

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

September 13, 2017

Three new members elected to EMC Board of Directors

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

On Sept. 12, 2014, Steven Phillips, Charles Jenkins and Chris Logan became the first petition candidates in the history of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to be elected as directors of the cooperative.

The trio opened the door that totally changed the leadership of the cooperative.

In July, Phillips, the vice chair of the cooperative's board, resigned for personal reasons. On Sept. 9, 2017, the membership decided once again that it was time for a change.

Logan, who represented Clay County, North Carolina, was ousted by Jeff Ledford.

Jenkins, who represented Union County, was ousted by former director, Danny Henson.

The race to replace Phillips resulted in Bert Rogers claiming the seat by defeating Jeff Waldroup.

Of the cooperative's 45,903 members, only 1,837, or 4.37 percent of the membership, cast ballots in this year's election.

In Union County, Henson received 794 votes, Jenkins collected 425 votes, Karen Pirie tallied 228 votes, and Tommy White received 184.

In Towns County, Rogers bested Waldroup 852 votes to 637. In Clay County, Ledford received 550 votes, Preston Cabe received 526, and Logan tallied 502 votes.

"I thought I could win if I worked hard," Rogers said. "I felt confident that I had enough support to win a seat at the director's table. But, you never know how many people are going to vote. You just have to put it in the Lord's hands. I felt like we (he and Waldroup) were on a level playing field - neither of us were the incumbent."

After being elected that Saturday, Henson said he would lead the charge to reverse the decision to subcontract right of way work to Georgia Right of Way Cooperative.

"It's time to get down to business," Henson said. "We plan on stopping the subcontractors. That's our main goal. This is a nonprofit cooperative, and we need to be employing the people in our
See Members, Page 8A



Meet the new members of the BRMEMC Board of Directors, L-R: Danny Henson, Union County; Bert Rogers, Towns County; and Jeff Ledford, Clay County, NC. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

EMC membership puts forward amendments on elections, meetings

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC membership will have two amendments to the cooperative's bylaws to vote on in 2018, resulting from discussion at the Sept. 9 EMC Annual Meeting.

Former BRMEMC legal counsel Larry Sorgen proposed an amendment that would allow voters in each of the EMC's five-member counties to be solely responsible for electing their home county representatives during the election process.

Currently, candidates are elected by voters in all counties in Georgia and North Carolina.

Sorgen's proposal,



Jeremy Nelms, General Manager of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC

however, would allow voters in Union County to decide which candidates would represent them on the board of directors, without votes from other

counties counting toward the Union County director races.

Likewise, the amendment would require the candidates from each of the four other counties to be elected only by members from their respective counties.

The number of board representatives for individual counties is determined by the size of a county's service population. Union County has the largest served population and has three representatives on the board. Towns County, and Clay County, North Carolina, both have two representatives. Fannin County, and Cherokee County, North Carolina, both have one representative.

The amendment to change the election process and
See EMC Amendments, Page 8A

Gov. Deal calls state of emergency for all Georgia counties

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for all 159 counties in Georgia on Sunday, Sept. 10, following updated National Hurricane Center forecasts for Hurricane Irma.

Hurricane Irma made U.S. landfall in the lower Florida Keys just after 9 a.m. on Sept. 10, and moved its way up Florida Sunday evening and into Georgia on Monday.

Union County Schools and neighboring school districts closed for students and employees on Monday, Sept. 11, following Gov. Deal's declaration.

And though the information was not available



Hurricane Irma over Cuba, just off the coast of Florida. Photo Credit: NOAA/CIRA

whether to close schools on Tuesday. Prior to its arrival in
See Irma, Page 2A

Mayor and city council members ready for 2018

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley will begin his fourth term as mayor come January, and he's already looking forward to continuing his work for the city.

"We finally got a terminal built at the airport, which we're moving into, but we've got property here in downtown that's to be developed," said Mayor Conley. "Of course, we've got one spot of that property already spoken for, but we've got the rest of it to be developed, and I want to see it through."

Continued Conley: "As long as I'm able and I feel like I'm making a difference, I'll continue to serve ... I'm looking forward to the next four years of some good, productive growth for downtown."

Conley and Blairsville



L-R: Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and City Councilmembers Buddy Moore and Tony Dyer. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

City Council members Tony Dyer and Buddy Moore all three qualified without opposition in August, meaning that the city will be able to forgo its General Election on

Nov. 7. There will still be a Nov. 7 Special Election to fill the remaining two years of Martha Cone's term on the council, and the two candidates running for

that seat are Mary Ruth Cook and Jonathan Love.

Moore, who sees his role as being a steward of Blairsville's future, will be

See Mayor, Page 3A

Hackers steal personal info for majority of US



By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

If you're an adult and reading this, odds are that your sensitive personal information has been stolen.

Your name, Social Security number, birthdate, home address - and potentially even your driver's license and credit card numbers - are likely accessible to criminals at this very moment, somewhere around the globe.

How did this happen? The answer is as simple as it is nefarious: hackers and weak

Equifax cybersecurity.

On Thursday, Sept. 7, one of the three major credit reporting agencies in the U.S., Equifax, announced that hackers had infiltrated their databases and gained access to the personal identifying information of 143 million Americans.

That's close to 60 percent of the adult population of the United States of America.

Hackers also gained access to credit card numbers of 209,000 people and credit dispute documents of 182,000
See Equifax, Page 3A

Hiawassee burglary suspect charged in Union

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Items recovered from the vehicle of a North Carolina man arrested in Hiawassee last month have been connected to the recent burglary of Victoria's Antique Mall in Union County, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Nathan Brice Garrett, 29, of Hayesville, has been charged in Union County with three counts of second degree burglary, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

The Victoria's Antique Mall burglary was discovered the morning of Thursday, Aug. 17, the same day Garrett was later arrested for a separate burglary incident in Towns County, according to Lt.



Nathan Brice Garrett Osborn.

Following Garrett's arrest, UCSO investigators received a tip that cracked their burglary case wide open - Hiawassee Police and

See Garrett, Page 2A

Fire Station No. 1 breaks bread with community

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Dozens upon dozens of locals came out to support local firefighters and get a close up of Union County Fire Station 1 as the station held its Annual Open House on Saturday, Sept. 9.

It was a chance for the community to come out and break bread with firefighters, show off the station's recently obtained fire truck, and also allow visitors to tour the facility. It was a chance for them to see where the firefighters spend their days working hard to keep the people of this county safe.

And for those who worked up an appetite during the tour, the firefighters were grilling up hamburgers and hotdogs complete with all the fixings, free of charge, for anyone who wanted one.

"Unlike our other stations,



Fire vehicles, equipment and facilities were on display during the open house. Photo/Lily Avery

Most of the firefighters here are staff rather than volunteers," said Lt. Jeff Fortenberry. "We're very fortunate to be

able to have that so when we have our open house, it's to invite the community to see what goes on here and see

where their tax dollars are going.

"We really appreciate
See Station 1, Page 8A

Vol. 108 No. 36
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Showers Hi 70 Lo 55
Fri: Cloudy Hi 78 Lo 56
Sat: Sunny Hi 82 Lo 57

Inside
Arrests 7A
Church 5C
Classifieds 2D
Opinion 4A
Legals 4D
Obits 7C
Sports 2C

0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 4 2

PANTHERS SOFTBALL
Thurs. Sept. 14 vs. Dawson Co
JV 4:30/ Varsity 6 PM
FOOTBALL
Fri Sept 8 vs. Banks County
7:30 PM

FARMERS MARKET
Home Grown & Handmade
Crop Walk
Farmers Market
September 16th
See page 3A

American Red Cross
American Red Cross Blood Drive
September 19th
See page 7A

Puttin' on the Dog
Benefiting the Towns & Union County Humane Society
September 23rd
See page 2B