

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

January 30, 2013

Sheriff, deputies search for man who tortured goat

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Sheriff's Office has issued warrants for a Blairsville man accused of aggravated cruelty to animals, theft by taking and discharging a firearm on the property of another, according to Sheriff Mack Mason.

Sheriff Mason says Marty Carlton Johnson Jr., is accused of injuring a goat that he allegedly stole from Tom and Jo Anne Allen's home at 252 Bunker Hill Road.

Johnson also is accused of aggravated animal cruelty for murdering the goat and then tying it to the back of his pick up and dragging it behind his vehicle at a high rate of speed, sheriff's reports show.

The incident began on Jan. 4 when Johnson and oth-



Sheriff Mack Mason

ers were drinking and watching a movie, *Men Who Stare at Goats*, sheriff's reports show.

After the conclusion of the movie, witnesses said that Johnson stole a goat from the Allen's residence.

Witnesses told sheriff's investigators that they urged Johnson to return the goat. Instead, he tossed the goat off the porch at 32 Bucks Way.

The goat, Jo Anne Allen's pet named *Mercy*, was injured after being tossed off the porch, sheriff's reports show.

Witnesses told investigators that Johnson then shot the goat several times after he tossed *Mercy* off the porch, sheriff's reports show.

To add insult to injury, witnesses told investigators that Johnson then tied the goat to the back of his pick up and drug a now deceased *Mercy* around at a high rate of speed, sheriff's reports show.

The following day, one of the Allen's neighbors came to their home and told them that they had found *Mercy* and that she was dead, a somber and heartbroken Jo Anne Allen said.

"*Mercy* was my sweetest goat," she said. "She was my pet and just like one of our family. She did not know a stranger. She would come

up to anyone. Families bring their children and grandchildren by to see our goats and *Mercy* was a favorite.

"I guess that is why the thief/animal abuser got her and not one of the others," Allen said. "I do not understand why anyone – even evil people – would do this to a helpless, lovable creature.

"She was 15 years old and was living out the rest of her goat life in her two pastures, eating hay and pasture grass and treats from the kitchen," Allen said. "Evil does exist in this world, even in Blairsville. Please watch after your animals and families. I pray that this does not happen to any other goat – or any animal – ever."

According to Union County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy John George, Johnson remains at large.

See *Goat*, Page 2A

Chambliss won't seek third U.S. Senate term

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Georgia's Senior Senator, U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss, (R-GA) announced late last week that he will not seek a third term in the United States Senate.

No, Sen. Chambliss isn't stepping aside because of health reasons, rather, he's leaving the Senate because of partisan gridlock between the White House and Congress.

For years, Sen. Chambliss has worked to help create a bi-partisan deficit reduction package.

"After much contemplation and reflection, I have decided not to run for re-election to the Senate in 2014," said Sen. Chambliss, a Moultrie Republican. "This is a decision



U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss

Julianne and I have thought through and prayed about for many weeks. I am humbled by and grateful for the extraordinary and generous of Georgians, who have allowed me to represent them for 20 years in the United States House and Senate."

See *Chambliss*, Page 2A

Airport upgrades key to future

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The City of Blairsville has received the funding for Phase I site development for the North Terminal of Blairsville Municipal Airport.

The funding, \$866,060.31 is split between \$784,164 from the Federal Aviation Administration, \$39,516 from the Georgia Department of Transportation, and \$42,380.31 from the city's match.

Southeastern Site Development will do the grading for the terminal site, and Knight Tree Service will handle the removal of trees that will alleviate safety issues for Instrument Approach at the Blairsville Municipal Airport.

"All of this has to be done before we can move forward with building a new terminal building," Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley said. "Of course we've got a new road leading into that area already. Many thanks to Commissioner Lamar Paris and a grant that came from the Georgia Department of Transportation,



Local flight instructor Stephen Thompson lands at Blairsville Municipal Airport on Sunday. The airport is on the verge of coming into the 21st century. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

tion, that new road was built from Highway 515 all the way to the airport property."

Mayor Conley says that the city hopes to have the North Terminal completed by

the end of 2014. The terminal, estimated to be 3,600 square feet of space, will move airport operations from the cur-

See *Airport*, Page 2A

Convicted sex offender now registered

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A recent telephone call from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office in Oakland, Calif. has led to the arrest of a man who authorities believe moved to Blairsville in June 2012. Union County Sheriff's Office authorities say.

Authorities say Michael Eric Pina, 48, is a convicted sex offender.

He failed to report and register as a sex offender when he moved to Union County, authorities said.

Pina is believed to have been living in Union County since in June 2012, Union County Sheriff's Office reports



Michael Eric Pina

show. Pina, authorities say, has been living at 259 Springs Hills Lane.

California authorities say Pina also had failed to register and report as a sex

offender in their jurisdiction, authorities said.

Following an investigation by local authorities, Pina was sought on warrants for failure to register as a sex offender in Georgia on Jan. 16th.

Pina was found and arrested on the Union County warrants and charged with failure to register as a sex offender in Georgia, sheriff's reports show.

He was taken into custody and put in the Union County Jail, sheriff's reports show.

Pina was released from the Union County Jail on Jan. 18th and officially became a registered Sex Offender in Georgia, sheriff's reports show.

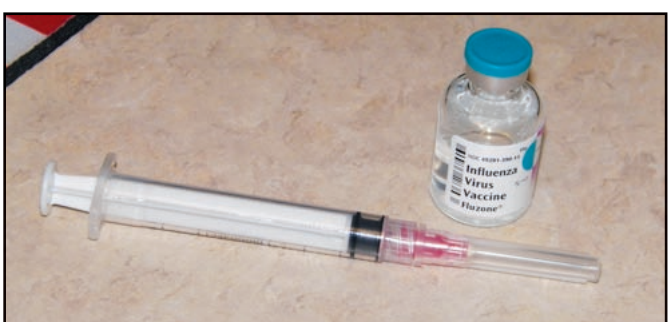
Flu season has taken a local toll

By Joe Collins
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The beautiful Appalachian Mountains that surround Union County can protect county residents from natural disasters such as storms and other weather related problems.

However, they have been unable to stop the flu from entering and attacking at an epic level.

"We are seeing one of the worst years that I can remember for flu in this area,"



Flu shots are still available at the Union County Health Department. Photo/Joe Collins

stated county nurse manager Janice Lancer, R.N. "We are advising everyone to get vac-

inated this season due to the fact that it has been so bad here

See *Flu*, Page 3A

Cold weather prompts school and business closures in Union County

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Local authorities say Union County dodged a bullet as freezing rains and sleet moved into the area on Friday morning.

Local roads were splashed with black ice, just enough to make travel hazardous for the morning commute.

According to Union County Emergency Management Agency Director Charles Worden, things could have been much, much worse.

"We had about five vehicles in the ditches throughout the day," said Worden, also Union County's fire chief and E-911 Director. "We were fortunate that we didn't get the ice that Towns and Rabun counties were faced with."

Towns County Sheriff



Local and county salt trucks were out in full force as the county and region fell victim to black ice on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

Chris Clinton said his department was faced with about a dozen accidents in a three-hour time frame during the winter storm. There were no

reports of injuries in the bad weather mishaps. The day of incidents

See *Weather*, Page 3A

Mock Trial team heads to Region

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County High School Mock Trial team has the honor of being the three-time defending Region Champion, and when the verdict returns on Saturday in Dalton, Union County is hoping they can make it four straight.

In preparation for the Region competition, the Mock Trial team held its intra-squad scrimmage last week at the Union County Courthouse.

The case presented on Tuesday revolved around a band director, Marion Roberts and Addison Cowell, leader of the band's trumpet section.

On a hot August afternoon, the band was practicing when Cowell arrived late to practice and was disciplined by Roberts by being sent to run laps around the school's track.

The school's athletic trainer, Alexis Schmitt had been monitoring the school's wet bulb readings determined that the readings had reached critical levels and all

the school's outdoor activities were forced inside, per county policy.

The school's custodian, Carly Jones, noticed both the band and football team move their practice indoors but saw that Cowell was still running laps around the track. She informed Schmitt that someone was still running outside and by the time the trainer reached the track, Cowell had collapsed from heat exhaustion and was rushed to the hospital.

See *Mock*, Page 6A



UCHS Mock Trial team lead defense attorney Corey Harris shakes hands with the team's biggest fan, former U.S. Sen. and Georgia Gov. Zell Miller.

Vol. 104 No. 5
2 Sections, 24 Pages
Weather
Wed: Storms Hi 66 Lo 32
Thu: Sunny Hi 45 Lo 26
Fri: Sunny Hi 40 Lo 25

Inside
Arrests 8A
Church 13A
Classified 2B
Opinion 4A
Legal 4B
Obits 15A
Sports 10A, 11A

8 0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 4 2

Lions Trash & Treasure Event
Saturday, February 9
Early Bird Shoppers
8 a.m. - 9 a.m.
\$1 admission
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
No Charge
See page 9A

Coat Swap
Suches Community Center
January 30
10am - 1pm
Feb. 3
10am - 12 noon
See page 12A

Relay for Life Kick Off
January 31 • 5:30pm
Mountain Presbyterian Church fellowship hall

UCHS Basketball
Tues., Jan. 29 @ Jefferson
Fri., Feb. 1 @ Rabun Co.
UCHS Wrestling Area Tournament
Feb. 1 & 2 @ GAC