

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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November 23, 2016

Burn ban still in effect as wildfires rage

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris reiterated the importance of the current burn ban in the Nov. 17 county meeting.

The commissioner proclaimed a burn ban on all outdoor open flames on Friday, Nov. 4, and backed it up by implementing an emergency burn ban ordinance on Wednesday, Nov. 9.

That ordinance allows the Union County Sheriff's Office to issue citations that could lead to up to \$1,000 in fines and up to 60 days in jail.

The commissioner's office has been waging a heavy public campaign to get the word out about the burn ban. Commissioner Paris has put out more than 50 signs around the county alerting people to the ban, a pair of lighted message boards at strategic intersections in town, as well as blasted Facebook with messages about the ban and gotten the word out over the radio, all in the hopes of letting every last resident know about the ban.

"When the fire department goes out there and somebody's burning, we don't want them to be able to

say, 'we didn't know about it,'" said Commissioner Paris. "Unless they've been a hermit and just been up in their home and not moved, then they should know about it now."

All of this is in response to months of extreme drought that have created conditions perfect for the onset and spread of wildfires.

Indeed, the nearby Rough Ridge fire in Fannin County is burning its way into North Carolina, and has consumed upward of 30,000 acres of wilderness.

Firefighters in Towns County have finally pushed the Rock Mountain Fire back from the Tate City community, with the help of the U.S. Forest Service and hotshots from around the country, not to mention several Georgia counties and cities under the banner of the Georgia Mutual Aid Group.

Union County has been lucky so far – Suches saw a bit of wildfire recently, though it was put out quickly and was suspected to have been arson. The Chimneytop Mountain wildfire is done burning, and the wildfire in White County off Richard Russell Scenic Highway has also been contained.

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Josh Dyer fights wildfire raging on Rock Mountain near Towns County

Mayor spreads word about drought levels

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Last week, Gov. Nathan Deal reacted to worsening statewide drought conditions by raising 52 counties to Level 2 Drought Response.

And conservation is key, said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, who hopes that everyone – both residents and businesses – will do their part to rein in water usage.

"Our water right now, we're in okay shape, but if this drought continues, it's just going to get more serious," said Mayor Conley. "People should definitely be conserving water. We've asked people to voluntarily conserve water for over a month now."

The governor's response came on the heels of a recommendation from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, which also resulted in the further classification of 58 other Georgia counties as being at Level 1 Drought Response.

"During this prolonged period of severe drought in Georgia, we are bolstering the state's drought response in more than 100 counties," said Gov. Deal in a statement



Mayor Jim Conley

last week. "I would like to remind Georgians that there are specific guidelines and prohibitions to follow during a Level 1 and Level 2 Drought Response.

"We urge these communities to act accordingly, use good judgment and avoid outdoor burning and watering while we continue to work with the EPD and pray for rain across the state."

According to the governor's website, this week

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Two die in two-car crash on GA 515

By Charles Duncan
and Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Brittany Shenise Hunter, 23, of Hiwassee, died at the scene of a two-car crash on GA 515 on Thursday, Nov. 17, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

An elderly couple, Ronald and Joanne Guggisberg, both 73, of Warne, North Carolina, was also involved in the accident, according to authorities.

Joanne Guggisberg was airlifted from the scene, authorities said, and she died the next day on Nov. 18 in Northeast Georgia Medical Center as a result of injuries sustained in the accident, according to the Ivie Funeral Home in Hayesville, NC, website.

The accident occurred shortly before the 911 call came in at 9:17 a.m. that Thursday.



Hunter's vehicle, a Kia sedan, was traveling east on Young Harris Highway, just a few short miles from the Towns County line, when for reasons unknown it drifted across the centerline and into the path of the Guggisbergs' vehicle, a Toyota Camry, authorities said.

The front passenger sides of both cars collided, according to authorities.

Services for Joanne Guggisberg will be held Tuesday, Nov. 22, at 11 a.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary

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Agriscience Center to hold grand opening on Monday

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The public is cordially invited to attend the Union County Schools Agriscience Center Grand Opening on Monday, Nov. 28.

Located just up Gainesville Highway at 22 Lovell Road in Blairsville, the grand opening will take place from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and will feature a program followed by tours of the facility afterward.

The facility is one of a kind, designed to fit the needs of Union County Schools after studying the agriculture

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Brian Ledford, of the Union County Schools Maintenance Department, adds a final coat of stain to the recently installed sign for the new Agriscience Center at 22 Lovell Road.

'Turkey Trot' showcases community support for deputy



Medal winners from the 5K race

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The shirts at Saturday's Mitchell Henderson prayer walk and run read "#239 Strong," in honor of Henderson's Union County Sheriff's Office Badge Number 239 and the incredible strength he continues to exhibit during his recovery from an

automobile accident on Sept. 19, exactly two months prior to the day of the race.

Proceeds from the #239 Turkey Trot 5K went to the Mitchell Henderson Benefit Account. The event featured 25 sponsors and 145 participants in the 5K and the Prayer Walk.

According to Bridget Henderson-Phillips, Henderson's sister, and Kaley

Raper, his girlfriend, Henderson has been recovering at Atlanta's Shepherd Center for the last month. The Shepherd Center specializes in rehabilitation of brain and spine injuries, and is ranked among the Top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the nation, according to U.S. News & World Report.

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Historical Society names Gibson 2016 volunteer of the year

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Historical Society had a day of meetings, preparations and thanksgiving, beginning at the Historic Union County Courthouse for the society's monthly meeting, followed by a volunteer appreciation luncheon at Monet's Restaurant on Tuesday, Nov. 15.

According to Historical Society President Libby Stevens, the courthouse and the society would not be able to have such an interactive presence in the community without the dozens of volunteers who help on a daily basis.

"We could not carry on the work of the historical society without the work of these volunteers," said Stevens. "The directors are there to make sure that we have the money to open the doors, but we cannot carry that through without the volunteers."

To honor those volunteers, the historical society held an appreciation luncheon to show unwavering gratitude for the countless hours these people are willing to work while asking for nothing in return.

During the luncheon, door prizes were handed out, fellowship was enjoyed, and one special volunteer received



Union County Historical Society President Libby Stevens presents Wanda Gibson, who was recently named historical society volunteer of the year

the recognition of being named the 2016 Volunteer of the Year – Wanda Gibson.

"There is nothing like volunteering at the historical society," said Gibson. "You meet so many interesting people. There's just so much that goes on."

Gibson has been volunteering for the historical society for almost three years now, working at the courthouse whenever she is needed, offering a helping hand with festivals and celebrations on the square, and assisting in any way she can for the society and the

community.

"I have always been interested in our family history, and sharing it with others during family gatherings and at reunions is a pleasure," said Gibson. "If I had listened closer as our grandmother talked to us, I would have known that when she said our folks came across the big waters on that big ship, she was referring to the Mayflower in 1620, on which my seventh great-grandfather, George Soule, arrived in America.

"My mom and dad
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Happy THANKSGIVING

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