

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Butternut Creek Festival sets attendance mark

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

It's easy to see why Blairsville's Butternut Creek Festival has been designated a Top 20 Event by the Southeast Tourism Society for five years running.

The High Country Artisans' 15th edition of the two-day, family-oriented arts and crafts show featured live music and entertainment, live art demonstrations, and plenty of good food.

The event is a perfect opportunity for local artists and craftsmen to sell and share their works with the public in a pleasant and inviting setting.

Acquiring a booth at this unique festival doesn't come easy. All applicants are screened, limiting participation to 70 artists, ensuring



It was a great weekend for a festival at Meeks Park. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

quality and diversity.

There was a lot of quality to go around beginning with live music from

Chloe Sanguine and Crista Lynn. Lynn, Georgia's 2008 Entertainer of the Year, is currently nominated for Georgia's

2013 Country Female Artist of the Year.

See *Butternut*, 2A

Adams-Donaldson laid to rest in Union County

By Charles Duncan
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Murder victim Diane "Dee Dee" Adams-Donaldson was laid to rest Saturday in Union County beside her brother Wayne Adams at the Adams family's residence.

Adams-Donaldson, 53, of Hiawassee, was murdered June 17th in Towns County. Brittany Elizabeth Ledford, 21, and Rebecca Stokes, 32, have confessed to the crime, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Charges against Ledford and Stokes were upgraded last week, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

The charges against Stokes now include malice murder, felony murder, unlawful removal of a body from a crime scene, tampering



Dee Dee Adams-Donaldson

with evidence, and terroristic threats, the Towns County Sheriff's Office reports.

The charges against Ledford now include malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, unlawful re-

See *R.I.P.*, 2A

Grand Jurors indict former Youth Camp instructor

By Charles Duncan
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The July Term of the Union County Grand Jury has handed up a three-count indictment against a former supervisor at the former Eckerd Academy of the Blue Ridge School in Suches.

Anthony Jarrell Thomas, 32, of Conyers, is accused of engaging in sex and sodomy with a female student at the Academy between the dates of May 20th and Oct. 21st.

Also, Thomas has been indicted for engaging in sex with another female student between the same dates, according to Grand Jury indictments.

Thomas also is accused of lying to a Union County Sheriff's Office investigator during the course of the investigation, the three-count indictment shows.



Anthony Jarrell Thomas

Thomas has been indicted on charges of two counts sexual assault by a person with supervisory or disciplinary authority, and making a false statement to a law enforcement officer, the indictment shows.

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Cline presented the case before Union County grand jurors earlier this month.

In an unrelated case, grand jurors have

indicted Matthew Neal Thomas, 22, of Young Harris, in a four-count indictment on charges of statutory rape, two counts child molestation, and making a false statement to a law enforcement officer, July Term indictments show.

Matthew Neal Thomas is accused of having sex with a child under the age of 16 years old, according to the indictment.

In an unrelated case, Michael Eric Pina, 48, of 259 Springs Hills Lane, has been indicted on a charge of failure to register as a convicted sex offender, July Term indictments show.

California authorities say Pina also had failed to register and report as a sex offender in their jurisdiction, authorities said.

Following an inves-

See *Indict*, 3A

Green Bean Festival returns to the Market

By Charles Duncan
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You can't have green beans without farmers, so naturally, you can't have a Green Bean Festival without the folks who work the soil.

The county's local farmers are the highlight of the Fourth Annual Green Bean Festival, scheduled for Friday and Saturday. Green beans, corn, tomatoes, and all of our local farm products will be the focus of the Green Bean Festival.

Oh, and of course there's a 5K race in the streets of Blairsville Saturday morning, and later, a bicycle ride.

But, the real fun starts Friday at 7 p.m. with a Don Byers concert at the Historic Courthouse in Downtown.

And at 8 p.m. there's a square dance on the square at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant.

The legendary John Nix and Mike Arnold will call the



Mr. Green Bean

dance.

The festival itself will be at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday.

"We need to let people know that they want to come early (7 a.m. to 9 a.m.) if they are only going to be purchasing produce," said event co-organizer JoAnne Leone. "The festival does not start until 9 a.m., so that

gives local folks two hours to get in and get their stuff.

Of course, they are encouraged to come any time from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. in order to take advantage of this free festival," she said.

Other Green Bean news includes the 5K race through downtown Blairsville. The city streets will be closed from 7:45 a.m. until 9:30 a.m.

More than 100 runners are expected to compete in the race.

At 10 a.m., the Bike Ride starting at Bikes and Hikes is hosted and led by Randy Deniston.

At 11:30 a.m., the Green Bean Beauty Pageant is scheduled at the Blairsville Civic Center. Lisa Little from Diamond Pageants will host her Fourth Annual pageant.

You'll want to be in downtown at 6 p.m. on Saturday as the Downtown Inn Plaza takes place.

See *Green Bean*, 2A

Sheriff Mason seeks cemetery vandal

By Charles Duncan
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Union County Sheriff Mack Mason hopes to bring the perpetrator or perpetrators of a heinous act of vandalism to justice.

The sheriff says the vandalism is distraught over the vandalism of a headstone of their loved one laid to rest in the Choestoe Cemetery.

On the stone, the date of death of a man, who died in 1989, has been covered with epoxy.

The stone cannot be repaired because the epoxy is harder than the stone, Sheriff Mason said.

"The family has offered a \$5,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of



The damage to this headstone is beyond repair. Photo/UCSO

those responsible for this act of vandalism," Sheriff Mason said. "Whoever did this left the man's name and the date he was born uncovered. I don't know, maybe they ran out of epoxy. Regardless, this

will not be tolerated in Union County.

"Once we arrest the person or persons that did this, we'll push for them to be prosecuted."

See *Stone*, 3A

County Audit gets thumbs up sign

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County was given a clean opinion during its audit for 2012, and the county's financial statements present a fair and accurate picture of Union County and it complies with generally accepted accounting principles, according to auditor Mauldin & Jenkins.

The Auditor's Report was the issue of significance at last week's Union County Commission Meeting.

CPA Adam Fraley of Union County's new independent auditors Mauldin & Jenkins, addressed Commissioner Paris and those in attendance as to the findings of the County audit.

"We have rendered what we call a clean opinion," Fraley said. "What that means is, these financial statements are fairly presented, in all material respects, based on all of our procedures for the year ending Dec. 31, 2012."

According to Fraley, the financial highlights for year included that the General Fund had a slight decrease in revenue, but remained fairly stable.

"Expenditures stayed right in check," Fraley said.



Adam Fraley

"What that shows right there is that there was actually a positive situation if you take revenue, minus expenditures."

The General Fund balance, according to Fraley, is the reserves of the General Fund.

"The General Fund balance on Dec. 31, 2012 was about \$3 million," Fraley said. "Of that \$3 million, approximately \$2.3 million was considered unrestricted, and available for future spending. I'm happy to say that we didn't have any difficulties or disagreements with management

during the auditing.

"The county's management was completely cooperative, the financial department got us everything we needed and in a timely fashion," he said.

Fraley announced that they are required to audit any findings during the audit.

"Most of our findings were of an accounting nature," Fraley said. "They have all been corrected now and have been included in the financial statements. So the corrected measures have been taken to address these accounting items and I know management is working, going forward to catch those accounting adjustments."

Finally, Fraley made everyone aware of the new accounting standards that will be coming down the pike, and how decisions made regarding financial transactions and how they will be affected in the financial statements.

As required by O.C.G.A. 36-1-6, the county is posting the financial statement for the period ending Dec. 31, 2012 in the courthouse for 30 days. The county also is listing all capital purchases - more than \$5,000

See *County*, 3A

Blairsville native headlines at Copperhead

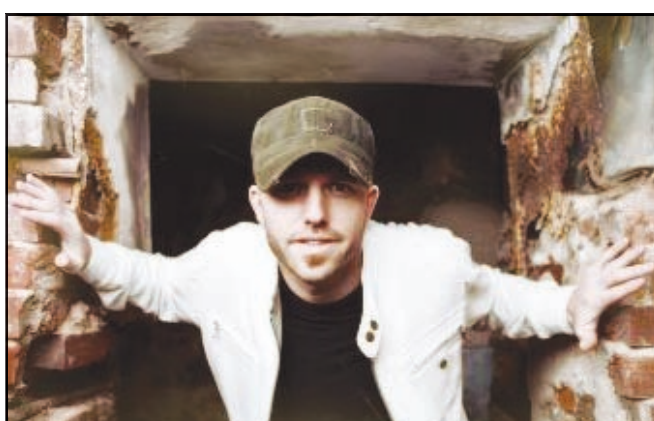
By Todd Forrest
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On Friday, The Lodge at Copperhead welcomes a pair of Georgia boys to "The Yard," The Lodge's state-of-the-art, natural amphitheater, nestled among the hills and pines of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The Hits Tour makes a stop in Blairsville, bringing Grammy-nominated, singer-songwriter John Berry, and up-and-coming singer-songwriter, Brit Jones along with it.

Both acts will offer a diverse mix of country music mixed with a little Gospel, soul, and blues.

Berry blasted into the stratosphere of Country Music stardom in 1994 when



Blairsville native Brit Jones returns to his music roots on Friday at Copperhead. Photo/Courtesy Brit Jones

his hit "Your Love Amazes Me" reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot Country Singles charts on May 21, 1994. Berry has charted a total of 19 songs on the Billboard Hot Country Songs charts, including six additional Top

10 hits - *What's In It for Me*, *You and Only You*, *Standing on the Edge of Goodbye*, *I Think About It All the Time*, *Change My Mind*, and *She's Taken a Shine*.

See *Copperhead*, 6A

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