

## Langley...continued from Page 1A

The harsh weather also was cited as the cause of a cracked block on the boat's motor. Mason said that in taped interviews with the GBI, both Woods and Sheriff Stephens admitted the report was not accurate.

Langley said the report was not a criminal incident report, rather it was a report of damage to county property for insurance purposes.

The charges Mason sought from Langley was a sidebar from the Garrick Parks investigation into corruption within the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Once Sheriff Stephens asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to investigate Parks, a former sheriff's deputy, who was re-indicted in July for alleged corruption, Langley asked state investigators to expand the scope of their investigation to search for additional corruption within the department.

In an interview with the newspaper, Sheriff Stephens acknowledged the probe into the damaged boat. He declined comment about the incident because it's his belief that the investigation is still open.

The probe by state investigators led to questions about the boat damaged by inclement weather.

An insurance claim was paid, a total of \$4,209.91, minus \$2,500 deductible that applied to the loss.

According to Langley,

the GBI determined that Sheriff Stephens instructed Lt. Wood to file a report on the damaged boat. The details in the report, provided by Sheriff Stephens, were not accurate, Langley said.

"The GBI contacted the insurance carrier and was informed that while they received Sheriff Stephens' description of how the boat came to be in the cold, it was not material to their payment of the claim," Langley said.

Therefore, the report, which was not accurate, was not pertinent to the insurance claim being paid, and thus, there would be no charges filed for insurance fraud, Langley said.

To be sure, Langley contacted the State Insurance Commissioner's Office and asked if he should pursue criminal charges. He was told no.

"The county's policy covers such damage regardless as to how it occurred. Insurance fraud requires a false statement to be a material false statement (material to the claim being paid)," Langley said. "It was not a material false statement by Sheriff Stephens, therefore, the GBI did not seek any warrant on the matter."

Langley said he also consulted with the GBI in addition to the State Insurance Commissioner's Office about whether the matter merits some kind of criminal action. The results were the same, Langley said.

"In addition, as I explained to Mr. Mason when he asked me about this matter back in August, I have provided this information to the two previous Grand Juries, including the live testimony of the GBI officer that conducted the investigation. Furthermore, as part of their civil review of the county government, Sheriff Stephens answered questions on the matter before the Grand Jury in January 2012."

Parks was originally indicted on two charges of theft by taking and two charges of theft by conversion. He was originally indicted without being in the presence of the Grand Jury, Langley said.

"The Georgia statute and case law giving an officer the right to appear before a Grand Jury does not apply to every situation and the Parks case fell into a gray area of that statute," Langley said. "Applying the case law, I initially presented it without his presence, but then elected to re-indict with him present rather than allow delay for an appeal of that interpretation."

Parks is accused of taking \$4,691 in seized funds from civil forfeiture actions, funds that were recovered during arrests by the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Two additional charges were added during Parks' re-indictment: two counts violation of oath of office by a law enforcement officer, Union County Superior Court records show.

## Probe...continued from Page 1A

climbing gear, a DVD player, and DVDs, according to sheriff's reports.

The stolen items were subsequently sold for cash, Investigator Worden said.

The arrests of Ramsey and Hollingsworth were the direct result of a two-month investigation by sheriff's investigators, Investigator Worden said.

Hollingsworth had been under investigation for the offense of theft by taking. He also was charged with burglary along with Randy LeRoy Epperson, 29, related to a break in at the Skate Shop at 1593 Blue Ridge Highway,



**Randy LeRoy Epperson**

Investigator Worden said.

Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens said thefts and burglaries have become a problem as tough times continue to make some folks take

shortcuts to solve financial burdens or for other financial reasons.

"We understand that times are tough for everyone, but we will not tolerate thefts and burglaries of any kind in Union County," Sheriff Stephens said. "If you have any information regarding thefts and burglaries in Union County, please contact us immediately."

Contact the Union County Sheriff's Office at (706) 439-6066 regarding any information about crimes against property. All information will be kept in strict confidence.

## BOE...continued from Page 1A

look like we'll be able to do that. I really want to get to the point where we have no more furlough days."

There are some tax exemptions that run out next year which could affect the budget.

"I've just noticed a lot more stress this year with the

employees. Everyone seems a lot more edgier and it's because of the economic stress and it just takes its toll on people after so long," Steppe said. "But whatever we set the millage at, we'll make it work, either way. Right now there are 14 schools statewide who are running a deficit and that number could go over 80 before the end of this year. So when you think about it, we're in pretty good shape compared to the rest of the state."

Gov. Nathan Deal has asked all departments statewide to cut back at least 3 per-

cent across the board except salary.

Departments that will suffer will be vocational and transportation educational experiences, according to Steppe.

"We can just pray for the best and keep it (millage) the same as it is," Hunter said. "But if we have cuts headed our way, then this isn't going to be any fun next year either." The millage rate will be advertised in the *North Georgia News* for two weeks before the meeting on Oct. 11 to finalize the rate.

## Fly-In...continued from Page 1A

ies of chili that our members made," Thompson said. "So all the guys flying in will get to sample different chili, deserts, and have the chance to socialize with all of our local members, and enjoy looking at all the different aircraft."

While some of the planes were certified aircrafts, many of the aircrafts at the event were home-built or experimental aircraft.

"That's what our organization was first founded on was because people wanted to design, and or build their own aircraft at home," Thompson said. "So many of the aircraft you see here are experimental and are built by the pilots who are flying them in."

With nothing but blue skies overhead, you couldn't ask for better conditions to host an event for pilots and their homemade aircraft.

"The first few years we had some trouble with the rain," Thompson said. "This by far is the most successful one that we've had, so we're pretty excited today."

The event took place for the better part of Saturday with Thompson arriving at the runway around 9:30 a.m. with the official fly-in times beginning around 11 a.m.

"We typically try to have this fly-in during September," Thompson said. "The Young Eagles Fly-In will be in the spring. What we do with that is we take youth from the area up on their first airplane ride, so we basically have our pilots here and our organization gets together and we have youth who are signed up for the flights, and we spend the entire day flying them around the area."



Blairsville Municipal Airport was the place to be on Saturday as Chapter 1211 of the Experimental Aircraft Association held their Fourth Annual Fly-In on Saturday. Planes traveled here for that special reason and the skies over Coosa Bald were colorful with each aircraft that graced the sky. Photos/Todd Forrest