

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Union County schools started last week, first day a success

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Students and staff of Union County Schools hit the ground running on Friday, Aug. 5, for the first day of the 2016-2017 school year.

"Today was very smooth for a first day of school," said Union County High School Principal John Hill. "It was almost like we'd taken a weeklong break and we were back in action. It was a great day. One thing that was neat today was, I got to work about 6:15 a.m., and there were some kids already in the parking lot by 6:30.

See School, Page 2A



Union County Primary School students and their parents line up outside the school building for the first day of classes on Friday, Aug. 5

## City of Blairsville millage rate stays at 2 mills

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For yet another year running, the Blairsville City Council voted to keep the millage rate at 2 mills, which will this year bring in \$124,649 in property taxes from city residents.

According to the tax digest and five-year history, the city will be bringing in about \$1,803 more than last year with the same millage rate, thanks to an increase in property values.

City council set the millage rate in a public hearing just prior to the

See Millage, Page 5A



In the Aug. 2 meeting of Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and city council, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carr Conley passes out paperwork detailing his department's activities for the month of July. Here he is with Councilwoman Martha Cone

## NGTC hosts Active Shooter training event

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Department of Homeland Security, Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and the Blairsville campus of North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) hosted an Active Shooter training exercise for law enforcement officers from Union County Sheriff's Office, the Blairsville Police and other local first responders.

The Friday, Aug. 5, exercise simulated a school shooting, forcing law enforcement to respond and confront the gunman, and to secure the scene for EMT's to enter and treat the wounded.

Faculty and staff of NGTC posed as students, teachers, and staff members with some portraying shooting victims, both deceased and injured.

Kevin Dyer of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources played the role of the gunman, whose rampage began by mortally wounding a financial aid officer with a gunshot to the head, he



Seth Dyer with the Blairsville Police Department was first to arrive in response to the simulated Active Shooter scenario at North Georgia Technical College on Friday, Aug. 5

then murdered another faculty member who was on the phone with 911 emergency services to report shots being fired.

He began traveling throughout the building looking for more victims while those posing as students or faculty had the option to run or hide until the coast was clear.

"Some of the faculty

members here have been trained to 'run, hide, fight' during an active shooter situation," NGTC Officer Jeff Edge said. "At the first opportunity, you want to try and get away.

"If you can't run or get away, hide or barricade yourself in a room, a closet, or a bathroom. Then you need to start making

See NGTC, Page 2A

## County audit reports revenues up in 2015

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

In a special called meeting on Thursday, Aug. 4, accountant Clay Pilgrim of Rushton & Pilgrim presented the audit report for the county's fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2015.

Financial audits are mandated by state law, and must be turned in to the state no later than June 30 each year. The auditing process begins in April, and once completed and turned into the state, the audit is presented to the public.

"This would have normally been presented at the last county meeting on July 21, but the firm was unable to attend that meeting, so we set

up this special meeting for the purpose of presentation of the audit," said Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris.

According to details of the audit, which can be obtained through the commissioner's office, General Fund revenues in 2015 increased by \$1.64 million when compared to Fiscal Year 2014.

This increase is due mainly to a \$982,467 increase in property tax intake - a key indicator of continued economic growth within the county during 2015.

Collection of other taxes increased as well, further attesting to the overall expansion in Union County's tax base: motor vehicle taxes, up \$130,688; local option sales taxes, up \$87,029; insurance



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris held a special called meeting on Thursday, Aug. 4, to go over the 2015 audit presentation

premium taxes, up \$71,888.

"On the (General

See Audit, Page 5A

## Over 300 sandwiches served at Union County Farmers Market Saturday

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Nothing satisfies a hungry stomach on a hot summer day quite like a tomato sandwich, and the Union County Farmers Market had plenty to go around during the market's annual Customer Appreciation Day on Saturday, Aug. 6.

"We had somewhere around 50 pounds of tomatoes, and we had some that were left over, but we used most of them," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "We made roughly 300 sandwiches and every one of them is gone.

"We had a lot of people



L-R: Lt. Brent Long and firefighter CJ Townsend with Union County Fire Chief David Dyer. The Union County Fire Department assisted the Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 6

come in to try things, so it's been a good day. We do this

every year, and I think that this

See Market, Page 3A

## Mattee muses over mummy berry and more at Movers and Shakers

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - Towns and Union County Extension Agent Melissa Mattee mulled over matters of lawn and flora care with the Mountain Movers and Shakers during their weekly meeting on Friday, Aug. 5, at Mary's Southern Grill.

This is not the conservative educational group's first encounter with the self-proclaimed "bug lady" - Mattee spoke with the Movers and Shakers for the first time back in March, when she introduced herself to the community and instantly became a hit among the members.

Mattee addressed the group on topics of current relevance at the extension office - proper lawn care, black knot - fungus, fire blight and

mummy berry.

"It's really important, if you have any grass at all, to have upkeep to prevent erosion and maintain greenery around your home," said Mattee. "September is a really important month for our grasses, whether you're establishing a lawn or just maintaining it."

According to Mattee, grass in the North Georgia Mountains is typically Fescue, which allows for survival during the cold weather months. September is the prime time to seed for a Fescue lawn due to its bump in growth after the heat and humidity of summer has lessened.

Fescue grasses have a three season growing period - fall, winter and spring. While most people assume that grass becomes dormant during the winter months, Fescue grass actually continues to grow during this time, gathering



Towns and Union County Ag Agent Melissa Mattee addressed a variety of common lawn care concerns at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, Aug. 5

nutrients and moisture from the soil.

"If you do have a mature Fescue lawn, September is

See Mattee, Page 5A

## Murphy USA opens end of September

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

When construction first started in June on the new Murphy USA in the Blairsville Walmart parking lot, many wondered what was going on - the site was surrounded by fencing and black tarpaulin.

Slowly but surely, the new gas station/convenience store began to come into view, as the tarpaulin came down and construction continued.

Once the prefabricated halves of the new convenience store came together, the store's district manager, Marques Gardner, held a special groundbreaking ceremony at the site with help from the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce on July 20.

Chamber members gathered with Murphy USA



Employees of Murphy USA held a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony in July to honor the construction of the new Murphy USA convenience store and gas station in the Walmart parking area. The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce joined in on the celebration

employees that Wednesday - employees such as Jessica Warren of Blue Ridge, who will be leading the new Blairsville

location as store manager. Together, they celebrated

See Murphy USA, Page 5A

## Tracy Lawrence to play The Hall

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE - Tracy Lawrence is one of the most recognizable voices in Country Music.

With such songs as "Time Marches On," "Alibis," and "Find Out Who Your Friends Are," Lawrence will be bringing his brand of Merle Haggard and Vern Gosdin-inspired Country Music to Anderson Music Hall in the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Friday, Aug. 26.

The multi-platinum Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music award-winning artist has helped shape the sound of Country Music for two decades.

Having recently celebrated 20 years in music, Lawrence has served as an inspiration for a whole new generation of entertainers and fans.



Tracy Lawrence

Jason Aldean and Luke Bryan frequently pay tribute to Lawrence during their live shows by performing any number of his double-platinum hits, including "Time Marches On" and "Alibis," songs that make

Lawrence one of the most played artists on Country Music radio.

Despite performing 90-plus live concerts a year, Lawrence also stays busy hosting

See Lawrence, Page 5A

Vol. 107 No. 31  
4 Sections 24 Pages  
Weather  
Thurs: T-Storms Hi 81 Lo 66  
Fri: Cloudy Hi 81 Lo 67  
Sat: T-Storms Hi 82 Lo 67

Inside  
Arrests 2B  
Church 2C  
Classifieds 3D  
Opinion 4B  
Legals 4D  
Obits 5C  
Sports 4A

Home Grown & Handmade

GMREC  
Council Day  
See page 1C

NEW  
Hunting  
Seasons  
and  
Regulations  
See page 2B

An Evening  
Celebrating  
Ronnie Milsap, '64  
Thursday, Aug. 11 @  
Young Harris College

PANTHERS  
Softball  
Tues. Aug. 9  
vs. Lumpkin 6 PM  
Thurs. Aug. 11  
@ North Hall 6 PM