

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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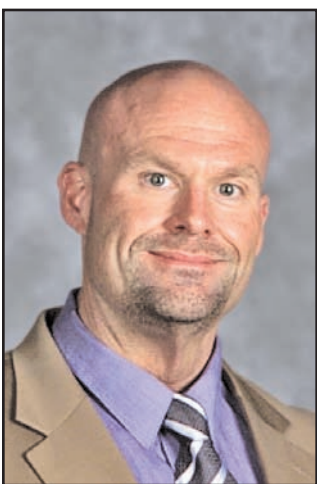
Legal Organ of Union County

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November 25, 2015

UCHS among top in state graduation rates

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



UCHS Principal John Hill

Class of 2015 graduation rates are in, and Union County High School has tied for 16th place out of all 624 high schools in Georgia, a total that includes both public and private schools.

The results arrived earlier this month via the Georgia Department of Education's 2015 Four-Year Graduation Rate report, and it showed that UCHS graduated 97.7 percent of its seniors, a rate shared with DeKalb, Early College Academy.

"I've very, very proud of this for our staff," said UCHS Principal John Hill. "They work very hard to make sure that all our kids that start high school finish high school. If you look at this list, there are only

little bit higher than us, and the other schools that beat us are specialty schools, like Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology, which has 100 percent advanced placement type kids."

This achievement is especially impressive considering that the national graduation rate average is around 81 percent, according to the latest available data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

"The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defines the cohort based on when a student first becomes a freshman," according to the GaDOE website. "It is calculated using the number of students who graduate within four years and includes adjustments for student transfers. In contrast, Georgia's former graduation rate calculation defined the

cohort upon graduation, which may have included students who took more than four years (to) graduate."

And according to Hill, no other school in the region is even close to UCHS' graduation rate, and he couldn't be more proud of his faculty and students.

"For us to be ranked among these elite schools with graduation rate - we're doing some things right," said Hill. "Our staff is working really hard to make sure that people are on grade level, that they're doing what they're supposed to. The counseling department is working very diligently with our kids."

"Parents are obviously very supportive to make sure their kids value education, so it's that community/school

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Accident claims life of Chattanooga man



By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

129/GA 11 at approximately 6:45 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 17, in Blairsville.

Edgar Fernando Davilasavin traveling as a passenger in a Toyota Tundra headed westbound in the right

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For Bonnie Cobb, it's 50 years and counting



Bonnie Cobb surrounded by friends and colleagues

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The North Georgia News would like to congratulate Bonnie Cobb, who recently celebrated her 50th anniversary working as a registered nurse in Union County.

Union General Hospital, where Cobb is a medical/surgical charge nurse, threw Cobb a surprise party commemorating the milestone on Thursday, Nov. 5, and more than 100 of her friends and colleagues attended from both Union General and Chatuge Regional hospitals.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, a longtime friend of Cobb's, also came to the party, and Union General CEO Mike

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Construction to begin soon on new ag center

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Union County Board of Education has voted to accept a bid for the upcoming Union County Schools Agricultural Science Center, which is expected to begin construction as soon as December and reach completion by May 2016.

The bid for completion of the facility came in at \$2,922,019, which beat pre-bid estimates of between \$3.2 and \$3.3 million, and the bidding process was conducted by Bowen & Watson Construction Managers, the construction management company also responsible for the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

"When we started our SPLIT, we did a construction manager at risk, so we sent out bids for somebody to manage all of our construction," said Union County Schools Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams. "That's pretty standard with SPLIT, because what they're then tied to are the projects that we have in our SPLIT, and they guarantee that price and they won't cost more than that."

The new ag center is



Superintendent Gary Steppe

the third project in the current cycle of SPLIT, with funds from this SPLIT having already gone toward funding the state-of-the-art Fine Arts Center and a 10-classroom addition to the Union County Primary School.

"As a part of this SPLIT, the board decided a couple of years ago that they were going to do pay-as-you-go," said Williams. "So that means that we have the funds to pay for these projects and we don't have to bond."

Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe

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Vietnam Veterans say 'thank you' Union County

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The residents of Union County received a very special gift from local Vietnam Veterans during the Union County Commissioner's meeting on Thursday, Nov. 19.

"As a token of our heartfelt gratitude to all the people of Union County, we would like to present this shadowbox," said Mike Priven, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America Blairsville Chapter 1101, in the meeting.

"It contains a U.S. flag once flown over the U.S. Capitol. It was given to our chapter by (U.S. Rep.) Doug Collins to be flown over the (Vietnam Moving Wall) during its stay."

"The moment we started construction on the wall, the moment we finished up, the moment we went taking it down, the flag was taken down. This shadowbox also



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris with members of VFW Chapter 1101

contains a certificate given by Rep. Collins to our chapter, and it contains a plaque from our chapter expressing its gratitude to the people of Union County."

Priven also thanked many of his VVA members, without whom the massive undertaking of bringing the Wall to town

would not have been possible, as well as Home Depot for going "beyond what we could have ever expected from a great corporate sponsor."

He also expressed appreciation for leadership within the county, the Meeks Park staff, the Union County Fire Department and the many

volunteers and visitors who helped to make the Moving Wall's time in Union County something to be remembered for generations.

The shadowbox is to receive prominent placement for display within the Union

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City Council meeting opens with pledge and prayer



City Attorney Jana Akins and Mayor Jim Conley

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Marty Duncan of Fellowship of the Hills Church now holds the singular distinction of having delivered the first invocation in a Blairsville City Council meeting in recent memory following the council's adoption of an invocation policy in the October meeting.

Duncan led the meeting with his invocation in the Tuesday, Nov. 10, meeting, and the Pledge of Allegiance also got its first recitation in a Blairsville City Council meeting, as it too received approval in October.

Also in the meeting, which was moved from Nov. 3 to Nov. 10 in order to accommodate for the Blairsville

Municipal Elections that featured wins from the three running incumbents, the council adopted the 2016 budget.

According to the adopted budget, which is required by state law to balance, the City of Blairsville's upcoming Operating Revenue Budget for 2016 is \$3,927,900, with a matching Operating Expenditure Budget for 2016.

The breakdown for both revenues and expenditures is as follows: \$1,393,700 for the General Fund; \$65,000 for the Hotel/Motel Fund; \$2,148,900 for the Water/Sewer Fund; and \$320,300 for the Airport Fund.

"Our budget has varied maybe \$400 or \$500 over

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Chesnutt/Diffie offer Black Friday ticket special

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In order to celebrate shopping and to show appreciation to the community for its support, on Black Friday, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will be selling Buy One, Get One Free tickets for the Saturday, Nov. 28, Mark Chesnutt/Joe Diffie concert.

The special sale will only be available on Black Friday, Nov. 27, and tickets are \$38 for premium seats and \$28 for regular seating.

"Joe and I have been buddies for 25 years now," said Chesnutt. "He came out just about the same time I did, just maybe a month or two later, and we've been really

good friends ever since. We've toured together off and on all these years, and it's always fun to get together and work with him."

"We have a hoot on stage. When we do these acoustic shows like this together, it's me and him and a couple of other guys backing us up, and we're all sitting there on stools playing acoustic guitars. We've all been knowing each other forever, and it's getting together with old friends that you haven't seen in a while."

The two Country Music icons are famous for their onstage rapport, which speaks to the level of friendship that they have achieved over the years.

"We always have a great time, we just hang out and we



Joe Diffie

talk, and if we don't watch it, we'll end up," said Chesnutt. "It's like our audience is sitting on the bus with us, and we'll



Mark Chesnutt

tell stories about the songs. He'll request a song of mine and I'll request some of his

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HAPPY THANKSGIVING

SPORTS

WRESTLING

TUES. NOV. 24 VS. FANNIN 5 PM

WED. NOV. 25 @ ST. PIUS 9 AM

BASKETBALL

TUES. NOV. 24 VS. LUMPKIN CO

6 & 7:30 PM