

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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February 15, 2017

## Payton Gooch named STAR Student at Woody Gap

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

SUCHES – The North Georgia News would like to congratulate Payton Gooch for her nomination as 2017 STAR Student at Woody Gap School.

Excelling academically is nothing new for Gooch, as she's been dual enrolled at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega for the last couple of years, and will graduate high school with nearly enough credits to start college as a sophomore.

And while she wasn't necessarily expecting the STAR Student title, Gooch said she's thankful for those who have helped her along

her path toward academic success.

"I would like to thank the faculty and staff of Woody Gap for their encouragement and support," said Gooch. "Also, a special thanks to my mom and dad, Becky and Stephen Gooch, for all their love and always supporting me no matter what."

To be nominated as a STAR Student, a high school senior must achieve the highest score among their peers on any single sitting of the SAT through November of their senior year, and be in the Top 10 percent or Top 10 students of their class based on grade-point average.

Once nominated, students then select a teacher who is representative of



Woody Gap School's 2017 STAR Student Payton Gooch and her STAR Teacher Althea Cantrell.

their academic success – a teacher who has particularly inspired them toward higher achievement.

When it came time for Gooch to select her STAR Teacher, she knew right away that she wanted to name Althea Cantrell.

"She has helped me a lot through high school," said Gooch. "She's very caring about her students. Any time that I've needed something, she tries her best to help, and she does that with everyone."

Gooch attended the main campuses of Union County Schools in Blairsville through seventh grade, before transferring to Woody Gap to begin her eighth-grade year.

Cantrell instructed Gooch in various subjects

of mathematics from eighth grade through her junior year, and helped to smooth that initial transition for Gooch by exemplifying the unique spirit of Woody Gap School many describe as a sense of familial closeness.

For her part, Cantrell was excited to see Gooch earn the STAR Student nomination, and described her own selection as Gooch's STAR Teacher as being "an amazing honor."

"As teachers, that's what we're here for, and for a student to say thank you, I want you to do this – that's just amazing," said Cantrell.

Cantrell is herself a graduate of Woody Gap School, and has been teaching

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## Quilts of Valor members honor veterans in quarterly meeting



These 10 men received Quilts of Valor at the Historical Union County Courthouse on Saturday, Feb. 11

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Ten area veterans received Quilts of Valor in a special ceremony conducted by the women who run the group, held on Saturday, Feb. 11, inside the Historical Union County Courthouse.

"We are Quilt of Valor quilters from the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild in Blairsville, and our mission is

to honor our combat service members and veterans who have been touched by war with a Quilt of Valor," said Sue Young in the quarterly presentation ceremony.

The presentation of the quilts is always an emotional affair, as each veteran stands to be wrapped in their one-of-a-kind gift, which is always followed by the warm embrace of those who volunteer their time to craft the quilts.

Honored on Saturday

were the following veterans, including eight who served in Vietnam, one in Korea and one in Iraq: Don Pruitt of Suches; David Walters of Hayesville; North Carolina; Jason Champlain of Blairsville; Lewis McCafferty of Blairsville; Terry Jones of Blairsville; Tommy Hardin of Hiwassee; Robert Earnshaw of Blairsville, near Young Harris; Thomas Mowell of Blairsville; Michael Roberts of Murphy, North

Carolina; and Franklin McKinley; and Franklin Morgan.

James Guinn of Morganton couldn't make the presentation, and Ron Melillo of Blairsville received his quilt at home.

The following biographical information, compiled with the help of the veterans and their families, was made available during the

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## Is your life worth a penny?

News Special  
North Georgia News

The North Georgia News provides the forum for the Georgia Sheriffs' Association to ask readers and state lawmakers the question of how much a life is worth.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason asks that locals contact their state lawmakers to provide support for a penny sales tax initiative that would help pay for Georgia's deputies and city police officers.

District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch can be reached at (404) 656-9221, and House District 8 Rep. Matt Gurtler can be reached at (706) 490-2285.

The following letter was penned by Putnam County Sheriff Howard Sills:

I live in a fine community where it is quite common for citizens to approach me and ask what they can do to help us. I know police officers don't always have such a relationship with the people they serve, and I am most grateful for support like this, especially these days. I am about to ask you to help me and all the deputy sheriffs and city police in this state.

My career in law enforcement has now spanned 43 years, and I began my sixth term in office as the sheriff of Putnam County two days ago. I have seen and been part of phenomenal changes in this profession over the years, but I regretfully now clearly recognize



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

that we have reached a crisis point for law enforcement in our country of which the average citizen is just unaware.

In 2016, there were 140 law enforcement officers who lost lives in the line of duty in this country. Of these deaths, 106 men and women were local city/county police and deputy sheriffs, 19 were state officers, six were federal officers, and the remaining nine were territory, college, or transit officers.

The loss of 140 officers' lives in a year is unfortunately not that unusual. What is different is the fact that 65 of those officers died as a result of gunfire, which represents a 69 percent increase in such cases from 2015. This is not something that is just occurring in the big cities. In the last two months alone there have been nine officers shot within 100 miles of where I'm sitting, and five of

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## For Leslie George, litter 'a quality of life issue'

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Litter is a big problem in Union County.

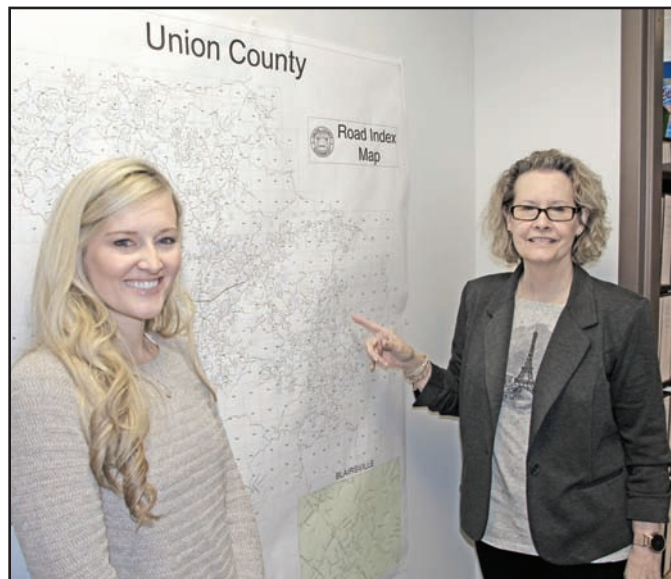
Every year, Union County contracts for a full-time detainee crew out of the Colwell Probation Detention Center, the sole purpose of which is to pick up litter along the sides of Union County's roads.

In 2015, this crew picked up 62,260 pounds of trash from Union County's roadways – that's more than 30 tons of garbage collected over the course of the year, either thrown from vehicles or lost due to improper transportation of trash, which is supposed to be covered if hauled via truck or trailer.

Last year, the same crew picked up 5 tons more than in 2015, for a total of 72,540 pounds of garbage.

So, how much does it cost to deal with 72,540 pounds of litter?

According to the Union



Ashley Rubio and Leslie George of the North Georgia Resource Management Authority.

County Commissioner's Office, it cost county taxpayers \$42,778.20 in 2016 to hire the detainee pick-up crew and dispose of all that trash.

Now, that's a sizeable bill that could certainly be

spent or saved elsewhere, especially considering that the Union County Transfer Station off Deep South Farm Road is now more user-friendly than ever since its renovation,

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## Council hears from public on skateboarding prohibition

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Longstanding city ordinances and commercial property opportunities were the primary focuses of the regular monthly meeting of the Blairsville City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 7.

Prior to the meeting, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and the council were approached by a concerned citizen, Thomas Wosyluk, regarding the city's current skateboard ordinance.

Wosyluk formally addressed the council in regards to the ordinance on Tuesday.

According to Wosyluk, due to recent transportation troubles, he used his skateboard as a means of getting to work, and was unaware of the laws against such until he was told skateboards weren't allowed.

"Along my ride to work, I started feeling strange about it, like maybe I wasn't supposed to do it," said Wosyluk. "When I got to work, I was told that it's illegal to ride a skateboard. So, that's why I'm here."

Wosyluk suggested to



Blairsville City Councilman Buddy Moore studies the agenda during the Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017, city council meeting. Photo/Lily Avery

the council an extension to the sidewalk that follows Blue Ridge Highway and continue it down to Meeks Park.

"I dug into some ideas that you might be interested in," said Wosyluk. "There could be a sidewalk from right here (City Hall) and the sidewalk could

keep going down to the Blue Ridge Highway and continue it down to Meeks Park.

"That's my idea, that kids could ride their scooters or skateboards along the sidewalks to Meeks Park. I have a little

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