

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Flash Freeze hits home in Union

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A weather event continues to unfold in Union County, the fallout from what the National Weather Service is calling a "polar vortex."

A polar vortex is a whirlpool of frigid, dense air. It descended Monday into much of the country - Union County included - arriving with a wave of dangerous cold that's likely to break decades-old records with wind chill warnings stretching from Montana to Georgia, according to the National Weather Service.

Snow had fallen in Union County by 4 a.m. Monday, nothing significant, but it was a sign of things to come as the coldest temperatures since 1977 arrived at the home front.

The frigid weather interfered with the morning commute as snow flurries continued and Union County's Road Department worked feverishly to remedy the roadway nightmare. Union County Schools were closed, well, because



Highway 180 was the first road closed in the state in 2014. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Monday was included in the Christmas holiday. It was unclear if classes would be held on Tuesday. Superintendent Gary Steppe was expected to make a decision by 6 p.m. Monday.

The National Weather Service called for temperatures

at or below zero Monday night for Union County and throughout the Mountain Region, thus, making the prospects of classes on Tuesday highly unlikely.

The weather service called for a balmy 8 degrees

See *Weather*, 2A

New Year's first baby is here

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Maia Lily May Cable wasn't about to be outdone.

At 8:47 a.m. on New Year's Day, she came into the world, all 7 pounds, 8 ounces of her. Unbeknownst to Little Maia, who was 20.5 inches at birth, her arrival marked a special event at Union General Hospital in Blairsville, where Dr. David Breedlove brought her into the world.

Maia Lily May Cable was the first baby born in 2014 in Union County.

Her mother, Jayda Burson, said when she first found out that she was pregnant, she had no idea that Maia would become an instant celebrity.

"I had absolutely no idea Maia was the New Year's baby," said Jayda, of Andrews, NC.

Jayda says that since she brought Maia home, she has been a quiet baby, laughing and smiling in her first days. Jayda also says that Maia has been the delight of her grandparents, Stephanie Burson, and Sharon



Dr. David Breedlove left, and Maia's father, Dalton Cable, right, congratulate Momma Jayda and welcome baby Maia into the world.

Year's Day.

Maia wasn't supposed to be the New Year's baby. She arrived earlier than expected. Her arrival time was expected to be Jan. 5th, her mother says.

"I was due Jan. 5th, but they were going to induce labor on Jan. 3rd," Jayda said.

However, Maia had another plan, and she arrived in the world at 8:47 a.m. on New

Year's Day. "Maia is a bundle of joy," Jayda said. "Her birth was the greatest moment in my life. Every time we celebrate New Year's, we'll also celebrate Maia. It was a very memorable occasion, and from now on, everybody in our family will celebrate Maia."

The *North Georgia News* wishes Maia and her family a very Happy New Year's, and many more to come.

Roundball returns to The Pit

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

If you still have a 'Pit Crew' t-shirt from the late 90s or early 2000s, go ahead and try it on and make sure it fits.

You'll need it this Saturday.

If you played for Union County between 1969-2002, enjoy the throwback to the glory days of Panther basketball.

The old Union County High School gym, nicknamed "The Pit" will be resurfaced for one night only this Saturday.

Andrews, NC will visit the historic venue this weekend for the first high school basketball game in the legendary building since 2002.

Opened in 1969-70, The Pit will forever hold a special place in the hearts of all of Union County. The mystique of the old gymnasium was untouchable. Each time the Panthers took the floor, the energy was electric, and the crowd volume was deafening.



The first teams to play in The Pit, above the Lady Panthers with Coach Tom Wilson, and below, the Panthers with Coach Earl Odom. Both teams advanced to the Class B State Tournament.

"That place was so loud that you couldn't hear Coach (Earl) Odom yelling at us during a game and he had to use hand signals to communicate

with us," said Joe Collins, a 1980 graduate of Union County High School. "But The Pit

See *The Pit*, 3A

Blairsville City Council greets New Year



Jim Conley

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

As the Blairsville City Council dispensed with the duties of swearing in Mayor Jim Conley, Councilman Tony Dyer, and Mayor Pro Tem Buddy Moore, they rolled up their sleeves and got down to business.

Business on this night was a continued effort to update the City Charter.

The Charter has not been updated since 1984 - 30 years to be exact - and the Council wants to bring the city's most important document into the 21st century.

City Attorney Jana Akins has been working on the revision, but it's a slow go. She's worked on 15 pages of the document, and, could use some advice during the revision process.

On Thursday at 5 p.m.,



Tony Dyer

the Council will meet during a Work Session to discuss ways to address the City Charter revision. It's likely the Council will turn to the Georgia Municipal Association to aid in the Charter's revision.

Once a draft is complete, the revisions must be signed off on by Council members, and then approved by the Georgia General Assembly, Mayor Conley said.

"The Charter hasn't been updated since 1984 and we need to get that taken care of," Mayor Conley said. "The laws have changed and we need a revision."

"We want to do this one time, and we want to do it right," Councilman Moore said.

In other business, the Council reappointed Janice Gratton as City Clerk.

Council members also were reappointed as liaisons



Buddy Moore

to their respective departments. Rhonda Mahan will be the Council's conduit with the Blairsville Police Department, Betty Easter will work with the Blairsville Municipal Airport, Tony Dyer will work with the Streets Department, Buddy Moore will serve as the liaison with the City's Water and Sewer Department, and Martha Cone once again works with the Union County Historical Society.

"These are the same assignments as last year," Mayor Conley told the Council.

The Council also reappointed Mahan to serve on the Downtown Development Authority board, and reappointed Buddy Moore as Mayor Pro Tem.

The Council hired Patrick Stancil to full-time status. He has spent the last six

See *Council*, 2A

Blairsville man charged in beating

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A 29-year-old Blairsville man is behind bars following a prolonged beating of his 36-year-old female companion, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Jonathan William Barclay is accused of beating his significant other for several hours in a domestic tirade on New Year's Day, Sheriff Mason said.

"A female child called 911 and told them that someone was hurting her mother," Sheriff Mason said. "The child had fled her home to go to a neighbor's home to make the



Jonathan Barclay

call. As deputies arrived on the front porch of the home, they could hear a male's voice

threatening to kill someone inside the home.

"The front door was locked and Deputy Douglas Brackett kicked in the door to get inside," Sheriff Mason said. "Deputy Brackett and Deputy Adam Deyton witnessed a male subject later identified as Jonathan Barclay walk out of a bedroom. They ordered him to get on the ground and he eventually complied with their verbal command.

"Once they had the suspect in handcuffs, and went inside the handcuffs, they discovered a female in the fetal position underneath a table in the bedroom," the sheriff said.

See *Beating*, 2A

New Year not happy for Tennessee man

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A 44-year-old Tennessee man went shopping at Wal-Mart on New Year's Day in Union County.

He left the store with almost \$500 worth of groceries and beer.

The problem is, he didn't pay for any of it, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Union County sheriff's deputies stopped James Randall Love, of 230 Main Street in Copper Hill, Tenn., as he drove his 1997 Ford Thunderbird toward Fannin County on Georgia 515, Sheriff Mason



James Randall Love

said. Prior to the traffic stop, a loss prevention officer at Wal-Mart called for assistance.

She had seen a man take several items from the store without paying for them, Sheriff Mason said.

"She reported a blue or silver vehicle was used by this suspect to leave the scene," Sheriff Mason said. "She reported the vehicle's tag number, and said that the vehicle was traveling toward Fannin County."

Union County Sheriff's Deputy Aaron Stanley spotted the vehicle and initiated a traffic stop, Sheriff Mason said.

Deputy Stanley asked Love if he had been to Wal-Mart, and he told the officer

See *Shopping*, 3A

Deputies arrest Ball Ground fugitive

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County sheriff's detectives are working today to determine what to do next with a 30-year-old Ball Ground man who is quite popular with regional law enforcement.

Michael Noah Harper, of 230 Spencer Road, Ball Ground, was arrested New Year's Day following a traffic stop by Union County Sheriff's Deputy Michael Jaques, Sheriff Mack Mason said.

A cashier at Marathon gas station at the Georgia border with North Carolina talked with Jaques as he stopped at the store. She told him that the man getting into a black Toyota had been there since 6 a.m., trying to sell items out of his vehicle.

"She told Deputy Jaques that she felt something was wrong because the guy said that he was from Helen, and that he was lost,"



Michael Noah Harper

Sheriff Mason said.

Deputy Jaques returned to his patrol car and pursued the Toyota driven by Harper, Sheriff Mason said.

He spotted the vehicle at Hughes' Store in front of the gas pumps. When Jaques pulled into the parking lot, Harper drove the Toyota back into the highway.

"Deputy Jaques got into a

position to run the license plate," Sheriff Mason said. "The check revealed the car was reported stolen."

Deputy Jaques gave chase and initiated a traffic stop at Pat Haralson Road, Sheriff Mason said.

Harper was driving a vehicle reported stolen of Cherokee County, GA, Sheriff Mason said. "He had identity items that belonged to other people in his possession," the sheriff said. "He also had warrants on him in other Georgia counties."

That's not all Harper had going against him. Deputy Jaques, and Blairsville Police Officer Seth Dyer found syringes under the driver's side floor mat of the Toyota, sheriff's reports show.

And, Harper didn't come clean when Deputy Jaques asked him his name, Sheriff Mason said.

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2013 Sport Review
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Gribble Benefit Civic Center
Jan 24th 6 PM
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Don Byers Plays the Copperhead Lodge
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BASKETBALL:
Friday, January 10 vs. Oglethorpe Co. 6 PM
Saturday, January 11 vs. Andrews NC 6 PM
Played in the The Pit (Old UCHS Gym)

WRESTLING:
Tuesday, January 7 vs. Stephens and Rabun Gap 5 PM