

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Union schools rank 5th in state

Union County Schools also tops in 13-county Pioneer RESA

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Federal Adequate Yearly Progress is now spelled C-C-R-P-I, or College and Career Ready Performance Index.

For the second year in a row, Union County Schools are No. 5 in the state and No. 1 in the Pioneer Regional Education Service Agency, or Pioneer RESA.

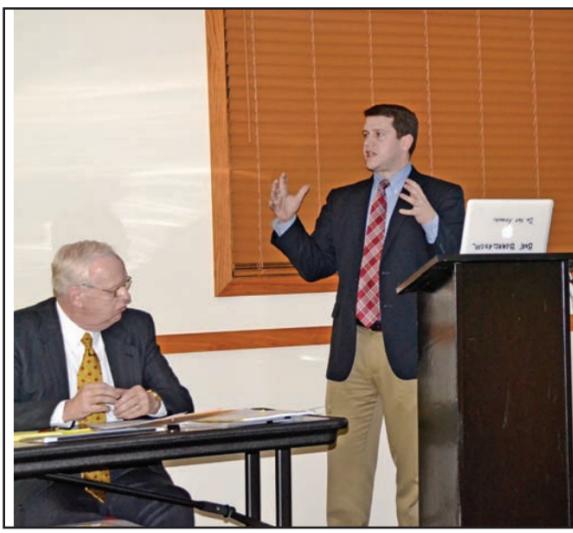
"Our system score was 88.2," Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams said. "That ranks No. 1 in Pioneer RESA, and No. 5 at the state level. Of the systems that scored higher than us, none of them have a higher poverty rate that we do."

The aggregate score of all school systems is based on the sum of achievement, progress, achievement gap, and challenge points.

Those schools that finished ahead of Union County Schools are Oconee County, Forsyth County, Jefferson City Schools, and Buford City Schools.

Union County Elementary came in with a score of 91.3; Union County Middle School achieved a score of 88.8; while Union County High School finished with a score of 84, Dr. Williams said.

The state average for elementary schools is 73.2; for middle schools, 73.5; and for



Union County Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams explains the College and Career Ready Performance Index at last week's Board of Education meeting at BOE headquarters. Photo/Charles Duncan

high schools, 68.7, according to the Georgia Department of Education website.

The average system score statewide is 72.

2012 was the first year of CCRPI, Dr. Williams said, adding that CCRPI replaced Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP.

"With AYP, all they really looked at was reading performance, language arts performance, math performance, and then graduation rate or attendance," he said.

"When you think about everything that goes on in a school, you're kind of discrediting science, social stud-

ies, kids that exceed tests, kids that are on a certain grade level, graduation," Dr. Williams said. "For years, we've had high graduation rates and you want to make sure that is reported back.

"For us as a system, the system score is based on all those indicators," Dr. Williams said. "You've got the academic performance, from what used to be CRCT, plus you've got what percentage of your kids scored a certain score on a SAT, or an ACT, or take an AP exam, an international baccalaureate exam, how many

See CCRPI, Page 3A

Davenport returns as chair; Hunter, vice chair

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Board of Education has chosen its chair and vice chair.

Gary Davenport, in his 18th year on the school board, was selected unanimously to return as board chairman.

Davenport and Hunter will serve in their respective seats for the next two years.

Davenport, who represents the 9th Congressional District as a member of Gov. Nathan Deal's Education Advisory Board, told the crowd in attendance at last week's BOE meeting that he was proud to be the chairman of Union County Board of Education.

"I'd just like to say thank you to Mr. Steppe, Jeremy (Dr. Williams) and all of our administrators, our teachers, our special education folks," Davenport said. "When you see what we've got going on here, I'm proud to be the chairman of this school board. I just want you to know that.

"We've made such great strides in the last 3 to 5 years," Davenport said.

Gov. Deal's Education Advisory Board is comprised of four different groups, consisting of superintendents, principals, educators and school board members. Davenport represents school boards within the 9th Congressional District.

Gov. Deal said in a



Union County Board of Education Chair Gary Davenport, right, was elected to serve another two-year term as board chairman. Davenport also represents the 9th Congressional District on Gov. Nathan Deal's Education Advisory Board. Photo/Charles Duncan

press release that throughout his term, the members of these advisory boards have provided invaluable feedback on policy issues including improving the percentage of Georgia's students reading on grade level by the third grade and encouraging innovation in STEM education.

"By listening to those on the frontlines, we can make better policy decisions for our educators and students," Gov. Deal said. "I'm grateful to these highly regarded professionals who are giving of their time and talents. Our children are our greatest resource, and I look forward to discussing

how we can continue to improve educational outcomes for all."

Meanwhile, Hunter, who has entered his second term on the Board of Education, was unanimously chosen as the board's vice chairman. He said that he was humbled by the board's confidence in him to serve as its vice chair.

Hunter is the second-most tenured BOE member behind Davenport.

In other business, the board ratified the resolution supporting the Great Promise Partnership. GPP is an

See BOE, Page 3A

We Are Still Here campaign moving swiftly

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The executive committee for the *We Are Still Here Memorial* held a public meeting on Monday, Jan. 19, at the Union County Civic Center.

One of the main goals of the memorial is "to bring the attention of the nation upon our community as we host four heads of sovereign nations while commemorating their peoples as the original inhabitants of Union County and North Georgia," according to event literature.

"The focal point of the project is a bronze statue currently being designed by nationally renowned Pawnee/Cherokee artist, Daniel Horsechief of Sallisaw, Oklahoma."

More than 50 residents attended the event, which surprised and delighted those on the executive committee - Jim Brown, Pam Worden, Jack Lance and Dana Nelson.

"Monday night was the first time we've really gone big to be the community to get a feel for where we are," said Brown, executive chairman of the *We Are Still Here Committee*. "Let's spring it on the community and see if we can get them to back us on this - and the support we saw out of



Jim Brown, executive chairman of the *We're Still Here Memorial* addresses the crowd last week at the Union County Civic Center in Blairsville. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

that just blew my mind."

Kathie Garrett, who is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and Haley Grizzle of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians have become an integral part of the memorial.

"To me, it is so very neat to have residents of Blairsville who represent two of the four federally recognized tribes, and to have them to sign on to this project and say, hey, we understand what you're doing, we respect what you're doing,

and we're willing to work with you because of the integrity that you're bringing back to our families," Brown said. "It just says a lot about what we're trying to do."

A video entitled "Blood Mountain - We Are Still Here" invited the audience to take part in a history lesson of Blairsville's past as the ancestral home of the Muscogee (Creek), the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the United Keetowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma and the

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

"Those ancestors, at one time or another, lived in North Georgia," Brown said. "They hunted these mountainsides and they fished these creeks. And in September of 2015, they will return home."

The video, which can be found on YouTube, opened and closed with an amazing rendition of "Amazing Grace" performed by Grizzle

See *We Are Still Here*, Page 2A

A slice of Italy comes to Downtown Blairsville



Chef Michael Collins and his wife Lisa Collins, of Italian Life Caffe, opened the new restaurant and received a warm Blairsville welcome in Downtown Blairsville. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Michaelee's Italian Life Caffe softly opened its doors with little notice but great fanfare on Wednesday, Jan. 21, on the Blairsville Square, and the restaurant quickly filled to capacity.

Proud owners Michael and Lisa Collins moved Michaelee's from Hiawassee to its current location in the Blairsville Square.

"Michaelee's was a combination of my name, Michael, and my wife's name,

See *New Restaurant*, Page 2A

Blackwell's Auto & Truck Sales celebrates 15 years



Vince Frusciant, Brandon Anderson, and Steve Blackwell celebrate 15 years of serving the community and beyond at Blackwell's Auto & Truck Sales. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Happy anniversary to Blackwell's Auto & Truck Sales of Blairsville.

On Feb. 1, Stephen Blackwell will be celebrating 15 years serving Union County and abroad with the

family business.

Blackwell moved from Dallas, Texas, to Blairsville with his wife, Rebecca, the month before he set up shop here 15 years ago.

"We had a baby on the way, and my wife wanted to be closer to her family," said

See *Blackwell*, Page 2A

Murphy man awaits extradition to face burglary charge

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County sheriff's detectives have charged a 37-year-old Murphy, NC man in connection with a Dec. 23 burglary in Union County, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

The burglary happened at 8:30 a.m. on Dec. 23, according to surveillance video, according to Sheriff Mason.

The film caught two good pictures of the suspects in question. According to the video, they were driving a black Honda Accord, Sheriff Mason said.

One of those in the photos was Edwin Walter King Jr., Sheriff Mason said.

Union County Detective



Sheriff Mack Mason

SSgt. Daren Osborn said King is in custody in the Cherokee County, NC jail awaiting extradition.

"He has been charged

with burglary in the first degree," Sgt. Osborn said.

Sgt. Osborn said that Union County also has taken warrants for a Kyle Thomas Lance, 31, of Morganton.

"We don't believe he's living in Morganton anymore," Sgt. Osborn said. "He also will be charged with burglary in the first degree."

Sgt. Osborn said many thanks go out to the Cherokee, NC Sheriff's Office, as well as members of the community in their attempt to help bring two burglary suspects to justice.

"The Cherokee County, NC Sheriff's Office did a tremendous job in helping us with Edwin Walter King Jr.," Sgt. Osborn said. "Many thanks go out to those folks."

More than \$5,000 in items was taken from the resi-

dence. Those items included chainsaws, socket sets, a pair of \$300 Maui Jim sunglasses, and TV and stereo equipment, Sgt. Osborn said.

"Those items have not been recovered at this time," Sgt. Osborn said. "Anyone with information that can lead to the arrest of Kyle Thomas Lance, please call us at the Union County Sheriff's Office at (706) 439-6066, or call our anonymous tip line at (706) 781-1973. All names will be kept confidential."

In other news, Sgt. Osborn said tax season is not without its pitfalls.

"As tax season is upon us there is a new scam to warn you about," Sgt. Osborn

See *Scam*, Page 3A

Vol. 106 No. 5
3 Sections, 22 Pages

Weather
Thurs: Rain Hi 50 Lo 31
Fri: Clouds Hi 46 Lo 27
Sat: Clouds Hi 51 Lo 33

Arrests 6A
Church 2B
Classifieds 3C
Opinion 4A
Legals 5C
Obits 4B
Sports 8A

Coming Soon
Trash to Treasures
February 21st
See page 1B

Coming Soon
No Greater LOVE to benefit
5K RACE & 1 Mile Walk
February 14, 2015
Tricia Spear
Feb 14th
See page 9A

Pre-K 2015-16
Registration Round-up
call 706-835-4321
See page 7A

SPORTS
PANTHERS UCHS Basketball
Tues. Jan 27 @ Riverside 6PM
Fri. Jan 30 vs. Rabun 7 PM
Sat. Jan 31 @ Washington Wilkes 3 PM
WRESTLING
Fri. & Sat. Jan 30 & 31
Area Tournament @ Social Circle