

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

October 31, 2012

Early voting ends Friday; more than 4,200 cast ballots

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



The 2012 election cycle could be the best in years for Union County.

When early voting concludes on Friday, more than 5,000 registered voters already could have cast ballots before the Nov. 6th General Election.

More than 4,200 have already cast ballots, including 400 returned absentee ballots. On Saturday, 182 registered voters cast ballots, according to Chief Registrar Robert Jackson.

Whether it's the Presidential race between Incumbent Barack Obama and

challenger Mitt Romney, the sheriff's race between Incumbent Scott Stephens and challenger Mack Mason, or the Charter School Amendment, also known as Amendment I, voters are turning out in record numbers.

Voters also have several other decisions to make as they cast their final ballot of the 2012 Election season.

They must decide two Public Service Commissioner posts, choose a new 9th District Congressman and de-

cide their choice for Georgia House District 8 state representative.

In the local races, almost all local are up for grabs.

The comfort zone for incumbents in the Nov. 6th election is zero, except for Clerk of Superior Court, Judy Odom, Probate Judge Dwain Brackett and Chief Magistrate Johnnie Garmon.

Judge Brackett and Judge Garmon were reelected during the July 31 primary. Odom is unopposed on the November ballot.

More than 37 percent of Union County registered voters turned out for the primaries. Expect that number to more than double during the Nov. 6th election.

On the Union County General Election ballot, Democratic Incumbent Sheriff Scott Stephens faces Republican challenger Mack Mason. Both were uncontested on their respective ballots.

Republican Lee Knight and Democrat Larry Trulove face off for tax commissioner. Both were uncontested on their respective ballots.

GOP Incumbent Coroner Benny Erwin faces Deputy Coroner Benny Brookshire, a Blairsville Democrat. Both were uncontested on their respective ballots.

Democrat and Sole Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris faces Republican Charles Rich. Both were unopposed on their respective party ballots.

Incumbent Democratic District 1 Board of Education member Gary Davenport and Republican political newcomer Patricia Bertuna face off. Both were uncontested on their respective primaries.

Democratic District 3 BOE Incumbent Carlton Collins faces Republican Cynthia Byers. Both were uncontested on their respective primaries.

In the District 8 State House race, Incumbent Stephen Allison, a Blairsville Republican, faces Democrat Jana Hill of Clayton. Both were uncontested on their respective primaries.

In District 51 State Senate, Incumbent Steve Gooch, a Dahlonega Republican, is

See Elections, Page 2A

Hometown Halloween a hit for all ages

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



The crowd was the story at Blairsville's Hometown Halloween on the Square held on Saturday evening in Downtown Blairsville. Photo by Todd Forrest

There were a lot of parents up late on Saturday night thanks to all the candy that was handed out on the Courthouse Square.

The air was crisp, and the pumpkins were out at the annual Hometown Halloween Festival.

Blairsville might be a small town but it is known to produce big-time family fun.

More than 3,000 people attended the event as parents and children of all ages, dressed up in an assortment of costumes and were lined up as far as the eye could see during the Downtown Development Authority's Blairsville Hometown Halloween festivities.

More than 40 vendors set up around the Town Square, with many bringing decorations and wearing original costumes.

Children's games, decorations, photo opportunities, and plenty of fun were the name of the game on Saturday night.

Many of the nearby res-

taurants stayed open to serve hot chocolate, coffee, and apple cider.

One of the vendors even had the Georgia vs. Florida football game on the radio for all the Bulldog fans and the handful of Gators in attendance.

Downtown Blairsville remained packed well past dark with vendors sticking around to make sure everyone left bewitched from their fair

share of candy and entertainment.

Others just strolled the streets and were entranced by a crisp autumn evening in Union County.

Although costumes weren't mandatory, it was strongly encouraged, and most participants went the extra mile with extremely realistic costumes.

The Downtown Development Authority's Feed the

Food Bank was collecting non-perishable food items for the Union County Food Pantry.

A costume contest, and raffle prizes all helped make this a one-of-a-kind event.

"It's a great event for the kids," Downtown Development Manager Janet Harman said. "It's a free event, it's safe and

See Hometown, Page 2A

BOE says vote 'no' to Amendment I

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



Gary Steppe

House Bill 1162 has the Union County Board of Education worried.

The Board believes it should have every public school in the state on the edge of its seat.

A proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6th General Election ballot would overturn a 2011 Georgia Supreme Court decision that ruled it unconstitutional for the state to create charter schools without local board approval.

Reacting to the proposed amendment, the Union County Board of Education passed a resolution asking state officials to recommit to adequately funding K-12 education without taking money away for charter or private schools.

Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe said if the amendment passes that the school system would lose money to state-approved charter schools and simultaneously have no control over operation.

He declined further comment because of lawsuits aimed at preventing public school officials from lobbying against the superintendent.

See Vote No, Page 6A

Chase suspects among 23 indictments

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



James Reece

James Tyler Casey Reece, 45, of Resaca, who led Union County authorities on a chase through town and onto Highway 515 last August was indicted along with his passenger Rhonda Joyce Fair, 41, also of Resaca.

In a separate incident,



Raymond Johnson

West on Georgia 515 on Aug. 29. His passenger, Fair, also was arrested. Both face felony drug charges in Union County.

Later, Johnson led Union County Sheriff's Office detectives, Georgia Bureau of Investigation agents and Gordon



Rhonda Fair

County sheriff's deputies to a residence in Gordon County that yielded five pounds of raw methamphetamine, sheriff's reports from Union and Gordon counties show.

Johnson and Fair were the occupants of a white Ford

See Indict, Page 7A

Detectives solve crime wave

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



Daby Loffin

Union County Sheriff's Detectives have cracked what they believe to be a one-man crime wave in Blairsville and Union County.

With one arrest, sheriff's detectives cleared eight commercial break ins and recovered some important financial documents stolen from a local church, sheriff's detectives said.

Authorities say that one-man crime wave was Daby Waddell Loffin.

Loffin is believed to be the culprit who broke into Coosa Water Authority, Heavenly Hands, the local bowling alley, Classic Cuts, the Chiropractic Health Center, Sicily Pizza, Dan's Grill and the Blairsville Church of God. He's under investigation in at least one other commercial break in, sheriff's reports show.

During an extensive investigation and some good old-fashioned police work, sheriff's detectives zeroed in on Loffin, Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens said.

Detectives searched state probation and parole records to see if there were any career criminals living in the county but were on parole or probation, sheriff's reports show.

See Crime Wave, Page 6A

October Term Grand Jury Indictments

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Michael Andrew Cheek, possession of hydrocodone, battery in violation of Georgia's Family Violence Act, two counts third-degree cruelty to children;

Angela Marie Cothren, two counts fourth-degree forgery;

Donald Lee Dennis, failure to register as a sex offender;

Stacy Aron Elliott, two counts failure to register as a sex offender;

Bianca Tnez Godby, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute;

Kevin James Goodwin, two counts false imprisonment; battery in violation

of Georgia's Family Violence Act, battery, third-degree cruelty to children;

Jamie Lynn King, manufacture methamphetamine, attempt to violate the Georgia Controlled Substance Act - manufacture methamphetamine, presence of a child during manufacture of methamphetamine;

Jodi Ann Lanigan, manufacture methamphetamine, attempt to violate the Georgia Controlled Substance Act - manufacture methamphetamine, presence of a child during manufacture of methamphetamine;

Danielle Nathalie Lawless, six counts fraud in obtaining

See Indictments, Page 7A

Paris honors retired teachers

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Front Row, left to right, UCREA President Terry Queen, Commissioner Lamar Paris, Clyde Collins; back row, left to right, Betty Adams, Charles Adams, Melissa Kelley, Jack Parker, Joyce Wycoff, Janice Cochran, Martha Collins, Sue Collins, Betty Sexton. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal are in agreement, both have proclaimed Sunday, Nov. 4th, as Retired Educators Day.

Gov. Deal's declaration covers the entire state; Commissioner Paris' covers his beloved Union County.

Commissioner Paris has acknowledged the day and encourages the residents of Union County to recognize and honor the area's retired educators for their dedicated service and lasting contribu-

tions to our city, county, and state.

Eleven retired educators were present at the proclamation. See Teachers, Page 6A

Vol. 103 No. 44
2 Sections, 30 Pages
Weather
Wed: Cloudy Hi 55 Lo 32
Thur: Sunny Hi 56 Lo 34
Friday Sunny Hi 58 Lo 33

Inside
Arrests 8A
Church 13A
Classified 6B
Opinion 4A
Legal 8B
Obits 15A
Sports 10A

Your North Georgia News paper will be available on November 7th so we can bring you up to date election results.

FFA Fruit Sale Underway!
See Page 8A for details

Woody Gap School honors our Veterans on November 9th
See Page 8A for details

UCHS Football
Friday, Nov. 2
7:30pm
Social Circle - Sr. Night
Cross Country - Region 8-AA Championship
Meet @ Oglethorpe Co.
4:30 p.m.