

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Class of 2015 bids UCHS farewell

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County High School history, the Class of 2015, on Friday, May 22, in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

The 169 students assembled to take part in the commencement exercises young men in purple and young women in white – as the stadium quickly filled with family and friends of graduates Friday night.

"Graduates, we stand here tonight on the precipice of the future," said Senior Class Secretary Madison Morlock during her welcome speech. "It is no longer a distant reality. It begins here, it begins



UCHS graduates head to their seats in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

now. The time has come for us to make our own mark on the world after reflecting on the many pillars of success and accomplishments made along this 13-year journey."

Abhyjit Kheepal of the School Governance Team highlighted the importance of support roles, as the community, family, friends, teachers and coaches have all attributed



Rachel Todd

to the successes and accomplishments of his graduating class.

"Most importantly, I would like to thank you, Class of 2015," said Kheepal. "We have laughed, matured and grown together. From

See UCHS Grads, Page 6A

## Cummings seeks EMC seat

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Mickey Cummings is tossing his hat into the ring.

Cummings will seek the Union County EMC board of directors' seat.

"I've had a number of people ask me to run for the EMC Board of Directors," Cummings said. "Folks cornered me in different places and asked me to run. I talked with my wife about it, and talked with some other folks about it. They said they thought it would be a good thing.

"So, I'm going to run," he said.

Cummings was raised during a time when television didn't have the influence that it has today. When he visited his Papa and Granny, the family



Mickey Cummings

turned the television off and spent evenings sitting around a pot-bellied stove listening to his Papa's tales about their family.

See Cummings, Page 2A

## Woody Gap Class of 2015 celebrates family

By North Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Woody Gap said goodbye to 11 graduates that are leaving the tight-knit family of Woody Gap Schools to follow their own path into the world and join another family, known as Woody Gap Alumni.

Woody Gap Co-Principals Sheila Tritt Collins and David Murphy verified that each of the outgoing seniors met the requirements for a diploma that was awarded to each graduate by Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe.

After the graduates took their seats at the south end of the Woody Gap Gymnasium, a prayer was led by outgoing senior Dakota Etheridge. Following the prayer, fellow graduate Eli Gooch led the near-capacity crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.



Woody Gap graduates gather for a group photo outside Woody Gap School on Saturday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Graduate Shelby Tumlin welcomed the audience to the 2015 graduation exercises.

"We are honored to share this moment with all of our family, friends, and mentors as we finish an important chapter

in our lives and prepare to start a new and exciting one," Tumlin said. "We truly appreciate everyone joining us today."

The Salutatory Address was given by the Class of 2015 Salutatorian Nina Sattler, who

plans on attending Kennesaw State University in the fall and pursue a major in New Media Arts. Sattler thanked her family and her friends' family for their guidance.

"Every single senior who gets their name called to get a diploma, has had someone behind them giving them help, love, and support along the way, whether it's a parent, a grandparent, or a teacher," Sattler said. "I don't know where I would be today without an amazing group of people behind me. I am truly blessed to have such wonderful family and friends."

Valedictorian Holly Harkins, who plans on attending the University of North Georgia to pursue a major in Biology, followed with the Valedictory Address.

"Today my fellow class- See Woody Gap Grads, Page 3A

## Relay For Life set for Saturday

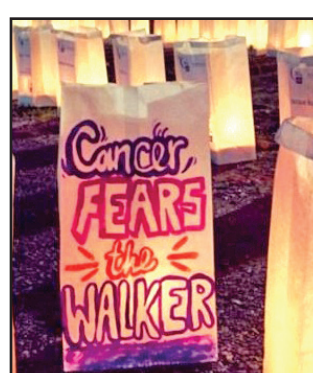
By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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The 2015 Union County Relay For Life is set for May 30 at 4 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market.

Events include a BBQ Cookoff, a Survivor's Picnic, as well as Opening Ceremonies, the Survivors Walk and the annual Carlton Shaw Bare Legs Contest.

"The schedule is set. The teams are ready. The Farmers Market will be the 2015 site for the 21st Annual American Cancer Society's Relay For Life here in Union County," event co-chair Allyson McGraw said.

"We have a shortened



version of our 21st Annual event so our volunteers, cancer survivors and caregivers, sponsors, and entertainers will be ready for our most jam-packed Relay For Life," added event co-chair Sue Up-

See Relay, Page 2A

## Arts & Crafts Festival thrives in 2015

By Mason Mitcham  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Historical Society and the Downtown Development Authority hosted the Annual Spring Arts and Crafts Festival, part of the annual Memorial Day festivities.

All weekend, the square was crowded with vendors, shoppers, and traffic.

"Every single one of the merchants said that they had record days, and that's what you want to hear," said Downtown Development Authority Director Darren Harper. "Because that means they're putting money back into the economy. When the



merchants are going full tilt, that helps everybody."

Harper explained that the Downtown Development Authority, or DDA, is the fuel of Blairsville's economic engine.

See Festival, Page 2A

## Memorial Day Parade celebrates Freedom

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Memorial Day serves as a reminder to Americans everywhere that freedom isn't free.

Hundreds of area residents turned out in force, cheering and waving the fabled Red, White and Blue flag as the annual Memorial Day Parade commenced on Saturday, May 23.

Attitudes among those gathered to witness the parade ranged from solemn to cheerful, as some remembered quietly the men and women who paid the ultimate price for their freedoms, and others celebrated the memories of those who died for their country.

Young and old alike, both civilians and veterans, toddlers to grandparents, watched proudly as the pa-



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason leads the Memorial Day Parade.

rade moved by, showcasing the passion of American remembrance.

"The parade shows that people love America, and they're standing up for principles, character and what we

stand for, and that's for God and country," said Stephen E. Woodbury, who attended the parade.

Woodbury is a disabled Vietnam veteran, having served in the conflict from

1967 to 1970. He moved to the South from Massachusetts with his family in 1995, before coming to Blairsville in 2012.

"We have the best country in the world, and may we stand strong in keeping it strong, and may we stand behind our troops and stand behind those who are in charge, and may we have victory, and victory for America," said Woodbury. "I would do it over again to serve my country, because they've done everything for me and I owe everything to them."

The parade, which has been running for about 15 years, featured more than 30 groups from the community in the form of businesses, civic groups and churches.

Classic cars and motorcycles rolled through town

See Parade, Page 6A

## Honaker: 'We are here to remember our fallen heroes'

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

A blue sky and a cool breeze greeted those who attended the Memorial Day Service at the Union County War Memorial on Saturday, May 23.

The ceremony to honor the brave men and women of American freedom who lost their lives while serving in the United States Armed Forces included the unveiling of an Afghanistan War Memorial.

"Memorial Day is important to me, and it is important to each of you as is evident by your presence here today," said Iraq War Veteran Chuck Honaker, the event's master of ceremonies. "To many, Memorial Day is the kickoff for summer and a reason to fire up the grill or catch a sail. Now, I've got nothing against any of those things, but it is imperative



Union County's most decorated veteran, Leon Davenport shares a moment with State Sen. Steve Gooch. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

that the true purpose not be overlooked.

"We are here to remember our fallen heroes, those men and women who believed in a cause greater than themselves. They believed that this cause was worth more

than their own lives and worthy of fighting for. That cause was freedom, liberty and the American way of life."

Honaker introduced keynote speaker Command Sergeant Major Arthur Joseph McCann III, who served in

U.S. Army Airborne, Ranger and Infantry units for more than 27 years.

McCann's combat tours include Operation Just Cause in Panama, the Gulf War, and he was the recipient of the Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars, the Soldier's Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.

He retired from active duty in 2010, when he came to Blairsville. Recently, McCann has been an active participant and organizer for the Veterans Day Ceremony presented by the Union County School System each year.

"Today, we stand here and recognize our military heroes who perished during time of war and conflict," said McCann. "We also honor those who returned wounded and those who are missing. Everyone here today remem-

See Service, Page 3A

Vol. 106 No. 22 Inside

2 Sections, 24 Pages

Weather

Thurs: Clouds Hi 83 Lo 55

Fri: Sunny Hi 81 Lo 57

Sat: Sunny Hi 81 Lo 61

Arrests 8A

Church 9A

Classifieds 3B

Opinion 4A

Legals 6B

Obits 10A

Sports 12A

8 0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 4 2

National Garden Club Week

June 8th -13th

May Meeting

May 28th

behind the Senior Center

See page 8A

Tool Box Bash

Dinner / Dance

Saturday, June 6th

Habitat for Humanity

Towns/Union Counties, Inc.

See page 11A

U.S. Forestry Junior and Senior FISHING RODEOS Information

See page 13A