

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

January 9, 2013

Rogers elected to National Coaches board

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County just gained a little more recognition at the national level.

Retired Union County Head Football Coach and Athletic Director Terry Rogers has joined the National Athletic Coaches Association Board of Directors.

Rogers, the executive director of the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association, is now one of only six board members at the national association level.

Rogers began serving a three-year term this month.

Rogers and the other Georgia join national board members from North Carolina, New Mexico, South Dakota, Kentucky and Texas.

"It's an honor, there are six board members that represent the National Coaches Association," Rogers said.

The National Association is composed of more than 30 states. The executive director of each state is on the executive board.

"The National Association has a six-member board of directors, each serving three-year terms," he said. "I was honored to be elected to the board. Actually, it's an honor for the state of Georgia and our outstanding coaches association."

"Georgia ranks high on the national level as producing some of the greatest athletes in the country," Rogers said. "Our GACA is the oldest coaches association in America. It was established in 1938."

"Our North-South All-Star Game is the oldest All-Star game in America," Rogers said. "The All-Star games in other states have patterned



Terry Rogers

after our All-Star game.

"We have a lot to be proud of in athletics in the state of Georgia," he said. "The state of Georgia ranks No. 1 in America in high school foot-

ball players on out-of-state rosters, we rank No. 1 in America in all classifications in high school football, Class A through Class AAAAAA.

"Some of the other states may rank above us in the upper classifications, but all-in-all, we rank at the top of every state in America in all classifications," Rogers said.

Georgia leads the nation in the number of high school football players on Southeastern Conference college rosters than any state in America.

"I just found this out, we rank third nationally in Georgia football players on National Football League rosters," Rogers said.

California and Texas lead the country respectively in the number of players from those respective states on

See Rogers, Page 3A

Assistant Chief Baxter on the mend after New Year's Eve mishap

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Michael Baxter is breathing a sigh of relief following a New Year's Eve mishap that left him bruised, sore and battling road rash.

Baxter was working a license check road block on New Year's Eve on the Murphy Highway when the incident occurred, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll said.

"There was a young man who had an expired registration and no car insurance," Chief Carroll said. "He was asked to move his car to the side and when he did, he put the car in reverse. Assistant Chief



Michael Baxter

Baxter was struck when the car moved backwards.

"It was a bit scary at first, but, remarkably, Bear

See Baxter, Page 2A

Knight: 'transition smooth'

Tax Office gears up for March 1 Title Tax change

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Newly elected Union County Tax Commissioner Lee Knight is pleased with the transition.

"The first day was very hectic, Thursday was a little better and Friday was better than Thursday," Knight said.

"We started fresh, we've already talked about building a new county tax Web site, where maybe we can service the customers better by offering an online means for them to pay their taxes."

"Commissioner Paris and his office have worked real well with me," Knight said. "Larry Garrett has been a pleasure to work with. I couldn't ask for any better cooperation."

Knight says the cooperation he has received has made the transition a smooth one.

"I feel real comfortable," he said. "I don't feel out of place and I feel like I'm going to belong there after a while. It's growing on me and there is a lot to learn."



Lee Knight

The staff is now taking credit cards over the phone to pay taxes.

"They had taken credit cards in the office previously," he said. "I told them that we should go ahead and take those credit cards over the phone. I don't want to turn away any revenues."

Knight has one concern, and that has everything to do with the March 1 start of the Title Ad Valorem Tax created in the last session of the Georgia General Assembly in

2012.

It's a state legislative plan to bring dollars in from a previously untapped source, causal auto sales, or sales in the private sector.

The plan is designed to push car owners to dealerships, and away from the previous system where private auto sales didn't generate tax dollars.

Starting March 1, it will cost more to register and title a vehicle in Georgia because of the new law.

The annual ad valorem tax, paid on a person's birthday, will remain for people who owned their cars before 2012. But for every automobile transaction following that, a new law will mean changes to the way vehicles are taxed. For some, it will mean big savings. For others, it will be a big expense, Knight said.

"I've talked with our local representatives from the General Assembly and they tell me it will boost state revenues," Knight said. "To me, it's still a tax."

See Title Tax, Page 3A

Commissioner Paris approves \$13.68 million County budget

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said there were a number of factors that raised the county's budget \$433,358 from a year ago.

Two new county employees, an attempt to give county employees a 2 percent raise, and new vehicle purchases for the Union County Sheriff's Office are in need.

Commissioner Paris approved the previously advertised \$13.68 million 2013 county budget on Dec. 27.

"We're using from our reserves to do some things that we need to do," he said. "We had to dip into reserves, we didn't want to raise property taxes, folks just can't afford that."

"Our property values went down 10 percent on the most recent Tax Digest, we knocked our millage rate down some," he said. "There's absolutely no tax increase in this budget. In fact, there's a slight decrease."



Lamar Paris

The big ticket items on the 2013 county budget include \$5.99 million for Public Safety, \$4.02 million for general county services and administration, \$1.01 million for Courts, \$838,330 for county services, \$436,480 for the county maintenance department, \$394,850 for the Commissioner's Office, \$284,255 for the Tax Appraiser's Office, \$266,347 for the Tax Commissioner's Office.

"We raised the county budget a little bit," he said. "We've squeezed the budget until we can't squeeze it any more. We've got a new sheriff and a

new budget for that department. The budget hasn't increased, but we've got items that we're having to look out for."

Other items of interests, the cost of Juvenile Courts has increased, the price of asphalt and fixing roads has increased, Commissioner Paris said.

"We're trying to budget for a salary increase for our employees," Commissioner Paris said. "This would be the second increase in four years for our employees."

"Withholding taxes have gone up 2 percent and some folks are already struggling as it is," he said. "We've put that into the budget, we're just not sure if we're going to be able to make that happen."

"We don't know because of other expenses that are hitting us," Commissioner Paris said.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to do something for our county employees, especially now that because of the fiscal cliff, Social Security taxes have risen," he said.

"Two percent isn't much to the folks up in Washington; it means something here," he said.

Chief Carroll: 'school safety a priority'

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The memories of the 26 people killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut will never be forgotten.

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll wants to make sure that the children attending Union County schools are safe from harm's way today and in the future.

Three times a week, Chief Carroll conducts safety checks in the schools, walk-through, unannounced to the public.

"We drive through, walk through, do the audits," Chief Carroll said. "You just can't take anything for granted in this world. We don't have a set schedule when we pay a visit to the schools. We just come in, and pay a visit at random and complete a system of checks."

Last week, Georgia State Trooper Cody White, Private First Class, went on the walk-through with Chief Carroll. He was impressed by the level of security in the local schools.

"I'd say these schools are pretty safe," Trooper White said. "The principal was along for the walk-through, the doors are shut, they keep the classrooms locked. They have great potential with where they're headed overall."



Georgia State Trooper PFC Cody White and Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll complete their unscheduled rounds at Union County Primary School. Photo/Charles Duncan

"This is a small town and people wouldn't expect things to happen here like it did in Connecticut," Trooper White said. "People didn't expect anything to happen in Newtown. You just have to be prepared, school shootings are common place, they do happen across the country. Communities just have to take the proper steps to avert these tragedies. It can be done."

Keeping classroom doors shut is key, name tags for visitors, no exceptions, and keeping staff members updated and on the same page

with school policies is a must, Trooper White said.

"It's all about teamwork, working together and being prepared when the lights come on in a real situation," he said.

On Dec. 14, a 20-year-old mentally challenged young man converged on Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. Before he left for the school to commit atrocities, he killed his mother at her home.

He then went to Sandy Hook and took the lives of

See Safety, Page 3A

Falcons honor T Bentley

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

As a part of the Atlanta Falcons' Salute to High School Football, Union County quarterback T Bentley was recognized at midfield by Atlanta Falcons' Head Coach Mike Smith as the Warrick Dunn Captain in the Community of the Year winner on Dec. 15.

The Captain in the Community Award is presented by Russell Athletic.

Bentley was chosen from a select group of 10 weekly winners of the award.

Earlier in November, Bentley had been recognized as the weekly winner for Nov. 12th.

The Captain in the Community Award recognition took place between the first and second Georgia High School State Championship games.

Joining Coach Smith and Bentley at midfield were the six High School Coaches of the Year recipients.

Bentley and the coaches were also recognized at the Atlanta Falcons vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers game on Dec. 30th.

Each year, the Falcons and Russell Athletic honor 10 varsity football student athletes from Georgia who demonstrate strong leadership



Atlanta Falcons Head Coach Mike Smith honors the Panthers' quarterback T Bentley with the team's Captain in the Community Award.

skills both on and off the field.

Winners of the award are selected by USA Football, the official youth football development partner of the National Football League.

Each winner's respective school receives a \$1,000 grant to support community initiatives courtesy of the Atlanta Falcons and the NFL's youth football fund.

In addition to their leadership on the field, the athletes must have a minimum 3.0 GPA and a volunteer community service record to qualify for the nomination.

"On behalf of the Atlanta Falcons, congratulations on being selected as the 2012 Atlanta Falcons Warrick Dunn Captain in the Community of the Year," Falcons Director of Community Relations Kendyl

Moss said. "We wish T a successful career both on and off the field."

Currently, T Bentley is ranked No. 1 in his class academically with a 4.0 GPA. An Eagle Scout since he was 14 years old, Bentley serves as the president of the Beta Club and the vice chair of the United Community Bank Junior Board of Directors. He is an active member of First Baptist Church Student Choir and volunteers for many community service projects.

Bentley recently chaired the First Annual "Shop with a Panther" sponsored by the Beta Club which involved several high school clubs hosting a select group of second grade students for a Christmas shop-

See Bentley, Page 2A

Vol. 104 No. 2
2 Sections, 20 Pages
Weather
Wed: Showers Hi 55 Lo 49
Thur: Showers Hi 53 Lo 52
Fri: Showers Hi 61 Lo 50

Inside
Arrests 13A
Church 7A
Classified 2B
Opinion 4A
Legal 3B
Obits 9A
Sports 10A

8 0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 4 2

GA State Commissioner of Revenue to speak at Rotary
Thursday, January 24
11:30am
Union County Community Center
See page 1B

J.W. Payne Retirement Party
Thursday, January 10
7:00 PM
Union County Senior Center
Refreshments will be served!
Come & Celebrate!
See page 3A

Celebrate the Business of the Quarter at Business After Hours
Thurs., Jan. 10
5:30pm - 6:30pm
@ Chamber offices
Blairsville
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

UCHS Basketball
Fri., Jan. 11 • 6pm
@ Oglethorpe Co.
Sat., Jan. 12 • 6pm vs. Andrews

UCHS Wrestling
Sat., Jan. 12 @ Andrews, NC

UCMS Wrestling
Fri., Jan. 11 • 5pm @ Home