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ey Cummings, who is also the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Agent for Union County.

"We want to educate people about the importance of buying and eating locally grown food," he says. "We want people to understand that this is a location where they can purchase locally grown food that is high quality and safe for their families to eat, and locally made crafts that are equally high quality."

The market had a modest beginning in 2007 on the grounds of the Union County Courthouse. Two years later, under the leadership of Union County Commission Chairman Lamar Paris and the rest of the commission, voters approved a special purpose local option sales tax to fund a permanent location for the market. The market moved into its new facility — a 50-stall market with two open air pavilions, a community garden and parking — in 2010. Booths are sold out for the season, and the overflow vendors set up in tents onsite.

"We wanted to promote agriculture and increase rev-

enue, and it's working," says Paris, whose father decades ago managed federal programs that assisted farmers. "I go down there on Saturday mornings and walk around and people come up to me and say, 'This is the greatest thing.'"

Many communities have farmers markets, but not many use the markets as an economic development tool. A drop in agriculture income from \$60 million a year annually to \$20 million sounded an alarm for community leaders, who were also concerned about the loss of family farms and green space to developers. The county did not want to lose its rural identity.

"Once that part of our heritage is gone, it's gone and you can't get it back," says Cummings. "Instead of creating rules and regulations, we decided the best thing was to stimulate the [agricultural] market, which is what we did with the Union County Farmers Market. Now local farmers don't have to go to Atlanta to market their vegetables — they can do it here."

Cummings is looking to

the Georgia Grown marketing program to help with one of his goals for the Union County Farmers Market: becoming a co-op for local farmers and restaurants. He envisions the market as a site where restaurant owners can contract with farmers for locally grown produce to serve in their establishments.

But first the Union County Farmers Market plans to open a community canning kitchen in August, where local residents can "put up" the fruits and vegetables they buy at the market or grow themselves. The new facility replaces one built in the 1940s, when families depended on what they grew to get them through the winter.

"One man told me he went to the old canning kitchen with his mother and grandmother," says Cummings. "Now he plans to go with his children and grandchildren."

Not only is canning their own food a cost savings for families during difficult economic times, Cummings says, but it's also another economic stimulus for the local economy. Several local residents plan to use the commer-

cial-grade kitchen to produce food products for sale at the market. The facility will be able to process 92 jars at a time compared to just eight in a home pressure cooker.

The farmers market has become more than just an economic boost for Union County. It's become the Saturday morning gathering place that draws the community together. Cummings made sure the new facility had benches "where people can sit around and tell tales."

"I don't know how you can put an economic value on that," he adds.

Want to go? Union County Farmers Market, 148 Old Smokey Rd., Blairsville, GA. Summer Hours: 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. every Saturday; 4 to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays evenings or, as the web site says: "until the farmers plum run out of goods to sell, whichever comes first!"

A Trash and Treasures Flea Market is held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Fridays.

Check the Web site, www.ucfarmersmarket.com, for festivals and other special events hosted by The Market.

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"People have been putting up signs without the permit process during this moratorium," Mayor Conley said. "We'll have to make sure that is corrected now."

As for the new sign ordinance, essentially, it's the same ordinance that the City had before, Mayor Conley said.

"All that we did differently was revise the process of how we approved the ordinance," he said.

Judge Struble ruled in April that the city's sign ordinance did not meet the criteria



Councilman Tony Dyer

required for approving a zoning ordinance.

He quickly ruled in Al-

lison Outdoor Advertising's favor, simply because a sign ordinance meets the criteria of a zoning ordinance.

Judge Struble ruled that the city did not satisfy the public notice or public hearing requirements prior to its approval of its sign ordinance.

Judge Struble also ruled that the city must allow Alison Outdoor Advertising, Limited Partners to erect and operate its signs which resulted in legal action against the city.

The city "shall complete

any local paperwork necessary to obtain state permits for the signs," Judge Struble ruled.

The day following the ruling by Judge Struble, the city of Blairsville implemented a 90-day moratorium on new sign applications.

Basic interpretation: the city's ordinance implied that it was enforcing zoning.

The Council remedied Judge Struble's concern about its sign ordinance this go around. "We heard Judge Struble loud and clear," Mayor Conley said.

Early voting for GOP 9th District Congressional runoff continues until Friday

Early voting for the Aug. 21 runoff for the 9th Congressional District GOP nomination concludes Friday, Aug. 17th.

Gainesville Republicans Doug Collins and Martha Zoller will go head-to-head on Aug. 21 in a runoff for the GOP nomination for the 9th District Congressional seat.

Collins took 41.81 percent of the district-wide vote on July 31, finishing with

45,894 votes. Zoller claimed 41.13 percent for a final total of 45,156 votes. Only 738 votes separated the two candidates.

The runoff was necessary because White County Republican Roger Fitzpatrick took 17.06 percent of the district-wide vote for a final tally of 18,728 votes.

In Hall County, the home of both Collins and Zoller, the latter defeated Collins by taking 47.07 percent or 11,963

votes. Collins collected 43.40 percent in his home county, or 11,030 votes. That's a 933-vote differential.

Collins said Zoller's key endorsements come from outside the 9th District, actually, he said they come from outside the state, referring to endorsements by Sarah Palin, and FOX News mainstream analysts.

Two weeks ago, she received the endorsement of

former Republican Presidential candidate Rick Santorum. She also has endorsements from former Republican Presidential hopefuls Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich.

Collins is endorsed by former U.S. Sen. Zell Miller, also a former Georgia governor, and Georgia House Speaker David Ralston.

On Aug. 21, the polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. See our Web site for results.

Union County receives dividend

Union County has received a dividend in the amount of \$7,788 that will be applied in the form of a credit towards the county's property and liability premium for the 2012-13 policy year. This is Union County's share of a \$2 million dividend declared by the Board of Trustees of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia - Interlocal Risk Management Agency (ACCG-IRMA).

The ACCG-IRMA is a non-profit Georgia county government-owned insurance fund providing property and liability insurance coverage to its Georgia county members since its inception in 1987. Georgia law, enacted at the request of Georgia county governments, allowed county governments to form non-profit insurance funds, which operate much like mutual insurance companies. These non-profit insurance funds allow Georgia county governments to purchase insurance coverage, at cost-efficient rates that are typically better than a county could negotiate on its own. The fund is owned by the Georgia county participants and managed by a Board of Trustees who represent participating Georgia counties. The program is an ef-

ficient method of financing insurable risks, which ultimately reduces insurance costs for the county and benefits the taxpayers. Counties participating in the ACCG insurance program also receive extensive loss control and safety services to help mitigate and reduce claims.

"The \$2 million dividend is the largest in the program's 25-year history," said Charlie Newton, McDuffie County Chairman and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. "This program provides an outstanding service to counties and authorities throughout the state and allows us to cost-effectively manage our insurance needs."

Any insurance premiums which are not used to pay claims and operating expenses, as well as any investment income earned on the premium while it is held to pay claims, belongs to the member county governments. The dividends are possible because of favorable results in the investment of premium dollars held in reserve to pay claims, as well as the successful and dedicated management efforts on the part of Union County in promoting safety and implementing loss control techniques.

UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Every Monday:	
Garden Tours	GMREC 9 am - 1 pm
Boy Scouts #101	United Methodist Ch 7 pm
Children's Story Time	Union County Library Noon
Kiwanis Club	Steve's Steakhouse Noon
Civil Air Patrol	Blairsville Airport 6:30 pm
Every Tuesday:	
Mtn. Woodcarvers	Senior Center 6 pm
Sweet Adelines	United Methodist Ch 6:30 pm
Every Thursday:	
Masonic Luncheon	Cooks Restaurant 11:30 am
Butternut Ladies Golf	Golf Course (Apr-Oct) 8:30 am
Rotary Club	Cadence Bank Noon
Fourth Monday of each month:	
Misty Mtn Quilt Guild	Blairsville 12:30-1 pm
Fourth Tuesday of each month:	
Cub Scouts Trp. #101	UC Elementary School 7 pm
Eastern Star #304	Location not listed 7:30 pm
VFW Post #7394	Old Nursing Home 11:30 am
Compassionate Friends	Grinds & Glazes Noon
Fourth Wednesday of each month:	
No activities listed	
Fourth Thursday of each month:	
UT Homebuilders	YH College 7 pm
Lions Club	Steve's Cookie Jar 6 pm
Cruisers Club Meeting	Sr. Center pavilion 6 pm
Fourth Friday of each month:	
Eastern Star #471	Location not listed 7:30 pm
Fourth Saturday of each month:	
Youngcane Lodge #597	Lodge Hall 7:30 pm