

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Expansion planned for NGTC Blairsville Campus

By Charles Duncan  
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A proposed expansion of North Georgia Technical College's Blairsville Campus could bring an Associate of Science in Nursing program to Union County, NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton said.

The ASN program is slated to begin in the fall at NGTC's Clarkesville Campus. Upon successful completion of the first group of students, the long-term plans are to bring the ASN program to the Blairsville Campus as well, Dr. Thaxton said.

In preparation for this event, NGTC Blairsville Campus' proposed expansion includes a new wing that will greatly enhance the college's health-related programs by providing five larger classrooms, two laboratories and



Dr. Gail Thaxton and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris

land for the school's expansion project," Paris said. "We are excited because the nursing program will be a valuable asset for not just Union County, but for the surrounding communities as well."

The creation of NGTC's Blairsville Campus in 1999 came as the result of concerted efforts by business and community leaders and elected officials to make post-secondary technical education available to the citizens of Towns, Union, and Fannin counties and the surrounding area. The partnerships and community spirit have continued as the college now moves forward with plans to add additional classroom and lab space to the campus.

"We are driving forward on expanding our programs and facilities to ensure the best learning environment

See NGTC, Page 2A

## Macon man, 48, dies on Appalachian Trail

By Charles Duncan  
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A 48-year-old hiker died on the Appalachian Trail at Slaughter Mountain in Suches on Saturday after experiencing health-related issues, according to Union County Fire Chief/EMA Director Charles Worden and Union County Sheriff Mack Mason.

Lance Beckman, from Macon, was hiking Slaughter Mountain, with his 16-year-old son. Slaughter Mountain, at 4,338 feet, is the second highest elevation in Union County, and the ninth highest elevation in the state. It's one of the steepest parts of the AT, Chief Worden said.

Sheriff Mason said the man's son told him that the

See Trail, Page 2A



Chief Charles Worden



Sheriff Mack Mason

## Farmers Market continues to grow; opening was grand

By Charles Duncan  
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The opening of the 2013 Union County Farmers Market was about as grand as it gets.

Folks turned out by the hundreds to experience friends, fellowship, bargains and fresh produce at the gathering place on Old Smokey Road.

The Market phenomenon continued as parking was at a premium for the six-hour event. Agricultural vendors brought extra produce for this day and that was a good plan.

They sold early and often, and most went home smiling and empty-handed, which, is a good thing.

When vendors go home empty-handed, it's generally a good indication that sales were brisk, said Willy Kerr, of Blairsville's Mountain View Farms.

"It's been a real good day. The crowd is about twice as big as last year's opening day," Kerr said. "I wouldn't have believed this many people would have been here today."



It was elbow-to-elbow Saturday morning at the Farmers Market grand opening. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

"We had our fresh-cut broccoli and fresh eggs today," he said. "Next week, we'll have fresh cabbage to go with both of those items."

"The broccoli didn't last long today," he said. "We had a special deal on our eggs, a flat of 30 for \$5. It's hard to beat that deal. These eggs are fresh gathered. The store-bought eggs are 30 days old when they reach the store. That's why we sell a lot of eggs."

Freddie Collins Farm was doing some pretty swift business as well. Collins was selling fresh collards and other greens. He also had some fresh tomatoes, not grown locally, but from Florida as Collins quickly pointed out.

"It's been busy and that's a good thing," Collins said.

Collins also had cantaloupes, plums and peaches to offer. Freddie Collins Farm

See Market, 3A

## 10th Scottish Festival thrives

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

You could take the high road or you could take the low road, but regardless of race or religion, all roads led to the 10th Annual Blairsville Scottish Festival and Highland Games Saturday and Sunday at Meeks Park.

Union County was covered with kilts, the aromatic smell of haggis filled the air, and the sounds of bagpipes that echoed throughout the mountains as everyone was a little bit Scottish during the two-day festival.

For those not fortunate enough to be of Highland descent, they were all welcomed into the clan over the weekend.

And they all walked away saying the same thing, "the Scots know how to throw a party."

"Anyone would be a fool not to seize the opportunity to come into this beautiful setting, among so many kind and sharing people,"



The weekend was filled with dance, song and happy sounds. A good time was had by all. Photo/Todd Forrest

Master of Ceremonies Bob Valentine said. "For those of us who have come from a far, we would like to say 'thank you' to the city of Blairsville."

Henderson was the featured clan of the weekend, that opened with the Ceilidh (kay lee) on Friday night at the Union County Community Center.

The rain that moved across Union County on Friday created misty, foggy conditions for the Ceilidh on Friday evening, giving Blairsville even more of a Scotland-like feel as you stood on the porch and admired the view over Butternut Creek Golf Course.

See Festival, Page 6A

## Community turns out for Open Houses

By Charles Duncan  
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More than 150 people turned out to celebrate their favorite volunteer firefighters on Saturday as Fire Stations 3 and 4 held their annual Open Houses.

Children filed out of the Fire Safety House like ants coming out of an ant hill at Station 3 on Waldroup Road.

They learned what to do in the event of a house fire. The Fire Safety House is a mobile educational trailer used to educate young children about fire safety and allows them



A firefighting demonstration at Fire Station 4 on Moccasin Road. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

See Stations, Page 3A

## Farmers Market to expand

By Charles Duncan  
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Union County's highly successful Farmers Market will expand by 5-plus acres, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said on Saturday.

Commissioner Paris said that the county, using Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, will close this week on the property along Butternut Creek.

The plan is to build a bridge to connect the current Farmers Market property and the new acreage, Paris said.

He added that in the future, the property will allow



Mickey Cummings for expansion of the Farmers Market facilities.

"We've contracted to buy five and a half acres across the creek," Paris said.

"We realize that we're going to have to build a bridge over the creek to be able to park more cars."

"Once we have a place for more vehicles to park, we'll build space for more vendors," he said. "You can see today, we're out of space. We've got people on both ends. This place is slammed and it's early."

"There is so much demand for vendors and we don't have anywhere else to put folks," Paris said. "We've got every vendor filled up," he said.

See Farmers, Page 2A

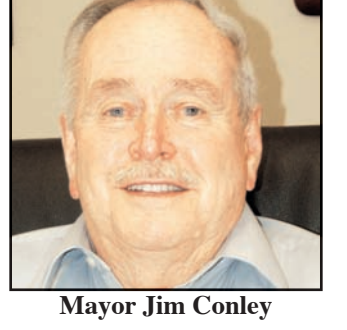
## Downtown Streetscape takes shape

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley says the trees falling behind City Hall are falling for a reason.

The Blairsville Downtown Streetscape project is progressing and the next big step is working to relocate power lines that hang over the Downtown Square.

"It's going real good," Mayor Conley said. "They're making good progress, we're seeing change and that's real



Mayor Jim Conley

positive. It might not feel real positive right now, there are some delays, but we'll get there."

The work crews have been somewhat shutdown for a few days as the city and engineers work with Georgia Department of Transportation officials on change orders in the project, Mayor Conley said.

Meanwhile, Mayor Conley didn't want folks to think that the city didn't care about its trees.

"We did cut some trees behind City Hall, but that's to enhance the project and the

See Streetscape, Page 3A

## Standoff in Dooly ends peacefully

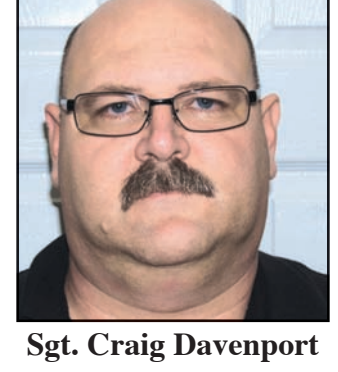
By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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A team of Union County Sheriff's Office crisis intervention negotiators talked a Dooly man into giving himself up following a tense standoff at his home.

The team, led by Union County Sheriff's Sgt. Craig Davenport, talked 47-year-old Bryan Hockman into standing down and surrendering his weapon.

Hockman was at odds with law enforcement following a domestic incident that began on June 3rd, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

"He's down on his luck, he's out of a job, and basically, just dealing with a lot of family-related stress issues,"



Sgt. Craig Davenport

Sheriff Mason said. "He had an argument with his wife, shot one of the family dogs, and things went downhill from there."

Neighbors heard the Monday morning argument, and then heard a gunshot, Sgt. Davenport said.

"I was in the area and

took the call," he said.

Sgt. Davenport encountered Hockman early after he arrived near the residence.

"He saw me, screamed at his wife, 'now you've done it, the law is here' and he tried to hide his gun," Sgt. Davenport said.

Sgt. Davenport, a trained negotiator, tried to talk Hockman into coming down and talk to him to no avail.

"His wife was screaming out the window, I told her to get her head back in the house," Sgt. Davenport said. "In the mean time, Mr. Hockman takes off running. I had a decision to make, get the wife and child to safety, or chase after him."

"I chose to make sure the wife and child were safe,"

See Standoff, Page 6A

Vol. 104 No. 25  
2 Sections, 26 Pages  
Weather  
Wed: Storms Hi 89 Lo 66  
Thu: Storms Hi 85 Lo 61  
Fri: Clouds Hi 81 Lo 57

Inside  
Arrests 8A  
Church 9A  
Classified 9B  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 5B  
Obits 11A  
Sports 12A, 13A

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

**Farmer's Market**  
Open Tuesdays 3-7 p.m.  
Sat., June 15 • Squash Bud Day  
Balloons, Sidewalk Chalk,  
Entertainment & Free Cookies for  
Little Buds (children 10 & younger)  
See page 2A

**UCHS Softball Practice**  
Grades 9-12  
June 17  
10 a.m. - noon  
High School field  
For any girls interested in playing!

**2013 Buy Local Weekend**  
Thurs., June 13 - Sat., June 15  
For Participating Businesses & Deals contact the chamber at 706-745-5789, stop by the chamber for a flyer or see the ad on page 16A.  
See page 7A

**Blairsville PTO 1st Annual Golf Tournament**  
Friday, July 26  
Butternut Creek Golf Course  
Call 706.835.5322 for more information  
See page 13A for form