

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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EMA Director: 'Everyone should sign up for WENS'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When it comes to being prepared, Union County has a special tool for its residents called the Wireless Emergency Notification System.

And yes, the Union County alert system can even notify people on their pagers.

So, what exactly is Union County WENS?

"(UCWENS) is designed to instantly reach cellphones, landline numbers, email addresses and pagers when an urgent county alert needs to be communicated," according

to program literature. "In the event of an emergency, a text message, voice call or email will be sent to the contact information you registered with the system."

Alerts could include notifications about extreme weather from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as information concerning city activities, water department alerts, and parks and recreation alerts.

The alert system has been in place in Union County since 2010, and recently, the system was used to keep residents up to date on the



David Dyer, Union County Fire Chief/EMA Director

state of the countywide burn ban that was imposed during the exceptional drought experienced last fall.

And Dyer has kept the notifications coming, with a winter storm warning in January, a boil water advisory in February, a couple of severe thunderstorm warnings and a flash flood warning in March, more thunderstorm warnings in April, and even a tornado warning in May.

And with all the storms that have been occurring this month and the potential for any number of emergency situations to arise, Union County Fire Chief and EMA

Director David Dyer believes it's important that every single person in the county signs up for the service.

"We can get anything out via the notification system," said Dyer. "The main alerts that we would do is stuff like the burn ban; hazardous materials, where people need to shelter in place, which means they need to shut their home down, don't bring any kind of outside ventilation into it for a while;

"Or if they need to evacuate, like Gatlinburg, which would be a perfect example, to evacuate all those folks during the fire.

NOAA storms, thunderstorms - NOAA alerts can come through this also."

Continued Dyer: "It's the quickest, fastest, most information that we can get information into peoples' hands. It's been proven that people will not take action unless they have two sources of information.

"We know that people are watching TV, looking on the internet, getting their NOAA weather alerts. We would like to have a local area to where people can say, okay, I hear the media and the news and all this national stuff -

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Union County Arena hosts biggest ever 2017 Pro Rodeo

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Thousands of rodeo lovers pulled on their boots, cowboy hats and took to the stands, packing the Union County Arena over the weekend for the Sixth Annual Blairsville Pro Rodeo, held on both Friday, June 16 and Saturday, June 17.

Breaking previous records, the event garnered the biggest crowd in Blairsville Pro Rodeo history, with rodeo fans filling up both sides of the arena bleachers, and plenty still standing around the arena



Bull riding is the most popular of rodeo sports. Photo/Lily Avery

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Agreements and grants in monthly county meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris accepted an agreement between the county and Air Methods in the June 15 regular county meeting.

The agreement will cover Union County residents through May 31, 2018, for medically necessary life flights via the Air Methods helicopter stationed at Union General Hospital.

Total cost of the agreement is \$55,668, with the county's portion coming to \$27,834, or half the total



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris once again explaining the land deal for the property next to the Union County Farmers Market. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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Dizzy Dean 14U youths headed to state tournament

News Special
North Georgia News

The Union County Panthers 14 and Under baseball team is headed to Rossville, where they will be competing in the Dizzy Dean State Tournament beginning Friday, June 23.

Fresh winning the Ralph Diaz Invitational Tournament on June 3rd, the Union County 14U Dizzy Dean All-Stars traveled to Dawsonville, to compete in the District 6 Dizzy Dean Baseball Tournament.

The Panthers came away with the Championship Trophy by winning five out of six games in the double-elimination tournament.

The Panthers lost the opening game on Friday, June 9 to Gilmer County in a pitchers' duel by a score of 2 to 1. Isaak Mullanack and Damien Chitwood were the only Panthers to get a hit off the Bobcat pitching.

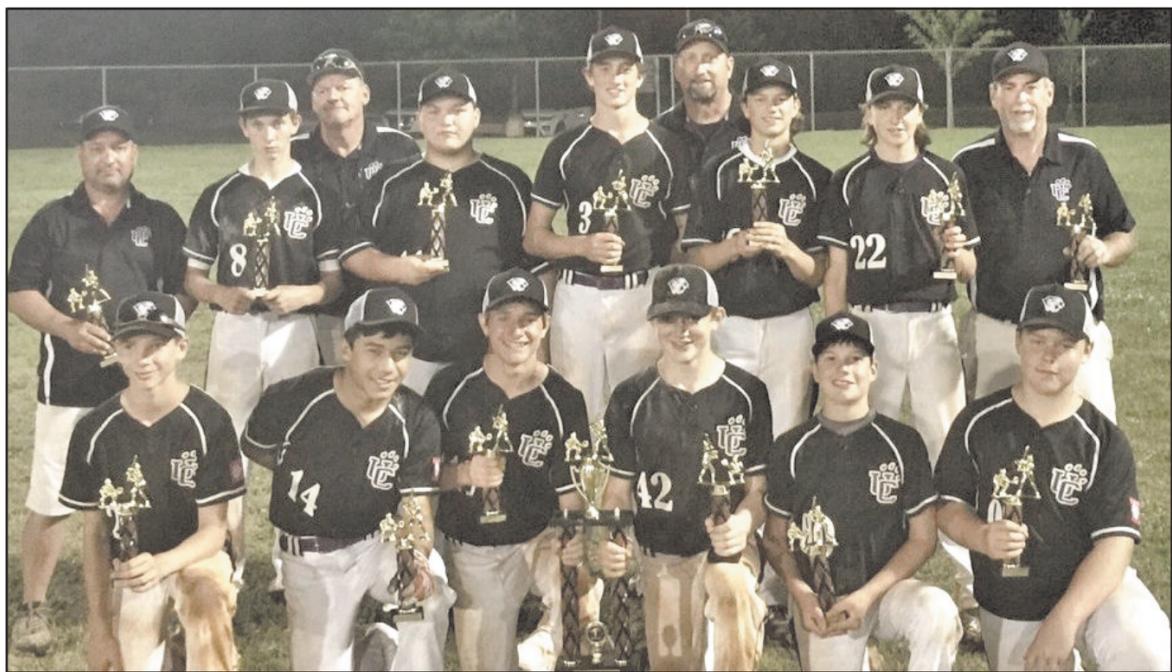
The Panthers used four

pitchers to hold the Bobcats to only two runs. The loss placed the Panthers in the loser's bracket with a long road to the Championship.

The Panthers returned to the field on Saturday and got their bats rolling and scored 12 runs while holding North Hall to only two. Kaston Hemphill led the offense with a double and a triple while Josh Orr, Conner Shields and Lake Hughes contributed two hits each. Joseph Rockenbaugh added two doubles and Mullanack connected on a triple. Both Hughes and Orr also picked up two stolen bases. Four Union County pitchers held the Trojans to only two runs.

On Sunday, the "hot hitting" Panthers continued putting up big numbers while scoring 20 runs against Fannin County in the first game of the day. Orr, Shields and Thomas Dyer each contributed four hits in the game. The Panthers used five pitchers to hold Fannin County to four runs.

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Kneeling left to right: 2-Thomas Dyer, 14-George Page, 19-J.J. Littles, 42-Damien Chitwood, 00-Lake Hughes, 99-Bret Ballew. Back Row left to right: Coach James Littles, 8-Josh Orr, Coach Tony Hughes, 11-Joseph Rockenbaugh, 3-Kaston Hemphill, Coach Danny Hemphill, 16-Isaak Mullanack, 22-Conner Shields and Coach Lester Chesser.

Firefighters break bread with their communities

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

What would the county do without its volunteer firefighters?

When a resident becomes a volunteer firefighter, they assume a mantle of protection for their neighbors, and like as not, it's that volunteer who is first on the scene of any emergency near one of the volunteer stations.

Volunteer firefighters live within the communities they serve, and lately, the volunteer fire stations of Union County have been celebrating their special relationships with the public by holding community Open Houses.

It's a fact that volunteer firefighters couldn't do what they do without continued



Smokey Bear loving on some local children. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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UCSO thankful that killer convicts apprehended

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Curtis Billue and Christopher Monica, both fathers, did not make it home from work on Tuesday, June 13 - they died in the line of duty as Georgia Department of Corrections Officers.

And it's unlikely that their alleged killers, Ricky Dubose and Donnie Rowe, will be going home anytime soon, either, as authorities took the two escaped convicts into custody some 50 miles from Nashville, Tennessee, on Thursday, June 15.

The shootings happened around 5:45 a.m. that Tuesday, when Dubose and Rowe managed to overpower and shoot their guarding officers on a prisoner transport bus in Putnam County.



Donnie Rowe. Photo/Rutherford County Sheriff's Office



Ricky Dubose. Photo/Rutherford County Sheriff's Office

Once free from the bus, the pair carjacked a vehicle and disappeared, setting off a multiday manhunt that put Georgia law enforcement professionals and citizens on

the lookout for armed killers. State and federal investigators initially fielded a variety of leads that pointed to South Carolina, but when that

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