

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Agriscience Center packs them in for grand opening

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Dozens of community members, local officials and members of the Union County School System gathered at the new Union County Schools Agriscience Center for the official grand opening ceremony of the building on Monday, Nov. 28.

Former Union County High School Agriculture Teacher Jim Allison began the ceremony by sharing anecdotes from his childhood and time in the program, expressing his pride and gratitude for how far the agriculture department has come since his time at UCHS.

"I'm excited for the students to have this state-of-the-art Agriscience Center," said Allison. "There's a lot of difference between the facility here today than it was in 1965 when I came to the mountains. For example, the equipment

is so much better, than what we had back then, and I'm so glad for it.

"I feel that this Agriscience Center is a valuable asset, not only to students of Union County Schools, but for all the people of Union County."

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, UCHS Principal John Hill, and Union County Board of Education Vice Chairman Tony Hunter also spoke at the ceremony, sharing uplifting words of encouragement and pride for the community, which supported the project from start to finish, and to the faculty and students that will benefit most from its opening.

Although Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris could not attend the event due to a prior engagement, he wrote a letter expressing his excitement for the facility, which was read on his behalf by Union County Schools Associate Superintendent Dr.



Dr. Fred Rayfield, Union County Schools Superintendent

Jeremy Williams.

"The Agriscience Center will add a new dimension to agriculture in North Georgia," wrote Commissioner Paris. "The county is excited because, as agriculture production grows

in Union County, so does improved land use, and this also, in time, enhances the Farmers Market.

"There is a future in farming, and thanks to these

young people and the educators that will be assisting them, this once almost lost art will always be making a comeback in our county."

After several years of planning and property work, the facility has now come to fruition, primarily under the guidance of former Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe, and the center was finalized under the supervision of current Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield.

On behalf of the UCHS FFA program, FFA President Austin Dyer shared words of appreciation and anticipation for the new Agriscience Center, thanking the community, local leaders and school system for believing in not only the program, but also the students within the program, and creating a better venue for learning and growth.

"This facility will have

the positive impact on not only the students enrolled in Union County's Agriculture Education program, but it will also benefit the citizens of Union County," said Dyer.

"As an FFA member, I am excited about the opportunities this facility will offer to our local FFA Chapter. This will include a place to keep and show animals, a place to grow and sell crops, enough space to have our very own herd of cattle and countless other opportunities.

"I would like to thank each and every one who has had a part in bringing this dream into reality, and for helping us make this program what it is today."

The main building of the facility features a large arena in which the grand opening ceremony was held, which is to be utilized for the school's Blue and Gold Auction as well

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## Cruisers help Union County Sheriff's Office provide local kids with Christmas

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For the Blairsville Cruisers and Union County Sheriff's Office, Christmas is more than holiday parties, parades and shopping – it is a time to hone in on the spirit of giving, most importantly, giving to the children of Union County.

Over the last 15 years, the Shop-With-A-Cop and Sheriff's Give-A-Gift programs have become staples in the community, allowing many children in the area to have a Christmas who otherwise would not. This year, the sheriff's office is expecting



Far Left, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll, a member of the Blairsville Cruisers, showed up to help his fellow Cruisers donate to the Sheriff's Give-A-Gift program.

## Christmas comes to the Market



Santa with a young Batman fan at the Kris Kringle Market on Saturday, Dec. 3.

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Kris Kringle Market brought holiday cheer to the Union County Market on Saturday, Dec. 3, as vendors and patrons filled the halls of the Market in preparation for Christmas.

On top of a full market with more than 80 vendors showcasing their produce, homemade goods and Christmas seasonal items, the market hosted a series of entertainment opportunities and events for the children to enjoy.

"We've been having the Kris Kringle Market for a number of years," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "It's a way for some of our produce vendors

to have something for Christmas, and some of them do.

"The people that have greenhouses, or they have turnip greens or collard greens, they can come and sell items. It works well for them. It also provides our crafters with a special day, because everybody is looking for Christmas gifts.

"I think this year has done better than any year before. It's been covered up since we got here this morning. There's something for everybody here. It's been a good day so far. We really appreciate the community turnout."

Santa Claus made an appearance at the market on Saturday, taking Christmas gift requests and posing for pictures.

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## Burn ban temporarily lifted thanks to rain

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Good news, residents of Union County – the burn ban has been temporarily suspended due to improved fire danger levels from recent rain.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris met with Fire Chief David Dyer on Monday to temporarily lift the ban on burning, at least until further notice.

That ban had been in place since Nov. 4.

"We still have a fire danger, regardless," said Chief Dyer. "We're still in an exceptional drought. This is a temporary suspension. Our long-term weather forecast doesn't see any kind of major rain coming that's

going to really knock us out of this drought.

"So that's why we're only going to temporarily suspend it, just in case it does dry out in, say, a week or so, and the fire danger goes back up. If the fire danger goes up again, we will have to put that burn ban back in effect."

The fire chief pointed out that residents will still need to obtain a burning permit if they wish to burn. Burning permits are issued for the burning of natural vegetation only, like brush piles – it is still illegal to burn trash, mail and other household items.

"All outdoor burning must have a permit and is good only for natural vegetative materials," according to the Georgia Forestry Commission



Firefighters responded to a house fire the morning of Sunday, Dec. 4, off old Blue Ridge Highway. The fire was quickly put out and no one was hurt.

## Union Sheriff's Office working with massive burglary task force

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office are working with a task force of more than 20 other Georgia law enforcement agencies in order to bring a group of serial burglars to justice.

It is believed that this group is responsible for burglaries in at least 29 Georgia counties, and has stolen as much as \$600,000 in 96 known overnight burglaries of small businesses, though their range extends into neighboring states as well.

So far, 38 suspects have been identified in connection with the burglaries.



UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn and Sgt. Lamar Dyer study an extensive map of burglaries committed in the North Georgia area.

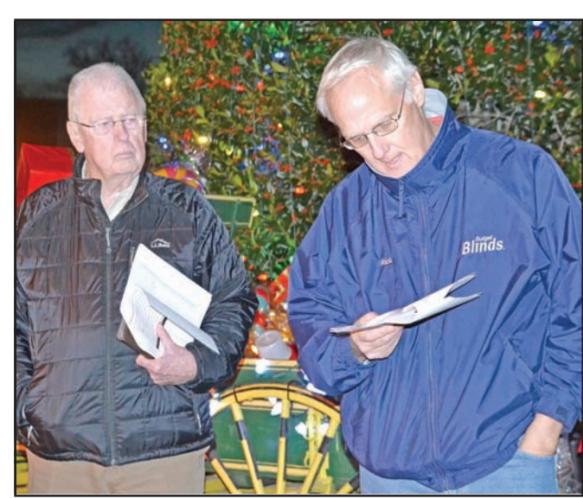
## Enotah CASA volunteers light luminaries for children

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Enotah CASA added to the collection of lights on the Blairsville Square with its annual Christmas Luminaries event on Friday, Dec. 2.

Despite the frigid temperatures, Enotah CASA volunteers and community supporters gathered around the square to be involved in the lighting of the luminaries, taking time out of the busy holiday season to help make a difference in the lives of the area's children in need.

Enotah CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, is a 501c3



Patrick Malone and Rick Siefken spoke at the Dec. 2 Christmas Luminaries program on the Blairsville Square.

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NATIONAL PEARL HARBOR Remembrance Day DECEMBER 7  
75th Anniversary

PANTHERS BASKETBALL  
Tues, Dec 6 vs. Fannin 6 & 7:30  
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WRESTLING  
@the Pit UCMS Traditional Tournament  
Sat, Dec 10 at 9 AM