

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Residents ask for Fine Arts Center first

By Charles Duncan
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One by one, they approached the microphone.

Their message was almost in unison. In 2008, the referendum for the Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax had promised a Fine Arts Center.

Because funds were running short, and if you begin a project, you must finish a project, the Union County School Board opted not to build the center. There simply wasn't enough money available to complete the Fine Arts Center.

Turn the page to 2012, another vote on ESPLOST and again, the project list.

Board members promised if the vote was approved, a forum would be held to help



UCHS senior Drum Major Carli Kidd supports the Fine Arts Center. Photo/Charles Duncan

the school board decide the order in which the projects would be completed.

That forum was Thursday, April 11th at the Union

County High School Cafeteria and out of 20 people who stood up to provide input, 15 urged the school board to make the proposed Fine Arts

Center their top priority.

More than 100 people attended the forum.

Duane Busse said the construction of the Fine Arts Center was way over due. He said it's time to deliver on the 2008 promise.

"We don't have one and we need one," Busse said, referring to the proposed Fine Arts Center. "It will benefit the community. Our kids deserve it and it's the right thing to do."

Union County Band Director Kerry Rittenhouse also urged the school board to move forward with construction of the Fine Arts Center.

He also urged board members to walk through the school system's band room as they exited the building at the end of the evening.

Rittenhouse says the band building is too small as

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Paris: 'overloaded fuse caused communications failure'

By Charles Duncan
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Lamar Paris

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris says no one individual, entity or agency is to blame for the March 4th communications blackout that wiped out landlines, Internet, cable TV and cell phone service for residents in two counties for almost two hours.

An overloaded telecommunications fuse and faulty power inverter proved to be the culprits of the communications outage that left emergency workers and residents in Union and Towns counties without any means of communication other than talking out loud.

The E-911 centers in Union and Towns went dead

along with other means of communications. Fortunately, no emergencies were reported during the outage, Paris said.

"(Windstream) engineers have re-examined every issue to determine the exact cause of the overload," Paris said. "Upgrades have been

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Whittle Blood Drive a success

A second drive scheduled for Wednesday at Union County High School

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Thursday, Apr. 11th would have been Derrick Whittle's 40th birthday.

And in honor of Badge No. 221, Chattanooga, Tenn.-based Blood Assurance in conjunction with Whittle's parents Jim and Sharon Whittle, and Pam Worden, hosted the first annual Derrick Whittle Blood Drive at the Union County Courthouse.

At the end of the drive, there were 86 donors, with 63 donating blood for the first time; 88 units of blood were collected.

Each unit of blood has the potential to help three people, which could total up to 264, a number that this blood drive could possibly benefit.

Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Williams was one of those on hand who donated blood.

"I came out today because Derrick meant a lot to me," she said. "Of course I knew him since I began working here in Union County. I just think it's a great way to give back and honor Derrick but to hopefully save lives in the future."



Jim and Sharon Whittle greet friends on Thursday. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Union County Sheriff's Office deputies were out in full force to donate blood in honor of their fallen comrade.

"I give blood every year, but this one is special because of Derrick Whittle," Union County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer and Lt. Darren Jones said. "Derrick belonged to the department and we all want to be here for his family and to help as many people out as we can."

"We've got several from the Sheriff's Office coming out today," Lt. Jones said. "We've been encouraging it and will have several from the department come out and give blood today."

According to Blood Assurance's Donor Recruiter Tim Wilson, 60 percent of the population is eligible to give blood, and of that 60 percent, only 6 percent actually donate.

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Ramp Festival, Cummings' book on Thursday

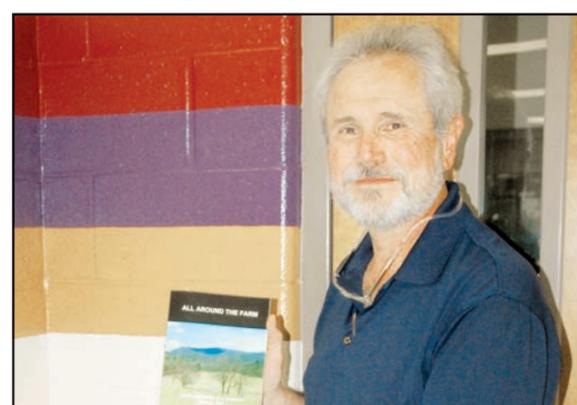
By Charles Duncan
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When Mickey Cummings was growing up, there wasn't any such thing as the Internet, Playstation, Wii or Xbox 360.

No, his source of entertainment came from sitting around the wood stove listening to his grandfather's stories about life in Phil Campbell, Ala.

Whether it was about farming, coon hunting or sawmilling, that was the excitement of a young boy's end to a hard work day.

For the past several years, Cummings, the county extension coordinator for Union County, and manager of the Union County Farmers Market, has been writing a column for the *North Georgia News*, aptly titled *Around*



Mickey Cummings and All Around the Farm. Photo/Charles Duncan

The Farm. By popular demand, Cummings has put together a compilation of his boyhood in book format entitled *All Around the Farm*.

The book will make its community debut on Thurs-

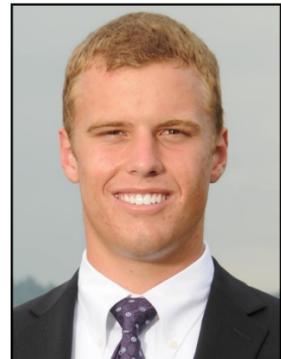
day, at the Union County Farmers Market, which also will include the Annual Ramp Festival, from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Yes, Cummings will be on hand for a book signing.

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T Bentley chooses Air Force

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



T Bentley

Union County High School has now sent someone to each of the three Military Academies.

Union County senior T Bentley has made his decision and it is the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Bentley received nominations for West Point, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force. With the deadline for West Point being Friday, Apr. 12th, Bentley chose the Air Force early last week.

"Both the Air Force Academy and West Point gave me dates in which I had to let them know if I would be accepting the Appointment," Bentley said. "I had to let West Point know by the 12th and the deadline for the Air Force Academy was the 30th of April. The first person

"The first day is called 'I-day' for In-processing," Bentley said. "The first four weeks consist of military training on the grounds of the Air Force Academy. The next two weeks consist of training in the wilderness. What do I expect? All the information I receive says to 'expect the unexpected!' After these six weeks, the school years begins. The first year will be quite a challenge for myself mentally, physically, and emotionally. My goal for this first year is to lay a solid ground work for myself on which to build the next three years." Although, Bentley loves taking to the skies, he would be happy to fly any type of airplane, but his goal is to someday fly fighter jets. "Even though there are just under 1,000 cadets at the AFA in a given year, only a select group of these earn the right to become an Air Force Pilot,"

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Mason: Payne committed suicide

By Charles Duncan
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Union County Sheriff Mack Mason says that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation is reporting that the 34-year-old man who killed his father and stepmother on Nottely Dam Road, turned a gun on himself when encountered by Cherokee County, GA sheriff's deputies on Swan Lane in Canton in the early morning hours of April 5th.

GBI reports indicate that a Cherokee County sheriff's deputy struck Anthony Payne in the arm during a standoff with the double-homicide suspect, Sheriff Mason said.

All indications point to Payne turning the gun he wouldn't put down on himself, the sheriff said. "That's what we're learning from the GBI," Sheriff Mason said. "We don't know if it was intentional, or if it was a reflex. We do know that he inflicted the fatal gunshot on himself."

Payne, of Canton, formerly of Blairsville, originally was believed shot and killed by law enforcement following a confrontation with Cherokee County, GA authorities, Sheriff Mason said.

Anthony Payne was the



Sheriff Mack Mason

one person of interest in the April 2nd shooting deaths of his father, Charlie Payne, 59, and his stepmother Louise Payne, 67.

The couple's bodies were discovered April 4th by family members at their home at 1098 Nottely Dam Road, Sheriff Mason said.

The case involving Anthony Payne began to unfold on April 4th as family members discovered the bodies of Charlie and Louise Payne inside their home, Sheriff Mason said.

"Their vehicle was missing, it was a 2007 Ford F-150 pickup, grey in color," Sheriff Mason said.

A witness saw Anthony Payne speeding out of Not-

tely Dam Road on Tuesday afternoon, April 2nd in that vehicle, which lead authorities to make him their prime person of interest in the case, the sheriff said.

"We entered that truck on the GCIC as missing/stolen," Sheriff Mason said. "That truck was located in Cherokee County, GA. Mr. Anthony Payne was not with that truck at the time that it was located by Cherokee County.

"Information from the persons in that truck led Cherokee County authorities to Swan Lane in Canton," Sheriff Mason said. "At approximately 1:30 a.m., Cherokee County deputies encountered Anthony Payne, he brandished a weapon, deputies urged him to drop his weapon, shots were fired."

"Anthony Payne was pronounced dead at the scene in Canton," Sheriff Mason said. "We had not secured murder warrants for Anthony Payne at the time of his death. We simply had a lookout for his father's stolen F-150."

The sheriff said that two weapons were secured at the Swan Lane location in Canton. One weapon, the gun Anthony Payne used to kill himself. The second, a charcoal believed used to kill Charlie and Louise Payne, Sheriff Mason said.

Law Enforcement Appreciation Breakfast
Saturday, May 11
8:30 a.m.



Union County Community Center

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Union General Hospital Auxiliary Fundraiser

Thurs., May 2 • 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Fri., May 3 • 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
URH Old Lobby, Deep South Farm Rd.
Masquerade™ \$5 Jewelry & Accessories See page 5A



Blairsville Garden Club Annual Plant Sale
April 27
7:30am - 1 pm
Union County Farmers Market See page 8A

UCHS Baseball
Tues., April 16 • 5:15 p.m. @ Riverside
Senior Night: Ari., April 19 • 5 p.m.
vs. Washington-Wilkes (DH)

UCHS Soccer
Senior Night: Tues., April 16 p.m. Lumpkin
5:30 p.m. (girls) & 7:30 p.m. (boys)
Fri., April 19 vs. Jefferson
5 p.m. (girls) & 7 p.m. (boys)

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