

# 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 18, 2012

## City Council holds public hearings for proposed sign ordinance

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The Blairsville City Council held its second public hearing Tuesday, July 10, at City Hall regarding proposed revisions to its sign ordinance.

Five people attended to ask questions about the revised ordinance and when a moratorium will be lifted regarding the issuance of sign permits.

John Calverley, of Papa's Pizza to Go, wanted to know if change had been made to the previously adopted sign ordinance and if so what they were.

The changes that have been made are basically pro-

cedural changes, said City Attorney Jana Akins.

Lonnice Horn expressed concern regarding the impact of the current sign moratorium on new customers renting his facility and not being able to put up signage.

Mayor Jim Conley explained that the moratorium will be lifted as soon as the revised sign ordinance is approved.

Bill Duckworth spoke with the Council regarding the proposed sign ordinance.

Duckworth compared the extreme restrictions and mandates in the City versus no mandates or restrictions on signs in Union County other than billboards.

Duckworth asked the Council to reconsider the sign ordinance as presented and al-



Mayor Jim Conley

low the merchants to actively participate in making the rules and regulations that would conform and fit Blairsville.

Duckworth submitted a proposed amendment to the sign ordinance for Mayor Conley and the Council to

consider before adopting the sign ordinance next month.

Local business owner Randy Denniston asked the Council to make the sign ordinance regulations more user friendly to prevent businesses going outside the City Limits where there are no regulations.

As the public hearing came to a close, Akins advised the Council that the proposed sign ordinance may be considered for final approval during the Council's next regular meeting on Aug. 7.

Afterward, a motion was made by Councilman Buddy Moore, and seconded by Councilwoman Betty Easter to extend the City's sign permit moratorium.

The Council voted

unanimously to not accept applications for sign permits until Aug. 8.

The City was put in a position to revise its sign ordinance after Senior Judge Robert Struble declared the City's sign ordinance invalid in awarding billboards in the City to Allison Outdoor Advertising in April.

Mayor Conley said the ordinance was basically the same one that Judge Struble ruled against in April.

Judge Struble ruled that the city of Blairsville failed in its attempt at a sign ordinance, and awarded partial summary judgment to Allison Outdoor Advertising, Limited Partners.

"What Judge Struble was saying is that procedurally, the ordinance wasn't ad-

opted correctly," Mayor Conley said.

So this time, the City is adopting the sign ordinance the right way, Mayor Conley said.

"Essentially, it's the same ordinance we had before," Mayor Conley said. "All that we're doing differently is revising the process of how we approve the ordinance."

Judge Struble ruled that the city's sign ordinance did not meet the criteria required for approving a zoning ordinance.

He quickly ruled in the company's favor, simply because a sign ordinance meets the criteria of a zoning ordinance.

See Council, Page 2A

## Third Corn Festival was sweetest ever

By Joe Collins  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Corn silks were floating in the air and bright green shucks were flying as the Third Annual Sweetest Corn Festival corn shucking contest got under way Saturday morning at the Union County Farmers Market.

Nothing is sweeter than the taste of victory as Blairsville's own Brian Mason found out Saturday when he shucked 19 ears of corn in two minutes and claimed the coveted title of "The Fastest Cornshucker" of 2012.

Another Blairsville local, Lee Knight, placed second with 16 shucked ears and Blairsville' Jennifer Kerr rounded out the Top Three with 13 ears.

Jennifer's son Trent Kerr was a pretty good shucker too, out shucking a young lad from Titusville, Fla. with an impressive 10-ear performance.

In the final round, Knight was originally credited with 18 shucked ears.

Because of Knight's po-



Jennifer Kerr and Brian Mason shuck it out at the Third Corn Festival at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday. Mason was crowned 'Shuck King' following the final shuck. Photo/Joe Collins

litical ambitions, his opponent demanded a recount. It was later determined that Knight had only shucked 16 ears of corn.

Meanwhile, Mason was humble in accepting his title as "Shuck King."

"Shuck shucks, nothing beats experience," Mason said with a grin, as he humbly claimed top honors.

He faced some tough competition en route to his victory as kids and adults alike traveled from as far away as

Corpus Christie, Texas to try their hand at ripping the husks off the bright yellow vegetable that was later cooked and sold to benefit the local food pantry.

The Farmers Market is a proud sponsor of these fun events in hopes of adding excitement and pleasure to The Market experience.

"This is a fantastic and happening place. We love coming here to shop and enjoy the special events such as the Sweetest Corn Festival," said

David and Doreen London, formerly of Miami, Fla.

"The Market and its events are set up right and it shows," David and Doreen said.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris also was on hand to shop and welcome visitors, but he encountered a little problem.

Vendor Charles Tothorow considerably offered to let Commissioner Paris

See Shucks, Page 3A

## Drug Courts headed to Union, Towns counties

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Drug Court will be arriving in Union and Towns counties this fall according to Enotah Judicial District Attorney Jeff Langley.

Langley made the announcement to more than 40 law enforcement officers at a meeting of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety at United Community Bank's Brackett Community Room in Blairsville last week.

Drug Court already is in place in the Southern half of the Circuit with Lumpkin and White County holding Drug Court since 2008.

The Appalachian Judicial Circuit, which consists of Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens counties also have offered Drug Court for several years.

Langley told the officers from Towns and Union that he expects Drug Court to be in place by the end of the year.

"Coming this fall to a courtroom near you, will be our new Drug Court," Lang-



District Attorney Jeff Langley

ley said.

"For years there has been Drug Court in White and Lumpkin County," he said. "You may love it or you may hate it, but it's a treatment based program. The idea is to let people go through a two-year program."

The Drug Court program will filter offenders who have been charged with drug crimes, or committed a non-drug crime because of their dependency, through an extensive two-year, pre-trial diversionary program.

Those eligible for Drug Court must visit with the ap-

See Drug Court, Page 3A

## Townsend kicks off 2012 Fair

By Libby Shook  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

HIWASSEE - Come ride the rides as the Georgia Mountain Fair kicks off at 5 p.m. Thursday at the Fairgrounds in Hiwassee.

On Friday, Blairsville's own Tommy Townsend and Waymore's Outlaws open the musical performances of the Fair's 62nd season.

The Georgia Mountain Fair Parade is at 11 a.m. on Saturday in Downtown Hiwassee. The Gtown Marshal is the community's war veterans.

Meanwhile, Townsend jokes that Lee Greenwood will close for the Outlaws, the legendary back up band for late Country Music legend, Waylon Jennings.

Waymore's Outlaws are scheduled to perform at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Friday. "We'll open the Fair and

See Fair, Page 6A



## Traffic Safety addressed

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Sheriff's Office was joined by more than 10 different law enforcement agencies from across North Georgia, for a monthly meeting of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

More than 40 officers from the Georgia State Patrol and local Sheriff's Offices such as Union, Towns, Fannin, and Lumpkin counties, were in attendance for the meeting at United Community Bank's Brackett Community Room.

Following the meeting, the Union County Sheriff's Office, with the aid of the other agencies set up a license checkpoint at Highway 325 and Highway 515.

"Each month we have a meeting," said Union County Sheriff's Investigator C.J. Worden. "We bring in a



A joint agency license check on Georgia 515. Photo/Todd Forrest

guest speaker who talks about relevant issues, as far as traffic is concerned.

"After that, we typically go out while we have a lot of assistance and we can perform a highway safety checkpoint, looking for any safety violations and illegal activity," he said.

The meeting was opened

by Union County Sheriff's Lt. Chad Dayton as he welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.

"Weather permitting, we are going to have a road check afterwards and anyone that wants to stay and participate is welcome to," Lt. Dey-

See Checkpoint, Page 3A

## Donations adding up for vets

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

SSG Bobby Franklin found a break in the clouds on Sunday; he must have been smiling.

That's because the memorial for Iraq War veterans got its most significant contribution to date on Sunday.



Jacob Franklin accepts a \$1,000 donation from the Sons of Confederate Veterans to help erect a memorial to Iraq War Veterans. Franklin's father was killed in Iraq, Aug. 20, 2003. Photo/Todd Forrest

See Donations, Page 3A

## Two become flyboys in Union

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Two Union County High School students recently made their first solo flights and are well on their way to obtaining their pilot's license.

Last month, 16-year-old Caleb Gessmann, completed his first solo flight on his birthday, while 17-year-



T Bentley lands at Blairsville Airport on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

See Flyboys, Page 6A

Vol. 103 No. 29 Inside

2 Sections, 26 Pages

Weather

Wed: Storms Hi 87 Lo 69

Thur: Storms Hi 85 Lo 69

Friday Storms Hi 85 Lo 69

Arrests 8A

Church 12A

Classified 2B

Opinion 4A

Legal 4B

Letters 4A

Obits 14A

Sports 10A

8 04879 419314 2

Cruise-In On The Square

Saturday, July 21

4 PM - Dusk

On the Square in downtown Blairsville

Georgia Mountain Fair 3rd Annual Cooking Contest

Check in: Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Office

Awards & Contest: Country Cafe Dining Hall

Tues., July 24 • 4-4:30 p.m.

Thurs., July 26 • 4-4:30 p.m.

Visit www.GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com for contest rules and entry forms

See page 16A

14th Annual Butternut Creek Festival

Sat., July 21 & Sun. July 22

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Meeks Park • Blairsville, GA

Presented by the High Country Artisans, Inc.

See page 7A