

# 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 30, 2014

## Union County students return to classes on Friday

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

There likely will be emotions over the return to classes on Friday at Union County Schools.

It could be because it's Aug. 1 and the young bodies of students might believe that they haven't had enough summer vacation or sleep.

Actually, they have as they got out of classes early in May.

That being said set the alarm clocks, school soon will be back in session on Friday.

Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe said emotions should be running high on Friday.

"We're excited," he said. "I think our enrollment is going to be up this year. We've got a Freshman Class of 225 scheduled to be on hand. I think the high school will have its largest enrollment ever."

"The Freshman Class is huge," Steppe said.



Union County school buses are ready to roll on Friday as classes resume for the 2014-2015 school year. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

It will be at least two weeks before administrators know the exact student population, but it could be on the verge of the largest enrollment in school history, a figure that

rivals the totals in 2007-2008, Steppe said.

"We're going to gain some, we won't know exactly until the first two weeks has come and

gone," Steppe said. The graduating class of 2014 was 125 seniors who are now in the big, wide world.

Those student numbers will increase as the next few years go by.

"The last two years we're gaining between 30 and 50 students a year," Steppe said. "We're expecting the same trend in 2014-2015. We won't know for a couple of weeks."

This will be Union County's first year under the new Charter School System.

"The biggest part of that is the way schools are governed," Steppe said. "It's a good system, it will have more parental involvement. Any time you get more parents involved, the children benefit."

Steppe said the teachers and administration is geared up and ready to go.

"The buses are ready to roll and the drivers are anxious," Steppe said.

## UCFD teams with Walmart to save lives with smoke detectors



Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Walmart Manager Dean Justus, and Union County Fire Chief Charles Worden work together to make sure Union County homes are protected by smoke alarms. Photo/Charles Duncan

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

There was a time when fire departments received free smoke detectors through a state grant.

Those days are long gone as state cutbacks eliminated that program.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris

See Team, 2A

## Record crowds at Saturday's Green Bean Festival

By Matthew Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Fifth Annual Green Bean Festival snapped into action Saturday morning as one of the Union County Farmers Market's busiest days of the season celebrated crafting, family, food, and all in all fresh grown Americana.

It was also opening day for the Market's newest addition that provides 27 additional vendor spaces and more options for patrons.

And it was also a day to make amends as Charles Thierow kindly apologized to Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar for the unfortunate habanero pepper he gave the commissioner at the 2012 Sweetest Corn Festival at the Sweetest.

The Green Bean Festival was swamped with patrons, as



Not everything was for sale at Saturday's Fifth Annual Green Bean Festival at the Union County Farmers Market. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

the Festival witnessed record crowds, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

"It was like ants leaving the anthill when I got here," Sheriff Mason said. "One of

the County Road crew directing traffic estimated 3,500 had been there by noon. The cars were filling in and filing out. It was sure enough a big crowd."

And green beans were as green as ever.

"Sit there in the shade and enjoy your day," Market Manager Mickey Cummings said as he greeted long lines of anxious spectators and patrons alike.

Freddie Collins and his family were there doling out produce as fast as they could bag it up. Willie Kerr from Mountain View Farms and his family stayed just as busy.

Seth Stanley, a 25-year-old up-and-coming farmer, brought the green beans and the beans brought the green as the afternoon's abundant crowd went wild over fresh green beans.

"I mowed grass for a couple of years and it just wasn't cutting it," said Stanley. "Gardening has always

See Festival, 3A

## Mayor, Chief Carroll honored by Allegheny Lodge No. 114

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

During a ceremony at Blairsville's Allegheny Lodge No. 114 F & AM, a popular phrase used to summarize Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll was, "bringing progress and tradition together," when the Masonic Lodge honored two of its local civil servants on Saturday, July 19th.

On behalf of Allegheny Lodge, Worshipful Master Mark Cox presented the duo with plaques for "Mayor of the Year," and "Law Enforcement Official of the Year."

Before handing out the plaques, Cox took a few moments to give some back-



Mayor Jim Conley



Chief Johnny Carroll

See Honored, 2A

## Old Blairsville Cemetery project moving forward

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

A peaceful piece of land near the Union County Board of Education headquarters will soon have a new look.

Fencing, refurbished headstones and marked graves headline the work that city and county leaders and concerned citizens hope to achieve at the Old Blairsville Cemetery.

Originally brought to the attention of Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the historic cemetery is the final resting place of many of the county's earliest settlers.

With 37 marked graves,



Progress continues with Old Blairsville Cemetery Project. The plan is to restore and preserve the cemetery, and enclose it with a wrought-iron

fence.

The project is moving forward, but it's still in the starter's block, Commissioner Paris said.

"We're at the bare basics," he said. "But, we've got a lot of contacts. We know a lot more today than we knew a month ago."

"Vince Evans was the overseer of Alta Vista Cemetery in Gainesville for 15 years," Paris said. "He's given us lots of advice on what to use and how to clean the markers."

"Basically, we need to map the cemetery, we'll need to use ground-piercing radar to help locate graves," Paris said. "With ground-piercing radar,

See Cemetery, 2A

## Grand Jury hands up 12-count indictment on Farnar

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

A Union County Grand Jury has handed up a 12-count indictment against a 54-year-old Blairsville man on charges that include three counts of child molestation.

Carl J. Farnar is accused of molesting two girls under the age of 16, Union County Superior Court records show.

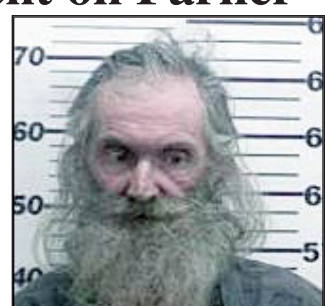
Farnar faces three counts of child molestation, three counts of sexual battery against a child under 16, two counts enticing a child for indecent purposes, and four counts contributing to the delinquency of a minor, Superior Court records show.

The incidents are alleged to have occurred between Nov. 15, 2013 and May 8, this year, Superior Court records show.

Farnar also is alleged to have provided the two girls with marijuana and alcohol, Superior Court records show. In another indictment during the January Term of the Union County Grand Jury, grand jurors handed up a six-count indictment against Barry Brock Harper on charges that include burglary and theft, Superior Court records show.

Harper is accused of second-degree burglary on June 5 when he entered the United Mountain Soccer facility off Jack C. Lance Memorial Highway, Superior Court records show.

He is accused of taking a John Deere Zero Turn, Z-Trak Lawn Tractor from that facility worth \$1,500, Supe-



Carl J. Farnar



Barry Brock Harper

Rior Court Records show. He also is charged with possession of tools for the commission of a crime, possession of a firearm, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, Superior Court records show.

Other indictments during the January Term of the Union County Grand Jury:

Randy Nathaniel Green, simple assault, riot in a penal institution;

David Russell Pokrywa, riot in a penal institution;

Nicholas Randall Neace, riot in a penal institution;

Uriah Wade Hall, riot in a penal institution, simple assault;

Earl Henry Conlon, See Indict, 2A

## Union County man charged in meth bust

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

A 52-year-old Union County man has been arrested in connection with an extensive undercover investigation, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Sheriff Mason said Gary Dean Payne was arrested July 25 and investigators seized more than 1 pound of methamphetamine.

"Payne was arrested and Union County Narcotics officers seized more than 1 pound of methamphetamine," Sheriff Mason said.

"We're in the process of filing seizure papers on various articles of property that include cash, weapons, vehicles and land," Sheriff Mason said. "Rough total estimates to be seized is around



Gary Dean Payne

\$400,000."

The case remains under investigation, Sheriff Mason said.

"More information will be released later," he said. "This arrest is the result of an

extensive undercover investigation."

The Union County Sheriff's Office opted out of the Appalachian Drug Task Force at the beginning of the year.

The program, dependent on state and federal dollars, is scheduled to run out of money in 2016, leaving the four counties - Union, Lumpkin, Towns and White - that make up the task force to support the program out of each county's general fund.

For that reason, Sheriff Mason opted out of the drug task force and expanded his department's Narcotics Division in February.

"Our message to the drug dealers and drug couriers is simple, stay out of Union County," Sheriff Mason said.

The department has three officers. Two of those officers made almost as many

cases in 2013 as the other three member agencies of the task force combined.

"Our narcotics officers here in the pushers and users know in Union County and like to handle cases themselves instead of turning them over to the drug task force," the sheriff said.

"Union narcotics officers made the same number of arrests and seized the same amount of property (dollar-for-dollar) as did the other three counties in the drug task force combined in 2013," Sheriff Mason said.

Sheriff Mason has kept his promise to step up Union County drug investigations and enforcement in 2014 by stepping out of the drug task force and focusing closer on the issues within Union County.

Vol. 105 No. 31 Inside  
2 Sections, 24 Pages  
Weather  
Thu: Clouds Hi 77 Lo 60  
Fri: T-Storms Hi 78 Lo 60  
Sat: T-Storms Hi 79 Lo 60

Blairsville Cruise In at Farmers Market  
Friday, Aug 1st  
Car Show on the Square  
Saturday, Aug 2nd  
See Page 7A

Blairsville PTO, Inc.  
2nd Annual Glow Golf Tourney  
Friday August 1st  
See Page 12A

Farmers Market  
Home Grown & Handmade  
Tomato Sandwich Day at the U.C. Farmers Market  
Saturday, Aug. 2nd  
See Page 6A

Changes for the 2014-15 School Year are being put into place. Don't miss this!  
See Page 9A