

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Busbee claims Skills USA State Championship

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

**Kansas City, MO** - In March, Union County High School Courtney Busbee laid claim to a SkillsUSA State Championship in First Aid/CPR, earning a trip to Kansas City, MO for a shot at a National title, where she placed 17th in the country.

Despite facing a more experienced field at the national competition, some of which were already employed as EMT's, Busbee gained some valuable training competing against some of the nation's brightest and best.

"My favorite part of the trip was meeting, interacting, and competing with skilled students from all over the United States," Busbee said.

"The competition consisted of a fifty question test and six timed First Aid and CPR scenarios. I top 35 skilled students in First Aid/ CPR most



Sandra Cok and Courtney Busbee at the SkillsUSA Nationals in Kansas City, MO

of which were already professional EMT's."

Luckily for Busbee, she was only a junior and will get one more crack at a National title when the 2016 SkillsUSA

journey to a State Championship and beyond almost never made it off the ground as she finished second at this year's Region competition.

"I plan on competing again next year hopefully to take home a national medal," Busbee said. "But I also plan on getting more job experience and training before next year."

During the competition, five students would be taken to a separate area with five different stations where they were given six minutes to complete, the stations simulated different scenarios, such as: adult CPR, infant CPR, a heat stroke victim, an arm injury, and a broken bone.

Joining Busbee on her Midwest trip was her mother, Candi and Union County High School's Healthcare Science Instructor Sandra Cook. They arrived in Kansas City on Monday evening and attended

See *Busbee, 3A*

## GBI investigates two deaths in Union

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The discovery of two bodies at a rural Union County residence has marred what was an otherwise perfect holiday weekend.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Union County Sheriff's Office are currently investigating the death of a 47-year old man and a 27-year old woman, according to GBI Spokeswoman Sherri Lang.

"We have been requested to investigate two deaths," Lang said.

Todd Sparks and Brandie Lawson were found dead Saturday afternoon in a home on High Meadows Rd. off Hwy. 180 just past Hamby Bridge in southern Union County.

Union County Sheriff

Mack Mason said that a 911 call was placed on Saturday after the two bodies were discovered by someone visiting the residence.

According to Lang, the official cause of death and time of death are unknown and are pending an autopsy. However, the time of death is believed to be sometime on Friday. Lang also said there were children in the home who were unharmed but was unable to release anymore information regarding the children.

"We got the call on Saturday evening and during the course of the investigation a time of death and a cause of death should be determined," Lang said.

According to Sheriff Mason, there is no timetable on when this information will become available.

## Old Tate Mill being moved to Meeks Park

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

In a plan that has been in the works for five years, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris announced last week that the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax is allowing a piece of local history to be replicated at Meeks Park.

With the help of Michael Thompson, parts from the old Tate Mill that was built by his family and is located near the North Carolina line, just off Hwy. 19/129 will be relocated to create a working replica along the shores of Butternut Creek inside of Meeks Park.

"Michael (Thompson) came to us and told us that the mill was in disrepair and wanted to know if the county would have an interest in it," Commissioner Paris said. "We

got with Ricky Davenport and Junior Bridges and went in and took all the parts out of it and Ricky Davenport stored them for us."

Unfortunately, the condition of the mill was too far gone to be restored, but Thompson and family donated the parts to the county in hopes they could somehow use them in the future. When the county found the Meeks Park locale they quickly hit a snag. Due to the creek, the location was inaccessible to the trucks and heavy equipment that were needed to get the mill up and running.

Commissioner Paris also announced that the construction of a new road has begun on the 6.5 acres of property purchased two years ago along the Old Blue Ridge Hwy. east of the Nottely River

See *Meeks Park, 2A*



The site of the new road that will provide added parking at Meeks Park. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Ralston being investigated for State Bar Association violations

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) is in hot water after the Georgia State Bar Association asked the Georgia Supreme Court to investigate the possible violation of multiple rules of conduct for attorneys.

Ralston's charges include nine Bar Association rules violations which could result in the Speaker's disbarment.

In 2006 Paul Chernak hired Ralston's law firm following a 2006 automobile accident in which Chernak was injured but not at fault. Chernak alleges that Ralston delayed his case for years misusing the "legislative leave" law as the reasoning behind the postponement.

The law is a member of the General Assembly who is a party to or the attorney



House Speaker David Ralston

in a case "shall be granted a continuance and stay of the case."

Chernak also alleges that he was given \$22,000 out of other clients' accounts to help pay living expenses while recovering from the accident.

Now the Georgia Supreme Court has selected Hiawassee attorney, Mark De-

See *Ralston, 3A*

## Early Voting has begun for Runoff

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer



Union County residents were eager to get to the polls when polls opened for early

voting last Monday, June 30th for the July 22nd Primary Election Runoff.

Ballots were being cast at a clip of more than 7 votes an hour at the Union County Courthouse in the first week of early voting, and as of 4 p.m. Friday, 246 votes were cast.

On the Democratic Party ballot, State Superintendent hopefuls Alisha Thomas Morgan and Valarie Wilson are vying for a spot in November's General Election. Mike Buck and Richard Woods are looking for the GOP nod in the General Election as the Republican's choice for State Superinten-

dent. Republicans Jack Kingston and David Perdue will face off with a U.S. Senate seat on the line. The third and final race on the Republican ticket is the Union County Board of Education District 5 race between Amber Deyton Pruitt and Patrick White, who are seeking to fill the seat left vacant by Julie Barton.

At last month's Union County GOP meeting, both Pruitt and White offered their pitch and fielded questions from local republicans.

See *Early Voting, 2A*

## Metal detectors in use for Courthouse security

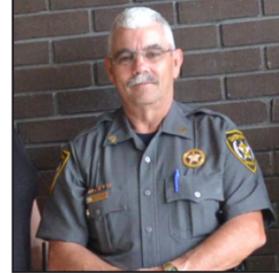
By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For the most part, the reaction to the new security checkpoints at the Union County Courthouse have been met with appreciation and understanding, but for others, it's going to take some getting used to.

Last Tuesday, two checkpoints were set up at both entrances to the courthouse where those entering the building were asked to empty their pockets and undergo a quick scan with the

held detectors (wands). In the three days (Tuesday-Thursday) that the deputies were stationed at the doors, three handguns and several knives were turned away.

According to Union County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Leon James of the Court Services Division, there were three instances where someone carrying a handgun walked up to the door and saw the deputies stationed there. They immediately informed the officers that they were carrying and returned the weapon to their vehicle with-



Sgt. Leon James

out incident. There were a few upset citizens who were asked to return a knife to their vehi-

See *Security, 3A*

## Hundreds gather for Blairsville Fireworks



The sky was ablaze over Meeks Park on Friday night. Photo/Debbie Thomas

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Blairsville's annual Independence Day fireworks celebration delighted crowds of all ages as families gathered from the Union County schools to the Walmart park-

ing lot to celebrate our freedom Blairsville-style.

With Meeks Park as the launch site, the area around the upper ball fields and basketball courts quickly filled up despite the nearby parking spaces rap-

See *Blairsville Fireworks, 3A*

## Record crowd at Nottely Marina Boat Parade



The floatin' Road Kill Grill took home top prize at Nottely Marina Boat Parade. Photo/Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The smile on Nottely Marina Owner Carleen Doucette's face was as wide as the sky was blue on Friday morning as she stood on the docks

and watched more than a dozen boats pass by, doing their best to attract attention and win the coveted first place trophy.

Doucette has seen her fair share of boat parades at

See *Boat Parade, 3A*

## Suches Fireworks event a rousing success



Fireworks light up the sky over Woody Gap School. Photo/Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Bristol Motor Speedway laid claim to the nickname 'Thunder Valley' after it was deemed one of NASCAR's loudest tracks. How-

ever, annually on July 4th, the Valley above the Clouds could make a case for the 'Thunder Valley' moniker.

The small town of Suches comes to life a few hours before dark when families make the descent from Hwy. See *Suches, 2A*

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Agriculture Field Day July 12th at the GA Experiment Station

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Here's the Buzzzz

Saturday, July 12th at the Union County Farmers 7am-1pm

Honey Bee Jubilee Free silver dollar pancakes with honey!

UC Farmer's Market Saturday, July 12th

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Runoff Election Ballots

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Smokey the Bear at Brasstow Bald

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