

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Firefighters constantly train to keep residents safe

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Fire safety can mean more than just saving a civilian's life – it can also mean saving the lives of those fighting the fires.

These brave men and women risk their lives to ensure the safety of others, but sometimes their own safety is lost in the midst of it all.

Union County Fire Department hosted a multi-company training session at Fire Station No. 1 on Monday, June 27. This multi-company training was voluntary, open to all the Union County Fire Department staff and volunteers.

"All of this today is all about safety," said Union

County Fire Chief David Dyer. "It's about getting ourselves out of the building, getting other people out of the building, and doing that in the safest and most efficient way possible."

Capt. Doug Pruitt of the Gainesville Fire Department assisted in organizing the exercise. Pruitt helps out with staff and volunteer training, and works at Fire Station 5 in Union County as well.

"We organize this because, in the profession we have, we're very much committed to serving citizens and providing fire protection services," said Pruitt. "On occasion, firefighters can become entrapped or disoriented or have some type of medical emergency."

"We feel it's very important to take time to

educate ourselves on not only how to recognize that we have a problem and the steps we need to take to help ourselves, but also what other firefighters have to do if one of their own has an emergency, and how to remove them from dangerous environments."

The training session was split into two parts, an educational presentation followed by a hands-on exercise on specific fire safety maneuvers. During the presentation, Pruitt went through how to recognize an emergency and the necessary steps to take afterward, including the proper protocol for relaying such an emergency.

"It's reassuring to know that these guys are going to know techniques to get in and out of a building, and know how

to go in and get one of their own out if there's a problem," said Chief Dyer.

Firefighters were split into groups to practice three primary exercises that focused on how to escape from a burning building, set up in the former Union County Fire Station No. 1 building.

Firefighters learned how to successfully use a ladder bailout to escape a burning infrastructure by jumping out of a window, swinging themselves onto a ladder and sliding down to safety.

Oftentimes there is only an interior entry to a basement, which can be difficult if a civilian or firefighter is either trapped or has fallen through a deteriorated floor during a fire.

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Firefighter Doug Pruitt, of Union County Fire Station No. 5 and the Gainesville Fire Department, shows other firefighters how to correctly perform a ladder bail maneuver from two floors up during training that took place on Monday, June 27.

Olympians raising money for Dream Ride Experience

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Year after year, thousands of Special Olympic athletes are given the opportunity of a lifetime with the Dream Ride Experience, and this year, eight Union County Olympians hope to have the same opportunity.

"In today's society, it's sad to say, these kids are kind of pushed to the side," said Paulette Dyer, mother of Special Olympian and Dream Ride participant Katie Dyer. "A lot of people don't know how to interact with them. They don't understand them. But when they go to the Dream Ride, it's all about the kids."

"Dream Ride lays out the red carpet for them, they're up front and center. It's not about anybody else. Last year, Katie and Ben (Taylor) got to go, and Katie got to sing the national anthem in front of 5,000 plus people in the opening ceremony."

"From the minute



Union County Special Olympians attended the Farmers Market on Saturday, July 16, to raise awareness and funds to go toward providing a Dream Ride Experience in Connecticut

it started, there were tears flowing everywhere. It's an experience that you can't put into words. There are so many

people that this organization helps in the communities."

Michael Bozzuto founded the Dream Ride Experience in

2001 as a means to raise money and awareness for Special Olympians nationwide.

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Sheriff, chief deputy help save young man's life

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When Union County Sheriff Mack Mason and Chief Deputy John George joined a Thursday, July 7, continuing manhunt for a Union County fugitive, they had no idea they would soon be saving a young man's life.

"Sheriff Mason and Chief Deputy George were in the area of Plott Town Road, looking for the wanted fugitive, James Paul Weaver, when a call came out of a subject not breathing in the Trackrock area," said UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn. "They were two to three minutes away, so they responded."

As soon as the two arrived on the scene, they quickly assessed the situation



Sheriff Mack Mason

and jumped into action. The sheriff moved the subject's vehicle, containing the subject therein, out of a garage, and he and Chief Deputy George were able to pull the young man out of the vehicle.

Sheriff Mason told

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Turnage indicted for 2014 arrest

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Billy Joe Turnage, 78, has been formally charged with aggravated sexual battery and criminal attempt to commit a felony, following the July Term 2016 Indictments of the Union County Grand Jury.

Leading the prosecution of the state's case will be Appalachian Judicial Circuit District Attorney B. Alison Sosebee.

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley has recused himself from trying the case based on his association with the Union County Republican Party – Turnage was the chairman of the Union County Republican

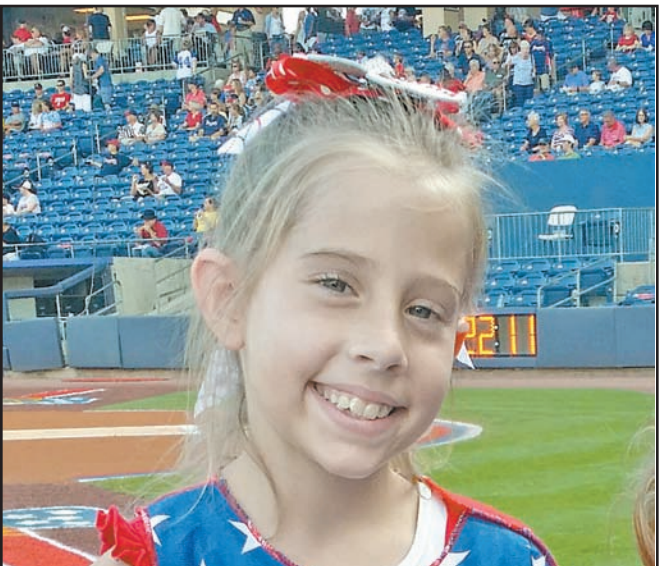


Billy Joe Turnage

Party at the time of his arrest. The charges stem from an October 2014 arrest of Turnage after investigation into a 911 call asking for law enforcement to respond to an ongoing "assault and rape,"

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Suches girl wows thousands at Gwinnett Braves game



Ten-year-old Nealy Webster sang the national anthem in front of a crowd of more than 11,000 at the Fourth of July Gwinnett Braves game

By Todd Forrester
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

LAURENCEVILLE - Local 10-year-old celebrity Nealy Webster has made quite a name for herself thanks to her powerful singing voice, and on the Fourth of July, Nealy received the honor of performing the national anthem prior to the Gwinnett Braves game, in front of a packed house of almost 11,000 fans at Coolray Field.

Baseballs weren't the only things flying out of the stadium that evening, as Nealy also knocked it out of the park with her rendition of the "The Star-Spangled Banner."

According to Nealy's

mother, Connie Webster, the crowd's reactions both during and after her performance were simply "overwhelming."

"After she sang, we had three people that have written at the stadium since it opened come to her and say that they have never heard the crowd react that way to that song," Connie Webster said. "I don't think Nealy realizes the impact that she has on people, especially with her patriotic songs. She's just an incredible little girl."

Nealy's family ties to Union County run deep. She is the granddaughter of Suches natives Larry and Diane Wood, and the great-granddaughter of

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Run-off election on Tuesday, Vote early until Friday

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Early voting for the July 26 Republic Primary Runoff will continue this week through Friday, July 22.

The runoff race in question is for the office of 8th District State Representative in the Georgia General Assembly,

and voters will be deciding between Matt Gurtler and Kent Woerner.

Those interested in voting early can do so now through this Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. each day in the Board of Registrars office inside the Union County Courthouse.

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Gowder, Heaton granted continuances in NC



Mike Gowder

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

MURPHY, NC - Following a July 11 Administrative Session held by North Carolina Superior Court Judge Bradley Letts, former



Dr. James Heaton

Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Blairsville physician Dr. James Heaton received continuances in their Cherokee County, NC, criminal drug cases through Nov. 7 of this year.

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July Term 2016 Union County Indictments

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The following were indicted during the July Term of the Union County Grand Jury:

Billy Joe Turnage, aggravated sexual battery; criminal attempt to commit a

felony.

S a m a n t h a Leigh, possession of methamphetamine; two counts giving false information to a law enforcement officer.

J a m e s C o l e Jones, possession of methamphetamine; crossing the guard line with contraband.

R o b e r t J a m e s Kennedy, possession of

methamphetamine; driving without a license.

M o r g a n M i c h e l l e Walker, possession of methamphetamine.

D i l l o n R u d o l p h Anderson, two counts cruelty to children in the first degree; aggravated battery.

J a c o b D a r r e l l Shook, identity fraud; financial transaction card fraud.

K e v i n P h i l l i p L e d f o r d, burglary in the first degree.

C h a r l e s K e n n e t h G r a y Jr., two counts terrorist threats; attempt to violate the Georgia Controlled Substances Act; illegal use of communication facility.

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