

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

July 8, 2015

Boat parade captures the imagination of many

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Rain couldn't stop Nottely Marina's 19th Annual Fourth of July Boat Parade from being a rousing success on Saturday, as scores of people lined the shores to witness the patriotic procession.

Nine boats with wildly differing themes took home trophies that day, but only one wowed the judges enough to settle on the grand prize – and arch, it was a pirate ship.

"The first year, I was told nobody would show up," said Nottely Marina owner Carleen Doucette. "So, I'm in the first boat, going all the way to the dam that year, and here comes two sheriff's boats, yelling, 'Carleen, Carleen, you've got 75 boats be-



hind you.' I had blown them away, and we never know who is coming."

For those who decorate boats for the parade, theming is more about having fun than anything else.

Red, white and blue boats are certainly welcome,

though not a must, and the important thing to remember is to think outside the box and impress the judges – namely Carleen and the four generations of Doucettes living within her household – with originality and boatloads of energy.

"You can find some won-

derful ideas that you would never have thought of," said Doucette, looking back on past parades. "There's always somebody that outshines everybody else."

This year, the Pirate

See Parade, Page 2A

Miller convicted of murdering his daughter; sentenced to life

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

An 83-year-old Union County man has been convicted of murdering his daughter during a family dispute Sept. 1, 2013.

A jury of five men and seven women convicted Frank Raymond Miller on Thursday in Union County Superior Court.

Enotah Judicial Circuit Senior Superior Court Judge Murphy Miller sentenced Frank Miller to two life sentences with parole for one count malice murder, and one count felony murder. Judge Miller also sentenced Frank



Frank Miller

Miller to two 20-year sentences for two counts of aggravated assault; and two 10-year sentences for two counts

See Miller, Page 3A

Cummings gets warm send off

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Mickey Cummings retired from his longstanding role as a University of Georgia Cooperative Extension County Agent after 33 years of serving farmers, the community and youth through the Union County 4-H program on Tuesday, June 30.

Surrounded by family and friends, Cummings went out in style at a party thrown by his colleagues in the Union County Extension Office on Tuesday at the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center.

In the years approaching his retirement, Cummings said that people had started asking him if he was looking forward to the day.



Mickey Cummings gets a big hug from Eleanor Smith at his retirement supper at the Blairsville Civic Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

"I've been working for 33 years in Extension, and when I went to work, all those old-timers like I am, they always kept talking about

their retirement and how much they were looking forward to it," said Cummings to the more than 100 guests in attendance. "But I really haven't,

because it's something that I've feared, getting older. My boys aren't at home anymore, and I could just see myself sitting on the front porch doing nothing."

But thanks to a phone call from Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris several years ago, Cummings found his reason to look forward to retirement.

"When Lamar called and said, 'Mickey, are you interested in working in this Farmers Market' – of course I was," said Cummings. "I love to get out in the woods and do things, but you can't do that seven days a week. So, being able to get involved in that Farmers Market and the Canning Plant, it's some-

See Mick, Page 2A

Vestal indicted for killing his mother and her boyfriend

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A Union County Grand Jury has handed up a nine-count indictment against a 35-year-old Union County man on charges that include two counts malice murder and two counts felony murder, Union County Superior Court records show.

Cody Lee Vestal faces other charges that include two counts aggravated assault in violation of Georgia's Family Violence Act, two counts aggravated assault, and armed robbery, the latter for taking money from one of his victims at gunpoint.

The events leading to the deaths of Marilyn Laughlin, and Tony Poat began



Cody Lee Vestal

on March 14, court records show.

A plea for help from Vestal at Rhea Medical Center in Dayton, Tenn., led to the discovery of the bodies of his mother and her boyfriend on

See Vestal, Page 3A

Husband charged in June 20th shooting death of wife

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A 38-year-old Union County man has been charged with involuntary manslaughter in the shooting death of his 44-year-old wife, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Randall Charles Cone also faces charges of pointing a gun at another and reckless conduct, Union County Detective Sgt. Andrew Hammond said.

Cone was arrested June 30 on charges of involuntary manslaughter, pointing a gun at another and reckless conduct, Sgt. Hammond said.

Cone's arrest followed an extensive investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Cone is accused of shooting his wife Robin



Randall Cone

Denise Cone on Saturday, June 20.

"We got a 911 call saying a person had been shot at 736 Ed King Road," Sgt. Hammond said. "When I got there, Robin Cone, the victim had already been transported to Union General Hospital, where she died.

See Manslaughter, Page 3A

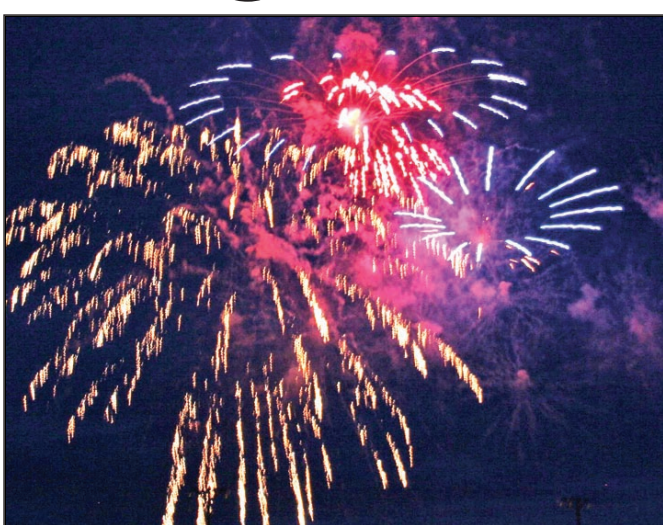
Meeks Park glows in the dark

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County celebrated Independence Day as countless communities do across the United States of America, by flying colors – literally and figuratively – and with plenty of sis-boom-bah.

Hours before the 9:30 p.m. start time for the annual Meeks Park community fireworks display, hundreds of residents from Union County and surrounding areas began to gather at the park, up and down Highway 515 and across the street from the big show at North Georgia Technical College.

"Just look at the skies," said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, relieved that the rain-clouds had, for the most part, tapered off. "That in itself is enough for excitement."



The show, put on by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by WoodmenLife – formerly Woodmen of the World until June 1 – featured the spectacular, bombarding finish that Union Countians

have come to expect.

For the past several years, the chamber has been selling \$10 raffle tickets for the chance to win a \$1,000 drawing, the proceeds of which go toward funding the fireworks.

"This is probably one of

my most favorite celebrations throughout the year, because I don't think that we have another event that draws the community out like this and brings everybody together to celebrate," said Chamber President Cindy Williams.

Something new this year was VIP parking offered by the chamber, which allowed those who got in on the opportunity early enough to purchase one of 25 parking spaces for the annual event in the upper parking lot, close to the fireworks.

Each VIP spot gets five food tickets, and the spaces are renewable each year, with a waiting list for spaces that become available should someone decide not to renew year after year.

But Meeks Park isn't the only prime location from

See Meeks, Page 6A

More than 100 break bread with Allegheny Lodge 114

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

More than 100 patrons of the Allegheny Lodge No. 114 F&AM's Big Country Breakfast came hungry and left full on Saturday, July 4.

The \$6 breakfast offered plenty of pancakes high, with pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, grits, and a choice of coffee, tea or milk.

But for Dagmar Taylor, it was all about the biscuits, which weren't originally advertised as part of the breakfast.

"My family is Southern, period, so I get spoiled with a lot of good biscuits, but these are great – they're not just good, they're great," said Taylor of Blairsville, who ate with her family. "They're fluffy, light. They have a better flavor to them. Some of the biscuits you taste, some-



times they just taste floury or doughy inside, so these were great."

All the fine food and fixings gave patrons the much needed energy for the rest of the Fourth of July festivities.

See Lodge, Page 6A

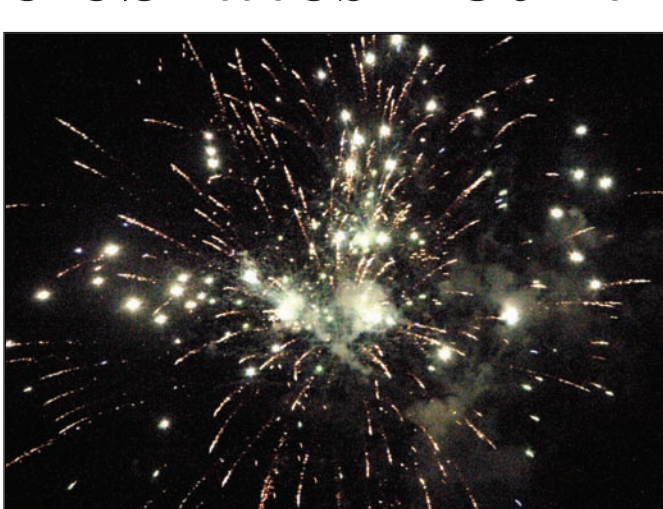
Suches celebrates Fourth in style

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Mother Nature showed her patriotic side last weekend in the Valley Above the Clouds when the gray skies parted on Saturday thunderstorm and an evening downshower was delayed long enough to keep the fireworks moisture-free, allowing them to culminate Suches' yearly Fourth of July party, that continues to live up to, and exceed its reputation as the place to be as the sun goes down on America's birthday.

Around 9:45 p.m., the crowd was on the edge of their seats, or blankets, when a local, young singer, 9-year-old Neely Webster gave a powerful, and moving rendition of the National Anthem.

The annual fireworks



display and the small town USA, family-like atmosphere has far exceeded its humble origins that began with a few friends firing off bottle rockets at the General Store, many moons ago.

Nowadays you can feel the excitement and the pa-

triotism hours before sunset as the crowd begins to gather before 6 p.m. Areas on and around the field behind the school begin to fill up quick, along with the school parking lot, and the parking lot across the street at the fire department and community center.

By 7:30 p.m. the embankment in front of the community center and along Hwy. 60 quickly becomes lined with lawn chairs, blankets and families from Blairsville to Birmingham (Ala.) and Suches to Sarasota (Fla.).

"This is our first time coming to the town (of Suches) so obviously it's our first time at the fireworks, but we've heard great things," said Evelyn Paneda of Sarasota, Fla. "We've started visiting Dahlonga for a few weeks during the summer, but never made it across the mountain, but we've heard so much bragging about the fireworks in this little town up in the mountains."

Following the show, Paneda summed up her experience with three words, "I'm extremely impressed,"

See Suches, Page 6A

Vol. 106 No. 28
2 Sections, 24 Pages

Weather
Thurs: Sunny Hi 88 Lo 66
Fri: Sunny Hi 88 Lo 66
Sat: Sunny Hi 89 Lo 66

Arrests 8A
Church 9A
Classifieds 2B
Opinion 4A
Legals 5B
Obits 10A
Sports 13A

See page 8A

FREE Personal Safety Defensive Arms class

See page 8A

Blueberry growing home gardner July 10th GMRE Center

See page 15A

GEORGIA MOUNTAIN FAIR
July 17th-25th
(706) 896-4191
Hiawassee Georgia

DAR and SAR joint chapter Meet and Greet Picnic at Meek's Park

See page 8A