

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Blairsville Police Department repeats as Agency of the Year

By Charles Duncan
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For the second consecutive year, Blairsville's finest have brought home the top award from the Mothers Against Drunk Driving banquet at the Union County Community Center on July 10.

Chief Johnny Carroll's department was honored once again for protecting the citizens of Blairsville and recognized for the work the department does to achieve the goals of MADD.

The Blairsville Police Department also won the award in 2008.

"We only patrol about a square mile of territory," Chief Carroll said. "But, as they tell me, it's not how much territory you cover, it's how aggressive you patrol that territory. I'm real proud of my officers. They're a dedicated bunch."



Adam Deyton, Shawn Dyer and Dustin Walker earned high honors at the annual Mothers Against Drunk Drivers Awards Banquet last week at the Union County Community Center.

MADD honors law enforcement agencies that represent the Appalachian Trail Traffic Enforcement Network. The ATTEN covers

seven counties from Cherokee County north and includes Union County.

Georgia State Patrol Post 27 out of Blue Ridge claimed

top honors as MADD's Patrol Post DUI Agency of the Year. TFC Cody White was named MADD's Trooper of the Year for his 49 DUI ar-



Georgia State Patrol TFC Cody White accepts the MADD Trooper of the Year Award last week at the Union County Community Center.

rests in 2013. That total isn't a personal record for Trooper White, whose personal best is 67 DUI arrests in a year.

White's career DUI arrest total was 271 in his six-year career with GSP.

By the end of 2013,

See Awards, 3A

Murder-suicide: Sparks killed Lawson and unborn child

By Charles Duncan
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Brandie Lawson and her unborn child were victims of murder, in an apparent murder-suicide on the Fourth of July involving Todd Sparks, Union County authorities now say.

Calling the tragedy a holiday domestic dispute between Lawson and Sparks, statements from witnesses and physical evidence indicate that Sparks murdered Lawson and her unborn child, authorities say.

Union County authorities say witnesses, the couple's two small children, have said that on Friday, July 4th, Sparks, 47, became enraged with Lawson, his significant other.

Sparks began to beat Brandie Lawson, the children



have told state and local authorities.

The oldest child tried to call for help but couldn't get a cell phone signal, authorities say.

Afterward, sometime during the night, Sparks carried Lawson upstairs, and

used three charcoal grills in an apparent attempt to kill Lawson and her small children inside the home by means of carbon monoxide poisoning, authorities said.

The two small children survived, but Lawson, 27, and her unborn child died, authori-

ties said.

The bodies were taken to the Georgia State Crime Laboratory for autopsies.

Autopsy results for Lawson are still pending, authorities said.

Autopsy results for Sparks indicate that he committed suicide, authorities said.

Authorities say Sparks killed himself with a self-inflicted gunshot wound after placing the weapon inside his mouth.

Sparks and Lawson were found dead by family members late afternoon on July 5, in a home on High Meadows Road, off of Highway 180 just past Hamby Bridge in southern Union County.

Union County Sheriff

See Deaths, 2A

Damages to city water meters proving costly



By Matthew Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Mayor Jim Conley stopped for a few minutes to discuss an important issue at the July City Council meeting regarding water meters, how damage can be

caused and what to look for if there is a potential threat to your meter from an outside force other than nature causing wire displacement.

"If you've looked at your water meter, you've got what

See Meters, 3A

McGill visits Blairsville during his coast-to-coast walk across America

By Matthew Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A great feat, traveling by feet, came upon the foothills of Blairsville on July 3 when the Rev. Walter "Chick" McGill met with city officials for his TransAmerican Crosswalk, a trip that will send him from Kill Devil Hills, NC to Santa Monica, CA.

"We've covered 620

See Walk, 3A



16th Butternut Creek Festival on tap for Saturday and Sunday

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Beginning hundreds of years ago, the melting pot of Native American, Scottish / Irish immigrants, and African slave cultures began to fuse together, creating the distinctive blend of artistry that the Blue Ridge mountains and Southern Appalachia are known for.

This weekend the High Country Artisans will celebrate

See Festival, 2A



BOE tackles personnel, financial issues and new hires



By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

An approval of the May 2014 financial statement and the 2014 budget amendments, a Towns-Union Alternative Education Program and Mountain Education Charter

Agreement, an update on the Sick Leave Bank, a County Extension personnel contract, and a public comment session were on the agenda at last week's Union County Board of Education meeting.

Following the open meeting, the board went into

executive session to approve personnel changes.

Following the financial statement approval, Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe reported an increase in ESPLOST revenue with June 2014 collection bringing in \$317,000, which is an increase over last June's collection of \$295,000. Steppe added that he expects this July to surpass last July's collection numbers.

The board added a \$47,100 request from the Technology Department and \$37,000 for the Fine Arts Center, both to come out of ESPLOST.

In new business, the board agreed unanimously to continue the agreement between Towns and Union Counties regarding the Alternative Education Program.

The board approved the Mountain Education agreement, which according to Superintendent Steppe, is whoever the the chairman of the

board is, whatever school district he represents, that school district keeps check on MEC's books and the financial statements about four times a year.

"Right now our sick bank balance is about 211 days," Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams said. "Once it gets below a certain threshold, which is in the 80's, then we will go back and ask for one more day. That doesn't happen often so we are okay."

The Sick Leave Bank are days that are donated to employees with a serious illness that have exhausted their own sick days before they can ask for additional days from the Sick Bank.

The County Extension Personnel Contract was presented by Mickey Cummings who was filling in for new County Coordinator Timothy Jennings who was at 4-H

See BOE, 3A

79-year-old man charged with criminal intent to entice a child

By Charles Duncan
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A 79-year-old Blairsville man faces charges of criminal intent to entice a minor for indecent purposes, contributing to the delinquency of a minor and furnishing a person under 21 years old with alcohol following a recent sting.

Jerry McGuffey, who moved to Union County from Towns County about a year ago, approached a 17-year-old girl at a recent community event and solicited sex from her, Union County sheriff's Detective Thomas Mangifesta said.

"McGuffey approached a 17-year-old girl who was at the event with her grandmother," Mangifesta said. "He was sweet talking her, talking about going out and spending some time together. She told him that she was only 17; he said 'that's okay, my last girlfriend was 13



Jerry McGuffey years old.' She told him that she wasn't interested."

The girl's grandmother was coming back to meet with her granddaughter and McGuffey handed the girl a piece of paper with his phone number on it, Mangifesta said.

"The girl told her grandmother what had happened," Mangifesta said. "Her

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The Green Bean Festival

The Green Bean Festival is right around the corner!

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Sadie Hawkins Golf Tournament

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CORN FEST

UC Farmer's Market Saturday, July 19th

Changes for the 2014-15 School Year are being put into place. Don't miss this!

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