

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Scottish Festival brings thousands of tourists to Blairsville

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Lads and lassies gathered their kilts and erasies to partake in the Opening Ceremony for the 14th Annual Blairsville Scottish Festival and Highland Games at Meeks Park on Saturday, June 10.

Each year, the games are officially opened during the Opening Ceremony, highlighting the Parade of Tartans, the Massed Bands and the recognition of the year's honored clan – Clan Fraser.

"The Scottish Festival is all about the gathering of the clans," said Paul Jean Redditt, Scottish Festival Music and Entertainment Chairwoman. "That's the origin of it. All the clans come and they border the creek and everyone comes together, like a family. Year

after year, everyone comes back. People that are searching for their clans come here and find out what their roots mean. It just gives people a real connection to their Scottish heritage."

Under the command of Drum Major Don Bogue, this year's Massed Bands featured bagpipers and drummers from across the region, with musicians from Athol Highlanders Pipes and Drums, Alhambra Highlanders Pipes and Drums, Appalachian St. Andrews Pipes and Drums, John Mohr MacKintosh Pipes and Drums.

Since the beginning of the Blairsville games 14 years ago, a clan from the original 26 that registered to attend the first games has been honored. Clan Blair was the first to hold

the coveted title all those years ago and now, Clan Fraser holds the 2017 title.

"In the 14 years that we've had the festival, we have literally drawn out of a hat the names of the 26 clans that were here the first year," said Joe Satterfield, Blairsville Scottish Festival Planning Committee Chairman. "We put those 26, and now 12, names in a pot and draw them out of a hat, literally, and invite them to be the honored clan. But it has to do with the first year and the clans that were here the organizing year."

Gary Fraser of Clan Fraser spoke to the audience on behalf of the clan, expressing his utmost gratitude to be honored during the festival and wishing all in attendance

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Clan Fraser was the honored clan at the 2017 Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games. Photo/Lily Avery

'Hometown Hero' Bud Akins honored by Modern Woodmen



Bud and Mary Carol Akins with members of Modern Woodmen of America. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Everyone always knew that Bud Akins was a Hometown Hero – it just became official on Wednesday, June 7.

That's when the local chapter of the Modern

Woodmen of America decided to honor Akins with a luncheon among friends at Sicily's Pizza, in celebration of everything he's done in the community and with the Union County Historical Society.

As part of his being declared a "Hometown Hero," he received a certificate of

appreciation and \$100, and he pledged on the spot to donate the money to the Historical Society.

For his part, Akins was honored to have been chosen by his fellow residents for a program that allowed him, through their giving, to give

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Home & Garden Show helps homeowners find solutions

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Third Annual Northeast Georgia and Western North Carolina Home & Garden Show by Expo Management Inc. provided local businesses and service providers an opportunity to show off home and lawn gears and gizmos to thousands of

patrons on June 10 and June 11.

"This is the third annual home and garden show," said Bill Anderson, president of Expo Management. "We'll have about 4,500 people between the two days, so we'll have a big turn out. We have just about anything and everything someone needs for their home."

The show, held for the first time at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center, also featured seminars from Jim Parks, the host of HGTV's remodeling show "New Spaces." Parks hosted three seminars on both days, covering an assortment of how-to topics and current trends in housing, from a seminar

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The 2017 Home & Garden Show. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Air ambulance memberships now in effect countywide

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

All Union County residents are Air Methods Advantage members, effective June 1.

Having an Air Methods Advantage membership translates to no out-of-pocket expenses for residents having to take medically necessary life flights via the Air Life Georgia 14 helicopter based out of Union General Hospital in Blairsville.

This blanket membership for all county residents includes everyone who lives in or has a

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The Air Methods helicopter is based out of Union General Hospital in Blairsville. Photo/Lily Avery

Veterans groups say goodbye to one of their own

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Mike Ruback may not have gotten a "Welcome Home" following his three tours in Vietnam, but for the last 10 years, he found a welcome home in Blairsville.

And so, it was with happy yet heavy hearts that he and his wife, Adeana, gathered with friends for a farewell dinner in their honor on Thursday, June 8, at Brother's Restaurant.

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Mike and Adeana Ruback. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Trail cam catches panther in Owltown backyard

News Special
North Georgia News

In Union County, panthers are a thing of legend.

After all, the panther is the school mascot, and one might think that would make Union County a haven for the big cats.

It is a haven for at least one big cat, caught on a trail cam in the Owltown community last week.

The Copeland family sent the newspaper a photo of the mountain lion captured on their trail cam.

"We have two game cameras set up because we do

have bears, and (we) got several pictures," the Copeland family said. "We were out on the deck on Wednesday the 7th and heard this weird noise. (We) thought it was a bear, but a deep cat-like growl alerted us that was not a bear."

The Copelands did not see anything that night, however, when they took the photo cards out of their game cameras, they found an image of a large cat. "We have concluded it's a mountain lion," the Copeland family said.

The newspaper has forwarded the photograph to Union County Sheriff Mack Mason.



This image of this mountain lion was captured via trail cam in an Owltown backyard. Photo/Beverly Copeland

Martina McBride headed for Hiawassee

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

While it may not be the Fourth of July just yet, Martina McBride is bringing Independence Day to Hiawassee, or the song at least.

Beloved Country Music star Martina McBride will be hitting the Anderson Music Hall stage at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on

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Martina McBride

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