

North Georgia News

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William Holland School stands test of time

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The William Holland School is celebrating its 30th season of classes on its Young Harris campus this year, and will be holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony with the Towns County Chamber of Commerce on Friday, April 10.

Lapidary Arts cover a wide spectrum of disciplines, including earth science, jewelry making, basketry, enameling, faceting, gem identification, wire wrapping and much more.

It all started in 1983, when founder Harold C. Sparks was serving as the eighth president of the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, or SFMS.

"At the time, he and his wife, Mary Lou, discovered that there were no schools where you could go to learn lapidary arts, only workshops a few times a year," according to school literature.

"Spurred into action, they set out to find a mountaintop retreat where such a school could be built; a place where strangers from all states and other countries could come together to learn in a peaceful



Left to right, Mike Sparks, and Suzanne Wagner, are the legacy of William Holland School founders Harold and Mary Lou Sparks.

atmosphere and to share with one another."

That was when the couple discovered Young Harris and began to build the main building of the school, which was completed and ready for use in the spring of 1986.

The name of the school comes from the third president of the SFMS, William Holland, who was the only deceased past president when the school opened.

And 30 years later, the school is still going strong,

with a mix of more than 100 teachers and many volunteers for the 30-week-long annual season spanning the third week in April until the second week of November.

"It feels wonderful, because my father talked about that he wanted to do things to make sure it would go on at least 30 years," said Suzanne Wagner, chairman of the school's board of directors. "And so, we've accomplished

See *Lapidary Arts*, Page 3A

ARC-funded PAES Lab up and running

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools held an open house to showcase its brand new PAES Lab on Tuesday, March 31.

PAES, which stands for Practical Assessment Exploration Systems, is a specialized classroom setting designed to train students who desire basic career and vocational skills.

"These skills relate to almost every type of career," according to literature made available at the event. "Skills are taught in a systematic format that helps students become more independent. Life skills are taught to help students learn everyday skills."

The program is an enrichment course designed to supplement students' general curriculum, much like an elective.

PAES Lab is headed up by teacher Cindy Dobbins and supervisor/paraprofessional Tracey Underwood, with assistance from substitute teachers Cristie Seabolt and Billie Daniel.

"What it does is it allows students with various needs to work in a simulated work environment so that



Students take part in PAES Lab assignments during last week's Open House at Union County High School. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

they can be exposed to over 260 work tasks," said Dobbins. "So, hands-on vocational training, learning, and it will expose them to tasks that they may never have been exposed to before or would have been if they hadn't had this opportunity to come in here."

Five different work domains are covered in the lab: consumer/service, business/marketing, construction/industrial, computer/technology and processing/production.

"When kids walk through the door, they're no longer students, they're workers," said Dobbins. "We're not teachers, we're supervisors. Everything we do, we make it like a real work setting. So, they clock in, they clock out. They come in, they get their work folders. This is teaching them all the skills to get what you're going to need to have."

See *PAES*, Page 3A

Kiwanis Mountain Fair here April 15-19

By Charles Duncan
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It's that time of year again, yes, the Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair is here again.

Yes, it's time for the Seventh Annual Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair, scheduled for April 15-19 at the Union County Industrial Park on Airport Road off Highway 519.

The fun filled adventure packs a carnival atmosphere, complete with rides galore. The event features traditional carousels to lots of rides for the kids. Without a doubt, there is something for everyone.

The fair also includes games, cotton candy, candy apples, a petting zoo and so much more.

The event brings to life



The colorful and musical Midway at Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair on Airport Industrial Road.

a week of exciting rides, delicious food and fun games, providing one of the most exciting adventures this county has ever experienced.

It also makes a difference in the Union County community.

The Kiwanis Fair brings the fun-filled carnival at-

sphere here, with proceeds benefitting the county's children. The many available rides include the Cyclops, the

See *Fair*, Page 2A

4-H BB Gun team heads to state



North Georgia News News Special

The Union County 4-H BB Gun Team is headed to the State Match.

The team competed at the Madison County District/Area BB Gun Match and were right on target, finishing in third place.

The group qualified for the State contest coming up next week.

The 4-H BB Gun Team has been practicing weekly since January for the competition.

Each 4-H'er had to demonstrate shooting proficiency in four shooting positions.

See *BB Team*, Page 2A

Chick-fil-A construction to begin this summer

By Charles Duncan
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The latest news from the Union County Economic Development team is get ready to "Eat mor Chikin."

That's right. All the earth moving beside Fatz Restaurant is for the upcoming construction of Blairsville's newest eatery, Chick-fil-A Restaurant.

According to Union County Economic Development Director Mitch Griggs, construction is scheduled to begin this summer, with a projected completion by fall.

Griggs said Chick-fil-A corporate is ready to officially say the Blairsville restaurant will be built.

"It's the worst-kept secret in North Georgia," Griggs said. "We've respected their desire to control the timing of the releases on this."

The store won't be built immediately.

"We see some dirt being moved, but that's to complete the terms of the GDOT permits," Griggs said. "The permits expire in December so we needed to get that driveway cut in and the curb cut. What's going on now is some of the mass grading."

"Right now, we don't have an absolute date for opening, but, we'll learn that in a little while," Griggs said. "What we do know is that the



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Bill McGlamery, Mitch Griggs, Gene Windham, and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley are ready to "Eat Mor Chikin." Photo/Lowell Nicholson

store's construction will get underway this summer. The store should be open in the early fall."

Griggs said when he arrived as the county's economic development director, Chick-fil-A was one of the first things he heard from locals.

"It was one of the first things anyone in the community ever said to me," Griggs said. "At that time we didn't have any retail recruitment strategy. But, that didn't stop

us from trying. And here we are today."

Griggs said a tip of the cap is owed to former Blairsville Walmart Manager Tony Stewart.

"I made some contact with the corporate folks at Chick-fil-A and frankly, didn't make a whole lot of headway," Griggs said. "Tony Stewart was actively interested in developing the out parcels near Walmart. Turns out Tony had a personal relationship at Chick-fil-A corporate. He made a

phone call and got us talking to the right folks."

Chick-fil-A's senior real estate person came up, looked at the out parcels near Walmart and asked to see what was in town, Griggs said.

"She looked at the out parcels, and quickly we moved to town," Griggs said. "Chicken follows chicken and in town was where the chicken was at. They wanted to be around other restaura-

See *Chick-fil-A*, Page 2A

Blairsville doctor arrested in Blue Ridge by Drug Task Force

By Charles Duncan
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Blue Ridge – Dr. David Gowder of Blairsville, faces two charges following his arrest last week by agents with the Zell Miller Drug Task Force, Commander Brandon Owens said.

On Wednesday, April 1, two agents with the Zell Miller Drug Task Force were at Walmart in Blue Ridge, conducting a separate investigation, Commander Owens said.

"While they were there they had come in earlier that day and attempted to pass two prescriptions there," Owens said. "Those prescriptions were denied and the agents started looking into it and started looking around."

The agents discovered that Gowder, a doctor at Union General Hospital in Blairsville, had allegedly passed another prescription at Ingles in Blue Ridge, Commander Owens said.

"The agents went to Ingles and learned that he would be back around noon to pick it up," Owens said. "When he came back to Ingles, they spoke to him and placed him under arrest."

A search warrant was executed in Union County at the doctor's residence, Commander Owens said.



Dr. David Gowder

"It was a joint search with Union County sheriff's deputies," Owens said. "Union County has an active investigation regarding this case. We also have an active investigation in our circuit."

Patsy Efrid, chairperson of the Union County Hospital Authority, said the following in response to Dr. Gowder's arrest:

"Dr. David Gowder is both a well respected member of this community as well as a respected physician," she said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with David and his family as they deal with these difficult issues."

"The hospital's com-

See *Arrest*, Page 2A

Vol. 106 No. 15
2 Sections, 22 Pages

Weather
Thurs: Rain Hi 82 Lo 61
Fri: Rain Hi 72 Lo 54
Sat: Clouds Hi 76 Lo 49

Inside
Arrests 8A
Church 9A
Classifieds 3B
Opinion 4A
Legals 5B
Obits 11A
Sports 12A

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

**Derrick Whittle
Memorial
Blood Drive
Union Countyhouse
April 9th**

See page 6A

**FARMERS MARKET
Waste Grease & Hardware**

**Trash and
Treasures
Starts
April 9th!**

See page 6A

**RELAY
FOR LIFE
American
Cancer
Society**

**Last day for Sign Ups
April 9th!**

See page 8A

UCHS Baseball
Apr 9 @ Murphy, NC 4:30 PM
UCHS JV Baseball
Mountain League
Tournament
Apr 9 - April 11
@ White County