thank everyone for supporting the Fine Arts. We've been on this for several years. We passed the E-SPLOST (Education Special Purpose

See *Groundbreaking*, 3A

## More than 250 eat trout at Meeks

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

They had a feast at Meeks Park on Friday.

Mountain trout, baked beans, coleslaw, potato salad, mountain cornbread, hot dogs for those not accustomed to trout, and all kinds of sweet treats.

What was the occasion? The 10th Annual Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition Trout Dinner and it attracted more than 250 people.

The food wasn't free. The event serves as a fundraiser for the Coalition.

The event also brings together residents from the entire watershed.

The upper Hiwassee River watershed boundary includes almost all of a four-county area, Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina and Towns and Union



counties in North Georgia.

There were no speeches by politicians, in fact, the only time those said politicians

opened their mouths, it was to insert a fork or spoonful of

See *Watershed*, 6A

## Union observes Confederate Memorial Day

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County paid its respects to those who laid down their lives for the Confederacy during the bloodiest conflict in United States history, the U.S. Civil War.

Roughly 260,000 young men gave all for the stars and bars, while another 137,000-plus were wounded during the 4 years, 3 weeks, and 6 days that tore our nation to pieces, and forever known as the War Between the States.

Approximately 2 percent of the population, an estimated 620,000 men, lost their lives during the great battles.

Taken as a percentage of today's population, the death toll would have risen to almost 6 million men.

On Saturday morning, Union County's leaders, citizens, the Sons of Confeder-



ate Veterans, David W. Payne Camp No. 1633, and the

United Daughters of the Confederacy

See *Memorial*, 6A

## Home Show draws a crowd

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Since 1999 The Mountain Home Show has showcased local businesses, and builders.

The two-day show provides seminars and exhibitions, as well as providing educational tools and everything you need for a first-time home builder, a remodeling novice, to even something for housing industry professionals.

Whatever the case, all of the above were offered under one roof at North Georgia Technical College over the weekend.

Set up just outside the doors was the recognizable orange symbol of The Home

See *Home Show*, 6A



## Taylor resigns; \$48,643.53 bill unpaid

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The longtime chairman of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors has stepped down amid controversy.

Channel 2 Action News Investigative Reporter Richard Belcher is reporting that BRMEMC's legal counsel has confirmed that Terry Taylor is no longer on the utility company's Board of Directors.

The utility company's legal counsel also says that



Terry Taylor

Taylor, who is in control of a now defunct Taylor and Taylor Construction, will pay

the electric bill of \$48,643.53 that Taylor's construction firm owes in unpaid utility bills.

According to a copy of Taylor's bill, the last payment made to BRMEMC was March 22, 2012.

Taylor, one of two Towns County representatives on the BRMEMC Board of Directors, resigned last week, according to Belcher's report.

"A hand-written note on the bill left no doubt who owned the company with the

See *Unpaid*, 5A

## Union, Woody Gap schools leading state

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

There isn't a better time to be a Union County Panther or a Woody Gap Falcon.

Not only are Union County's student-athletes getting it done in every sport from August through May, they're excelling in the classroom year-round.

Union County High School was named a National Beta School of Distinction for its commitment and dedication to academics for preparing students for college and beyond.

It's not only the high school but all Union County and Woody Gap students, Kindergarten through 12th grade, who



John Hill

are gaining attention for achievements in the classroom.

Union County/Woody Gap Elementary School, Middle School, and High School were all at or near the top of the statewide

rankings of 180 school districts in the 2013 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCR-PI) scores that were released last week by the Georgia Department of Education.

"Our goal as a school system is to excel at all levels and within all disciplines," Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Stepe said. "That includes Academics, Vocational, Arts, and Athletics. The major contributing factor to our success is the culture in our district from students, parents, teachers, support personnel, administrators, and the community."

Union County/Woody Gap

See *Schools*, 6A

Vol. 105 No. 17 Inside

3 Sections, 26 Pages

Weather

Thu: Clouds Hi 65 Lo 43

Fri: Clouds Hi 65 Lo 43

Sat: Clouds Hi 67 Lo 42

Arrests 8A

Church 9A

Classified 2C

Opinion 4A

Legals 5C

Obits 11A

Sports 12A

# Early Voting...from Page 1A

---

## 4-H...from Page 1A

---

## Death...from Page 1A

---

## Prayer...from Page 1A

---

## Fair... continued from Page 1A

# Groundbreaking...from Page 1A

Local Option Sales Tax) for the previous five years, but the economy turning down is what kept us from being able to do this.”

After Union County voters approved a new E-SPLIST last year, construction can begin this spring for the Fine Arts Center.

The building is above the Union County High School front office, looking down upon Wendy's and Georgia 515. The brand new, state of the art building will be visible to those traveling both East and West on Georgia 515.

On hand at the groundbreaking were Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe, Assistant School Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Wil-

liams, Union County High School Principal John Hill, along with the five members of the Union County Board of Education.

“I am so glad that we're finally getting a Fine Arts Center here in Union County,” Chairman Davenport said. “I think it's going to really help our community. I know it's really going to help our school because it's going to have classrooms in it. It's just a big plus for this community and I'm proud of it. I just want to say ‘thank you’ to everybody.”

Also on hand at the groundbreaking were Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy

Williams, and Union County Development Authority Director Mitch Griggs.

“I want to thank those people from the community who have come out and supported us here today,” BOE member Julie Barton said. “Our Commissioner Lamar Paris, President of our Chamber of Commerce Cindy Williams, and Mitch Griggs from the Development Authority. This Fine Arts Center doesn't just recognize the school system, but it's for the whole community and the whole town.”

David Barton spoke briefly regarding what the arts mean to him. His oldest son, who was also a 6-foot, 4-inch basketball star, joined the drama department and went

on to play Prince Charming in the play Cinderella during his senior year.

“I never dreamed I would see my big old son up there singing, dancing, and kissing the girls on stage. It was a special time,” David Barton said. We don't know whose lives are going to be touched by this. I want to say as a citizen of Union County, to the administration, and to the school board, ‘I appreciate you folks.’”

Superintendent Steppe concurred with David Barton.

“This is about developing the different talents of the students,” Steppe said. “Every child should have the opportunity to develop their passions and talents, whatever that might be.”

# Shotgun...from Page 1A

Union County 4-H Senior Squad 1 included Buck Martin, Kolbe Nix, Brady Tanner, Hayden Smith, Austin Dyer, Matt Peney, and Blane Brown.

This team finished third in the District Shotgun Meet, scoring 117, Margelli said.

“All of our shooters qualified for state,” Margelli

said. Other Senior Shooters include Eric Perricone, Caitlyn Murphy, Knox Kiernan, Tyler Dyer, Chelsey Cook, Spencer Brundrett, Will Donaldson, Daniel Kumler, R.J. Brown, Haden Green, and Vanna Chambers. All are going to state.

Other Junior Shooters include Allie Kumler, Marc

Cecchi, Nate Brown, Andrew Walker, Angel Flater, Caleb Sanders, Elena Griggs, and Sam Cockerham. All are going to state.

“Our goal was to have as many 4-H students qualify for the State shoot that will take place at Rock Eagle near Eatonton, on May 10,” Margelli said. “In order to qualify our junior shooters (7th and

8th grade) must hit 16 targets out of 25.

Our seniors (9 thru 12 grade) must hit 20 out of 25,” he said. “We are very proud of all members of the Union County team as everyone qualified.”

# Charter...from Page 1A

some capacity, the charter will provide a consistent focus for the district, Dr. Williams said.

“As required by the charter, Union County Schools System will develop School Governance Teams for each school,” Dr. Williams said. “The purpose of these teams is to increase community engagement and decision making for the students of Union County.”

The search is on now

for forming School Governance Teams. A team will be formed for each school.

Each team will consist of seven voting members.

Two parents, and two teachers will be elected. Each school's principal will recommend two Community/Business members and one school employee that will be approved by the elected team members, Dr. Williams said. “The 2014-2015 school

year will consist of training and the teams will begin full implementation during the 2015-2016 school year,” Dr. Williams said. “Each staggered term is set for two years.”

“If you're interested in serving on a governance team, please visit the survey link ([www.surveymonkey.com/s/charter\\_governance](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/charter_governance)),” Dr. Williams said.

# Art show on Saturday at UCHS Gymnasium

The Union County Schools Spring Fine Arts Show will open to the public on Saturday, May 3rd in the Union County High School (UCHS) Gym.

Hours are 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., and admission is free. The show will include exhibits from the Union County Schools Fine Arts Department, grades K-12.

There will be something at the Art Show for everyone. Exhibits will range from Visual to Performing Arts to something new this year - exhibits from Union County High School Construction Classes. Exhibits from the Metals Class will also be included in the show.

Also new this year will be art exhibits from Woody Gap School. Coach Gary Butler, Woody Gap Construction Teacher, Grades 9-12, said, “I'm very excited for everyone to see the fine work the students of Woody Gap produce.”

UCHS art exhibits will range from painting to drawing, paper sculpting, ceramics, metals, and construction.

The Construction Class will be offering birdhouses, corn hole games, a nightstand, trebuchet, and small wood projects for display.

Exhibits from Woody Gap School will include wood working projects made by students in grades 9 - 12 this year.

“In my Shop Class I try to create projects that use art techniques,” Butler said. “Even the corn hole games we make have great art work done.”

The largest item in the

show will be an island that a student made for a customer to use in her kitchen.

Also, items that people bought at the Indian Summer Festival will be displayed, such as: apple baskets, wall shelves, a quilt rack, and wooden lanterns. There will also be a jewelry box made from three different wood materials.

Middle School exhibits include two and three dimensional works, charcoal renderings, paintings, mosaics, sculptures, metal tooling, and glasswork.

Primary School art will include: jewelry, self-portraits, puppets, weaving, cartooning,

charcoal landscapes, book-making, metal embossing, and Japanese sumi painting.

“The Spring Fine Arts show held each May is a wonderful way for teachers to showcase Union County students and their wonderful creative talents,” Sylvia Garner, Union County Middle School Art Teacher, and coordinator of the Art Show, said. “Our students are excited to show parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and friends what they have been learning in the arts classrooms this year. This is a very busy time of year, but we hope that you will all take a few minutes to visit this year's show and share our appreciation for what your children can do.”

As in the past, there will be a silent auction to benefit the UCHS Art Department. The auction will feature works by high school pottery and two-dimensional visual art students.

Works will include drawings, paintings, prints, pottery and sculpture. Hours for the silent auction are 10 a.m. until noon on Saturday, and the minimum bid for items is \$5.

All proceeds from the auction will be used to help buy materials and supplies for high school art classes.

Throughout the day, attendees will be entertained with videotaped performances of the UCHS Chorus. Come to the Union County High School Gym on Saturday and enjoy some fine art work made by our local talented art students.



# Home Show...from Page 1A

Depot – a tent promoting the free estimates that they are offering on any job.

Inside the air conditioned building was another familiar name among Union Countians, and that is Builders First Source, who were making their first appearance at the Mountain Home Show.

However, Builder's First Source General Manager Eric Sebring said that this wouldn't be the last time they set up shop at the annual event.

"This is our first year at

The Home Show and we plan on being here for years to come," Sebring said. "We've had a lot of activity with new people coming into our community wanting to build new homes or remodeling. In just a day and a half we've had multiple leads and a lot of people interested in building right now. We feel that the building industry is really taking a turn and is coming back here in Union County."

Show Organizer Richard MacCrea is also confident that a turnaround is already taking place.

He says that these shows contribute to and energize the housing and construction market in Union County and surrounding communities.

At this year's Home Show, approximately 32 businesses set up booths, an increase from 2013.

"Things are picking up," MacCrea said. "We have more exhibitors this year than we had last year. We're just trying to help the whole hous-

ing industry in this area get some work."

On Sunday, free seminars were presented by MacCrea and open to anyone in attendance.

The first one focused on how to remodel and get more for less cost.

The second one focused on how to save the most energy for the least cost. Patrick Construction presented a third seminar on saving energy.

David Lewis of North Georgia Outdoor Wood Furnaces in Blue Ridge is a veteran to The Mountain Home Show and has been to the last four.

He spoke about the importance of these events and the benefits they offer for local businesses.

"I've gotten returns as far as three years back from customers who picked up a brochure or something and they contacted us when they needed us," Lewis said. "I like this Home Show because it brings me into this particu-

lar area. I'm from Blue Ridge and this gets me some exposure over here. It gives people a chance to get to see my product and we get to talk to people."

Ronald Reagan once said that "a rising tide lifts all boats" and according to Sebring, that is the consensus among all of the exhibitors at The Mountain Home Show.

When the housing industry begins to gain steam, each one of these local businesses will reap the benefits, as will the economy as a whole. And that's the reason for the friendly atmosphere amongst everyone at this event.

"These shows are very important for name recognition and to commiserate with the other vendors here at the show," Sebring said. "We all try to help each other out. If they don't offer a certain product then we will help them out. Beyond the Home Show we work with each other to try and grow business here in Union County."

# Watershed...from Page 1A

food.

No, Friday was an opportunity to feast and enjoy the fellowship of those who help protect "God's" watershed.

"Water is about the most precious commodity we have," said John Kay, president of the Byron Herbert Reece Society. "The day is coming that a gallon of water will cost more than a gallon of gas. Anything we can do to make sure we have a water supply that is pure, and, suitable for human use, we better be supportive."

Blairsville's Bud Hill, a proactive member of the Coalition, said the Coalition was working hard to make sure the watershed was safe and protected in a manner it should be.

"People need to be aware of the protections for our waterways," Hill said. "The Coalition's mission is to protect the watershed, protect our valuable natural resource, and improving the stream bank buffers that filters the runoff that goes into our streams. They also reshape the water right of ways

to what they used to be."

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said the Coalition and its mission is important to the four-county watershed.

"A lot of people still don't know about the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, but they've been around since 1995," Paris said. "The interesting part is they work Towns and Union counties in Georgia and Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina."

"They've been real good to work with the county on stream protection, buffer protection, planting buffers, giving us advice on stream buffers, and they do that in all four counties," Paris said. "They also do a lot of work around our lakes, they do water quality testing, and give us an indication if there is a problem with our water quality."

"They are a real asset to all four counties in the watershed," Paris said.

Callie Moore, executive director of the Coalition, said the event was a rousing success.

"It was a great crowd," Moore said. "There were lots of people from all four counties in the watershed here tonight."

"This event really gives people from all over the watershed the opportunity to interact with one another," Moore said. "People came here to support the Watershed Coalition. Folks get to talk, get to know one another and they realize they all support the same ideals."

The major watersheds covered by the Coalition include Brasstown Creek, Valley River, Tusquitee Creek, Nottely River and Lake Nottely, Hiwassee River and Lake Chatuge in Clay County, NC and Towns County.

Over the past 10 years, the Coalition has brought \$6 million in grant funding into the upper Hiwassee River watershed.

More than 92 percent of these funds were spent for on-the-ground projects and programs to facilitate water quality and aquatic habitat improvements in areas where it has declined.

# Memorial...from Page 1A

federacy members met at the Union County War Memorial to honor Confederate Memorial Day.

Compatriot Pete White led the pledges, salutes, and charge with the Pledge to the American Flag, the Pledge to the State of Georgia Flag, the Salute to the Confederate Flag, and the Charge of Lt. General Stephen Dill Lee.

"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans we will commit the vindication of the Cause for which we fought," White read from Lt. Gen. Lee's charge. "To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate Soldier's good name, the Guardianship of our history, the emulation of our virtues, the perpetuation of these principles which you also cherish."

The United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a wreath at the Confederate Monument and the Sons of Confederate Veterans removed the Battle Flag from the monument.

Compatriot Scott Ledford then introduced House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison (R-Blairsville), who reflected on his days at Virginia Military Institution in Lexington, VA and how they paid tribute to Confederate generals Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee.

He also told of how

Confederate Memorial Day is older than the Memorial Day holiday.

"A fact that is often overlooked is that Confederate Memorial Day has actually been observed longer than the more well known, Memorial Day holiday," Rep. Allison said. "In 1868, Gen. John Logan, who was in charge of the Union's Civil War Veterans Fraternity, actually founded the Memorial Day Holiday, which is currently observed in May, and it was declared by his wife, that he had modeled the holiday after Confederate Memorial Day."

"The General was quoted as saying that 'it's not too late for the Union men of the nation to follow the example of the people in the South in perpetuating the memory of their friends who had died for the cause that they thought was just and right,'" Rep. Allison said.

Rep. Allison went on to point out that a staunch opponent of the Confederacy acknowledged the validity of the holiday and the importance of remembering their fallen friends and loved ones.

"My how times have changed," Rep. Allison said. "In the past 50 years, many people, including politicians, professors, and other intellectuals have chosen to sanitize the parts of history that they

don't like or they don't approve of. Choosing instead to rewrite history and overlook the sacrifices of so many of their ancestors."

"As I prepared this speech, I decided to focus on an activity that so many in our country fail to do, and have no concept of, and that is the act of remembrance," Allison said. "In discussing the word remembrance, I want to make three key points. First, remembrance requires action. Second, remembrance requires education. Finally, remembrance requires understanding."

The Sons of Confederate Veterans' Adjutant Harold Levi later presented Rep. Allison with a Certificate of Appreciation.

In Compatriot Ledford's closing remarks, he reminded everyone to remember the sacrifices of our young men and women in uniform, even if years later, their cause is deemed unjust.

Our disdain for the government should not be directed at its soldiers who must serve, whether we agree or disagree with our government's motives behind sending them into combat, Ledford said.

Camp Piper Richard Smith performed *Amazing Grace* before Chaplain Edward Massengale dismissed the ceremony with the Benediction.

# Schools...from Page 1A

overall score, grades 3rd through 12th, came in second in the state with a score of 90.1.

Union County/Woody Gap Middle School, grades 6th through 8th, finished atop the statewide rankings with a score of 92.5.

Union County/Woody Gap Primary and Elementary schools, Kindergarten through 5th grade, were fourth in the state with a score of 93.3.

Union County/Woody Gap High School was 14th in the state with a score of 82 to round out Union's No. 2 overall ranking.

"The CCRPI scores will continue to evolve as the expectations and assessments change," Assistant Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams said. "We do not know how the change in state assessments

next year will impact the district or state scores, but the move from all multiple choice assessments to a combination of open-ended responses, performance tasks, and multiple choice is a major transition for our students and our state."

CCRPI is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that will promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students. Georgia is currently in its second year of CCRPI, replacing the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

"It is far more than test scores," Dr. Williams said. "It factors in graduation rate, readiness for the next grade level, high school pathway completers, innovations, and more."

Also one of UCHS' clubs was recently nationally recognized.

According to National Beta Club's Chief Executive Officer Bob Bright, the national award speaks highly of Union County's commitment to academic rigor and illustrates their dedication to preparing students for college and career readiness.

UCHS Principal John Hill noted that more than 200 UCHS students qualify for Beta Club which requires students maintain a 93 average along with no disciplinary issues and a high attendance rate.

In a letter to Hill from Bright, "the students at UCHS understand the importance of these qualities and exemplify the Beta motto, 'Let Us Lead by Serving Others.'"