

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Chase on Hwy. 515 leads to Mexican Cartel bust in Gordon County

By Charles Duncan
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the occupants of a white Ford Expedition, that Johnson drove with reckless abandon through Blairsville and West on Georgia 515 on Wednesday, Aug. 29th.

Johnson led authorities to a residence in Sonorville where they executed a search warrant and arrested a 20-year-old Sandy Springs man.

The residence was being used to manufacture methamphetamine, authorities said.

In a joint investigation along with the GBI, Georgia State Patrol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Union County Sheriff's Office, and Gordon County sheriff's investigators and deputies, executed a search warrant at a private residence on the Fairmount Highway in



Union County sheriff's Investigator C.J. Worden takes custody of a man authorities say led them on a chase on Hwy. 515. The chase proved to be much more. Photo/Charles Duncan

Sonorville.

Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens said that the man arrested in Sonorville is linked to the notorious Mexican Drug Cartel.

"In recent weeks, authorities throughout the state of Georgia have put a dent in drug trafficking," Sheriff Stephens said. "What started in Union County on Aug. 29th, resulted in taking a serious quantity of drugs out of the North Georgia mountains."

Authorities seized approximately five pounds of raw methamphetamine, also known as "ice," sheriff's reports from Union and Gordon counties show.

Information which led to the acquisition of the warrant had been developed ear-

lier in the day, and a squad of sheriff's detectives dressed in camouflage had the home under surveillance for several hours before the arrest was made.

Alexis Renteria Maldonado was arrested at the scene without incident. He has been charged with trafficking methamphetamine, manufacturing methamphetamine, and possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute, Gordon County sheriff's reports show.

A quantity of the methamphetamine was in liquid form, and authorities believe that Maldonado was in the processing of reducing the liquid to solid "ice" form when

See Chase, Page 6A

Heritage Festival packs in the tourists

By Janice Boling
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Staff Writer

pel music in the Southeast.

Demonstrations include blacksmithing, the Magic Man, hatchet throwing, a civil war camp, musket loading, wood-turning, quilting, spinning, basket making, chair caning, needlework, and other exhibits of early settler life here in the mountains.

Southern Appalachian traditions are kept alive at the Mountain Heritage Festival.

Youngsters get to play marbles, pan for gold, see real live mule loaders in action, and pet the farm animals.

Many leave with colorful face paintings, old time toys, and other treats that stir the imagination.

During this year's festival, Union County's own Don Byers and Historical Society President Bud Akins surprised Sam Ensley with an important announcement.

There is going to be a new holiday in Union County this year called Sam Ensley Day.

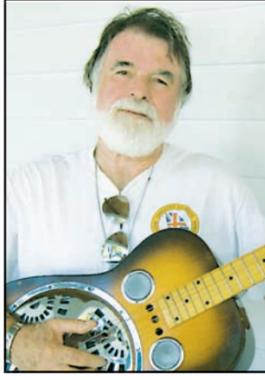
Everyone is invited to Sam Ensley Appreciation Day at the Mountain Life Museum on Saturday, Sept. 15. More information will be published before the event,



Locals and visitors alike came out Saturday and Sunday to get a glimpse of the native way of life in early Union County at the annual Heritage festival. Photo/Janice Boling

Don Byers' success continues

By Janice Boling
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Don Byers

Musician and songwriter Don Byers, an honoree of the Atlanta Country Music Hall of Fame, spent his childhood growing up in Union County. He comes from a family where music is a way of life; both of Don's grandfathers were musicians. Byers received his first guitar lesson from neighbor Billy Burnette in the early 1950s.

As a young boy, his first musical hero was singer/songwriter Hank Williams. Guitarists Merle Travis and Chet Atkins also made an impression on young Byers, which is evident in his music today.

With help from his thumb-picking cousin, legendary Jr. Mauney, Byers developed a unique style of guitar playing. Cousin Ray Mauney, the well-known square dance caller, also showed Byers some chords in the early days.

Growing up, Byers listened to country, Rockabilly, Delta Blues, and local mountain music and learned to appreciate all genres of mu-

sic. During his high school years, he played backup for several singing groups winning multiple talent contests. Byers was voted "most talented male" in the Class of 1960. In 1961, Byers joined the U.S. Army and was stationed in Japan. He soon teamed up with another GI, Ray Lambright, and two Naval airmen, Tom "Monty" Montgomery and Tom "Ski" Racklocky. They formed a Rock 'n' Roll instrumental group called The Strangers which became extremely popular in the Tokyo/Yokohama area. When they

See Byers, Page 3A

Foodie Night at The Market bigger than expected

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



The first Foodie Night at the Union County Farmers Market was a rousing success as hungry locals flocked to the tasting event. Event organizers say the crowd turnout was larger than anyone expected. Photo/Todd Forrest

Paris' State of County address on Sept. 11

By Charles Duncan
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Lamar Paris

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris will deliver the annual State of the County Address at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 11 at the Union County Farmers Market.

Commissioner Paris will discuss the overall finances of the county, and update the community of ongoing projects that are coming close to fruition, he said in a Sunday interview with the North Georgia News.

Commissioner Paris

See Paris, Page 3A

Dive team recovers two stolen vehicles

By Charles Duncan
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A white 2002 PT Cruiser resurfaces for the first time in several years. Union County Dive team members recovered two stolen vehicles last week from Lake Nottely.

down on Lake Nottely to retrieve the vehicles.

"We examined the vehicles underwater in late May to make sure there were no victims inside the vehicles," said Lt. Wood, who oversees the county's dive team operations.

See Recovered, Page 6A

VFW gets a new home

By Charles Duncan
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When Commander Richard Hoibraten of VFW Post 7394 in Union County learned that the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce was moving out of its headquarters off Hwy. 515, he picked up the phone.

The lobbying of Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris began.

The Rev. Hoibraten sent out a lot of prayers about the situation, including several telephone calls to Commissioner Paris.

See VFW, Page 2A

Commissioner Lamar Paris gives the keys to the old Chamber of Commerce building to Commander Richard Hoibraten, of VFW Post 7394 in Blairsville. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Vol. 103 No. 36
2 Sections, 28 Pages

Weather
Wed: Storms Hi 84 Lo 66
Thur: Storms Hi 85 Lo 65
Friday Clouds Hi 85 Lo 66

Inside
Arrests 8A
Church 13A
Classified 3B
Opinion 4A
Legal 5B
Preview 1C
Obits 15A
Sports 10A

UCHS Football Friday Night Against Fannin County at Home

Lady Panthers Softball Tournament at Oconee County Friday & Saturday

Cross Country Thursday, September 6 at Chestatee

Blairsville Cruisers Car Show at Walmart Friday, Sept 7 5 PM - Dusk See page 8A

Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites
Mountain Music, Arts & Craft Day Festival at Vogel State Park Sept. 8th. see page 8A

Open House at Fire Precinct 2 Saturday, Sept. 8 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Fall Cruise-In at Union County Nursing Home
Sunday, September 9th 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. See pg 2A