

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Deal signs important legislation to protect firefighters

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

ELLIJAY – Firefighters don't ask what they might be exposed to before running into burning buildings.

And before the signing of House Bill 146 on Thursday, May 4, if they contracted cancers from exposure to carcinogenic burning chemicals, Georgia firefighters were on their own.

Effective Jan. 1, 2018, firefighters all over Georgia will gain access to insurance coverage for cancers specific to firefighting.

Gov. Nathan Deal met with legislators to sign what has become known as the "firefighter cancer bill" last Thursday at Gilmer County Fire Station No. 1.

During the signing ceremony, which was attended by more than two dozen area firefighting agencies, bill sponsor and District 67 State Rep. Micah Gravley of Douglasville highlighted individuals important to the bill.

He spoke on the advocacy of Atlanta firefighter Frank Martinez, who died last year of cancer before being able to benefit from the bill he fought to secure for all firefighters in Georgia. Martinez' children attended the signing and collected pens used to sign the bill from Gov. Deal.

Bill advocate and Gilmer County Firefighter Brian Scudder, who previously underwent more than a year of chemotherapy for a firefighter

cancer.

Gov. Deal, who vetoed a similar bill last year, called HB 146 an innovative solution in the way it provides "compensation and money for treatment and care for firefighters who contract cancers that are related to their work."

Moving forward in 2018, the bill will require fire departments to have insurance coverage to pay for cancer claims, to include lump sum payments to firefighters when they are diagnosed with cancers related to the job.

Furthermore, firefighters diagnosed with a "firefighter cancer" will be eligible for up to three years of disability payments if they can't work because of their illness.

After the signing, District

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L-R: District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland, Gov. Nathan Deal, Union County Batt. Chief Richard Jones and Union County Fire Chief David Dyer. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

First Baptist Church hosts annual National Day of Prayer

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Thousands upon thousands joined in prayer across the nation last week for the 66th National Day of Prayer, including dozens of Union County residents who gathered in prayer at the First Baptist Church of Blairsville on Thursday, May 4.

The National Day of Prayer is always on the first Thursday of May each year, and according to the National Day of Prayer Task Force, it is an occasion to promote prayer in righteousness and encourage

A number of pastors from around the county showed up to pray over various facets of the community, from the local levels of county and city government, all the way up to missionaries around the world and Israel.

Richard and Sharon



Richard and Sharon Morrison. Photo/Lily Avery

Morrison of Blairsville organized and coordinated the event, reaching out to the pastors who participated in the ceremony last Thursday.

"Thousands of people

have gathered together today all across this great nation to pray," said Sharon Morrison. "We still have the freedom as

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Sheriff's Office to crack down on speeding, texting while driving

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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For the safety of the public, the Union County Sheriff's Office will soon be increasing its efforts to crack down on certain offenses.

The top two problem areas for patrol deputies have been speeding on Georgia 515 and texting while driving, activities that are both potentially deadly to drivers and innocent bystanders, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

"Here lately, we've had some that's been clocked in the 90s and 100 plus miles per hour," said Lt. Osborn, speaking on GA 515 speeding. "That's too fast, and in my opinion, it's stupid."

Other offenses the sheriff's office will be looking to curtail are blacked out tinted windows and unsecured loads, according to Lt. Osborn.

All of the issues



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

enumerated above are becoming more and more of a problem in the county, according to Lt. Osborn.

"We're giving the public a chance to pull the reins back in," said Lt. Osborn. "There's going to be more of a concentrated patrol of 515 no matter what."

The sheriff's office has been averaging more than 100 traffic tickets a month, a good portion of them for speeding, according to Lt. Osborn.

"It's getting worse, and we've got to do something about it," said Lt. Osborn. "We're writing tickets, but we're not a revenue machine. This is to save lives."

"Look at the deaths out there. We've been looking at the citations and looking at the deaths, and all that's going up, so it's got to be stopped."

To Lt. Osborn's point, the sheriff's office operates on a budget through the county that is independent of the number of citations issued, meaning that the sheriff's office is funded even if it writes zero tickets.

"Texting and driving. I see it more and every day," said Lt. Osborn. "I see it every day, and I have pulled people over for it, but now we're going to start writing

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Life of Martha Cone celebrated in memorial

By Shawn Jarrard
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Family and friends gathered to celebrate the life and legacy of Martha Cone on Thursday, May 4.

Cone, 78, passed away at Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on Monday, May 1, following a brief illness.

Her memorial service took place inside the sanctuary of her home church, First United Methodist of Union County, where she directed the church's Child Enrichment Center for more than 20 years.

As guests filed in before

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Scott Cone eulogized his mother, Martha, during the Thursday, May 4, memorial service. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Union County woman dies from injuries in Sunday evening motorcycle crash

By Charles Duncan
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A 53-year-old Blairsville woman succumbed to injuries sustained in a one-vehicle accident Sunday on Track Rock Gap Road, just east of Foggy Bottom Farm Road, according to Staff Sgt. Bradley Glass of the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Chanel Hilliard lost control of her Harley Davidson Cruiser and skidded 50 feet before her motorcycle left the roadway, Sgt. Glass said.

"She collided with a telephone pole," Sgt. Glass said. "She died at the scene from injuries sustained in the crash as emergency personnel was arriving at the crash scene. She was pronounced dead at the scene."

This crash occurred around 7:55 p.m. on Sunday, May 7. Hilliard was traveling north on Track Rock Gap Road attempting to negotiate a left-hand curve. The motorcycle traveled onto the east shoulder of the roadway

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Chanel Hilliard

TVA: Lake Nottely means jobs and money

By Lily Avery
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As part of a yearly "River Tour," the Tennessee Valley Authority held a briefing for local officials at Cabin Coffee in Blairsville to discuss area lake levels and recent recreation studies on Monday, May 1.

Members of the various departments within TVA spent the last week traveling throughout TVA properties in the valleys in

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Travis Brickley, left, and Tom Barnett of TVA, speaking at Cabin Coffee on Monday, May 1. Photo/Lily Avery

Union County home to two Title I Reward Schools

By Shawn Jarrard
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Every child deserves equal access to a quality education, including those who face financial and other disadvantages on the home front, as is the case with many families in Union County.

Enter Title I, a federal program designed to help schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families.

According to the numbers, greater than 60

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UCES Principal Trish Cook, Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Jarrard, and UCMS Principal Gwen Stafford. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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