



Merry Christmas

"Land of Lakes, Mountains, Scenic Beauty and Friendly People"

50¢

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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December 23, 2015

Third Annual Adopt a Grandparent

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Roberta Ford and Kristy Wallace assembled their helper elves to conduct the Third Annual Adopt-a-Grandparent for Christmas in Union and Towns counties on Saturday, Dec. 19.

Ford and Wallace, both Independent Beauty Consultants with Mary Kay, started the program in 2013 with the Union County Nursing Home, before expanding it last year to reach Chatsuge Regional Nursing Home.

This year, the two were able to add the Lazy-R Personal Care Center as beneficiaries of their give-back program, and they got help from friends and



Commissioner Paris, Roberta Ford, Kristy Wallace, Brigitte Edghill and Erika Star deliver gifts to residents at Union County Nursing Home, in Blairsville.

clients Erika Star and Brigitte Edghill, as well as Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris.

As the team made its way up and down the halls of

each retirement community, the residents expressed their appreciation for visitors bearing Christmas gifts.

"We wanted a way to give back to the community

with our businesses and our success in our Tri-State area," said Ford. "But not just give back to the community - we wanted something that was

See Grandparent, Page 2A

ISO ratings go down



Fire Chief David Dyer, EMA Director Charles Worden and Fire Capt. Richard Jones are proud of the Class 4 ISO rating that the county now has - one of only 14 counties in Georgia. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

News Special
North Georgia News

Homeowners and business owners of Union County will have an extra Christmas

present this year with the lowering of the Insurance Services Office's (ISO) Public Protection Class.

Union County Fire Department, Union County Dis-

See ISO, Page 14A

Capt. Chad Deyton named Deputy of the Year



Sheriff Mack Mason and Chief Deputy John George present Capt. Chad Deyton with Deputy of the Year honor. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Each year, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason invites those involved in law

enforcement within the county to attend his office's annual Christmas party.

The annual event gives the sheriff's office, the Blairsville Police Department,

the Union County District Attorney's Office, the Union County Jail, the Georgia State Patrol and others a chance to break bread together and celebrate a year of hard work well done.

Two deputies were honored at this year's Christmas party, on Monday, Dec. 14, by the sheriff and by the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.

"They approached me, and they wanted to give a certificate to honor a Deputy of the Year," said Sheriff Mason of the Sons of the American Revolution, adding that he would have liked to have been able to give one of the same certificates to each of his deputies. "Chad Deyton here was selected on his merit,

the hard work that he does, the major cases that he has worked.

"We're just very proud of him, and Union County should be honored to have someone like him. And like I said, that goes for all the rest of you, too."

David Cook and Sid Turner, both SAR members, presented Capt. Deyton of the Narcotics Division with a law enforcement commendation medal and a certificate, honoring him for "his leadership, diligence and dedication leading to 68 arrests and seizure of over \$500,000 in contraband."

Capt. Deyton also received an award from Sheriff Mason, naming him 2015 Deputy of the Year, in

See Deputy, Page 2A

Williams departs with fond memories of Blairsville-Union County

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Longtime Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Williams has taken the top spot at the Cartersville-Barrow County Chamber, and will serve her last day in Union County at the start of the New Year, on Wednesday, Jan. 6.

The decision was not easy for Williams, who has spent the past nine and a half years as president of the chamber here in Blairsville. What it boiled down to was



Cindy Williams

an opportunity to embrace the challenges of working with a

See Williams, Page 14A

2015 Shop with a Cruiser a huge success

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County has no short supply of generous people willing to give in order to make sure that the children of the county have a magical Christmas experience, and the Blairsville Cruisers raise money year round to aid in the effort.

And those efforts came to fruition on Tuesday, Dec. 15, in the annual Shop With a Cruiser program, in which 59 children of Union County Schools ages 8-13 got to shop at Walmart and eat lunch

afterward at Papa's Pizza. Shop With a Cruiser is modeled after the Blairsville Police Department's Shop With a Cop program, which the Cruisers help with each year also.

In fact, between the Blairsville Police Department, the Cruisers and the Union County Sheriff's Office with its Give-a-Gift program, a large number of county children receive the best Christmas possible each year, regardless of their circumstances.

"We've been supporting Shop With a Cop and the sheriff's Give-a-Gift program



The Blairsville Cruisers held their annual Shop With a Cruiser.

about ever since we started," said Wayne Tanner, co-founder of the Blairsville Cruisers,

adding that his daughter, Sherry Lovell, helped him to

See Cruiser, Page 3A

Off-ramp construction continues

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Bud Akins gave an update on the Haralson Development Project in the December meeting of the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority's Board of Directors.

Akins spent years working with the Georgia Department of Transportation and is currently overseeing development of the new off ramp.

"We've had a lot of rain this fall, but I think we're coming along great," said Akins. "I'm satisfied with all of the work that they've done."

One of the next steps in construction will be installing the curbs and gutters of the ramp, which will be done by machine to expedite the process, though weather will play



Darren Harper

a big role as far as when the ramp will reach completion.

"If it gets down to 20 degrees, the ground's going to freeze, and you're not going to be able to put the asphalt down," said Akins, highlighting the importance of continued good weather in finishing the job soon. "There might come a time that you have to

See DDA, Page 3A

Star Wars debuts at Blairsville Cinema

By Shawn Jarrard
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Hundreds of area residents lined up outside the Blairsville Cinema on Thursday, Dec. 17, each patiently waiting to take part in a multi-generational happening more than 30 years in the making.

Those who attended the premiere in Blairsville were not alone - nationally, *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens* broke the record for domestic ticket sales in its opening weekend, bringing in a whopping \$238 million.

The latest installment in the franchise reunites cast and crew that last filmed together for *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, which some of those in attendance were fortunate enough to have seen in theaters.

Kate VanOrsdal, 65, and Kathy Thompson, 71, both of Blue Ridge, remem-



Friends Zack Whitfield, Doug Harper, Zach Johnson, Aaron Donnelly and Ryan Oquendo attend the Star Wars premiere at Blairsville Cinema. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

ber seeing the original trilogy as the movies debuted years ago, and for them, seeing the newest movie was just as exciting.

"Oh my God, it's *Star Wars* - we wouldn't miss it," said VanOrsdal just before the premiere. "We were young

people when this first started, so we've seen them all."

In fact, VanOrsdal and Thompson have seen every *Star Wars* movie in theaters - now all seven - and attending Thursday was an important part of maintaining that legacy.

"If you're there for the first night, it's more of a party," said Thompson, who posed for pictures clashing lightsabers with VanOrsdal. "I have friends that envy me, because they thought it wasn't starting until tomorrow night."

Many fans decided to dress up for the occasion, going all out to celebrate opening night in true Jedi fashion. Aaron Donnelly, 23, and Ryan Oquendo, 25, showed up in costume for the premiere in a group of 15 friends, and all were equally excited for the film to start.

"For me, I'm really looking forward to what they can do with the special effects, kind of bringing *Star Wars* into the modern era," said Oquendo, whose Jedi outfit was styled after Luke Skywalker in *Episode VI*.

See Star Wars, Page 3A

New furniture for Primary School



Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams and Superintendent Gary Steppe answer the board members questions in the meeting.

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Primary School will be receiving brand new furniture for its first and

second grade classrooms, and new tables for its lunchroom after the purchases were approved in the December meeting of the Union County

See BOE, Page 2A

Vol. 106 No. 52
3 Sections, 30 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Storms Hi 68 Lo 59
Fri: Storms Hi 71 Lo 61
Sat: Cloudy Hi 71 Lo 59

Inside
Arrests 8A
Church 9A
Classifieds 3B
Opinion 4A
Legals 5B
Obits 11A
Sports 12A

PANTHERS
Union County Men and Women's Basketball Teams will compete
Battle of the States
hosted by Towns County High School
December 28th-30th

FREE Christmas Haircuts at GLOW
See page 10A

PANTHERS SPORTS
BASKETBALL
Tuesday, December 22nd
@ Greene County 5 & 6:30 PM