

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Residents to receive boosters in mass vaccine clinic Friday

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Sports Center off the Glenn Gooch Bypass will welcome back 1,050 residents of Union and Towns counties Friday for second booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sponsored by the Union County Government, Union County Emergency Management Agency, and health departments of Union and Towns counties, the event will be a repeat of the Jan. 22 mass vaccination clinic that featured 12 hours of shots at a rate of 15 vaccines every 10 minutes.

Vaccine supplies remain limited, with new vaccinations still being conducted by appointment only, and the

Feb. 19 clinic will consist regularly of second shot receivers.

The Sports Center will host future EMA-coordinated mass clinics as supplies become available. In the meantime, the Health Department will conduct the majority of its COVID vaccinations there Monday through Thursday each week to maximize vaccine delivery efforts.

"Having a larger space than the health departments will also give us flexibility to vaccinate more people each day, especially when vaccine becomes more readily available," District 2 Public Health Director Dr. Zachary Taylor said.

In Towns, the Health Department has been

regularly vaccinating people with appointments in the Conference Room of the Recreation and Conference Center, with Foster Park offering its facilities alongside assistance from Towns County Government and EMA for all local mass vaccine efforts.

Sharing this space is Dr. Samuel Le Church and his staff at Synergy Health of Hiawassee, including the all-volunteer COVID-19 Vaccine Team. As a mass vaccine provider, Synergy has been steadily vaccinating large groups of people from the ngvax.com wait list.

Already, Dr. Church's health practice has succeeded in administering over a thousand doses, and his team is prepared logistically to vaccinate more than 1,000

people a day when the time comes, which is certain to happen in the not-too-distant future as supply becomes more widely available.

It takes many community partners to host these events, from volunteers to police officers and fire-fighters, and everyone involved is grateful for the opportunity to put residents' minds at ease and hopefully restore a sense of normalcy.

Early vaccination efforts are still focused on medical workers; long-term care residents and staff; all Georgians 65 years of age and older; as well as law enforcement, fire personnel, and other first responders.

Eventually, everyone who wants a shot will be able

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Karen Burchardt received her COVID shot during a Health Department vaccine day at the Sports Center last week, administered by Registered Nurse Shara Harkins. Burchardt was hesitant about the vaccine at first but came around to getting it for protection. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Annual 'Night to Shine' made bright despite COVID-19



Volunteers at First United Methodist Church prepare special baskets to help "Night to Shine" guests have a fun evening at home for the 2021 event. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The annual "Night to Shine" event sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation has been a well-attended and much appreciated event for area special needs individuals for the last four years.

Each year, the participants

receive an exclusive prom night experience they will never forget – an evening of glamour and glitz, suits and dresses, the coronation of kings and queens, complete with music, dancing and other fun activities with people who care about them.

Due to COVID-19, however, the 2021 event could not be held in person, so guests

partook of a specially prepared virtual celebration on Friday, Feb. 12, according to local Event Directors Joe and Kim Tatman.

"The Tim Tebow Foundation didn't want to just scuttle the whole event, but they also wanted it to be safe," Joe said. "So, what they have

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Union County Farmers Market on track for 2021 season open

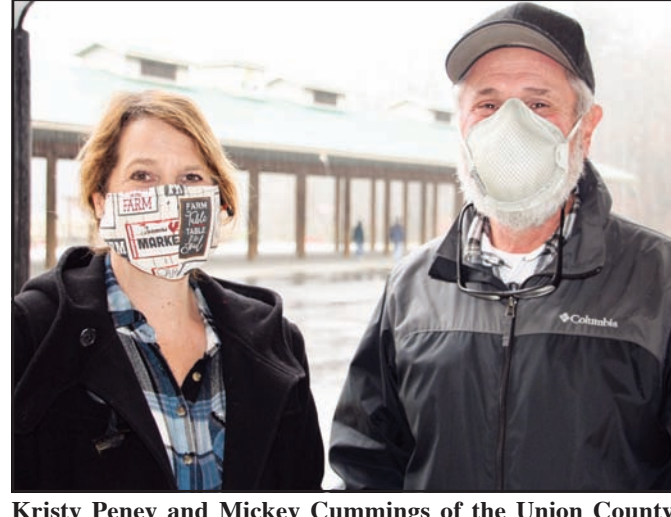
By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Farmers Market will be open for 2021 following a successful 2020 season, with safety measures returning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the market can operate June through October.

Last season took place during the Southern wave of the pandemic, though the outdoor venue and coronavirus-specific mitigations allowed the Farmers Market to carry on despite the virus, with no known infections at the market.

The return is expected to occur around the same time as usual, with an unofficial Ramp Day kickoff in early May and an official opening day soon thereafter.

Ramp Day and other customer appreciation days



Kristy Peney and Mickey Cummings of the Union County Farmers Market can't wait for the new season to debut later this spring. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

were canceled last year, but the market may hold a select few events in 2021, like the Honeybee Jubilee or Tomato Sandwich Day, but under strict

parameters, such as handing out canned ramps, salsas and other pre-packaged foods. People have been asking

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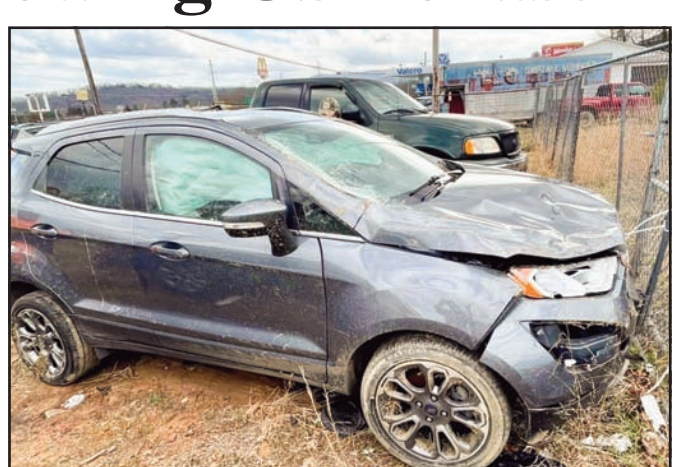
Car theft ends in runaway's arrest following GSP chase

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A runaway White County juvenile found himself in the hot seat Monday, Feb. 8, when a Georgia State Patrol trooper performed a pit maneuver on the stolen vehicle he was driving and subsequently took him into custody, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn said.

The 14-year-old Cleveland male, who will not be identified due to his status as a juvenile, somehow made his way to Meek's Park in Union County on Sunday, Feb. 7, where he stole a vehicle, Osborn said.

"When the owner of the vehicle realized she had left her key fob in it, she went back to get it, and the car was already



A 14-year-old runaway stole this vehicle from Meek's Park Feb. 7 and later got into a high-speed chase with Georgia State Patrol. Photo/Facebook

gone," Osborn said.

At some point in the roughly 24 hours that the vehicle was missing, the youth allegedly met with a female

juvenile in Blairsville, taking her for a ride before dropping her back home, Osborn confirmed, adding that she

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Businesses 'Share the Love' with Habitat for Humanity

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties Inc. and Visit Downtown Blairsville partnered with more than two dozen local businesses Feb. 11-13 for a "Share the Love" fundraiser to benefit the nonprofit organization.

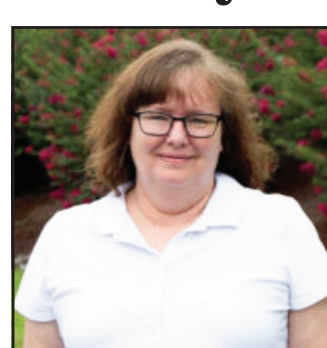
According to Darren Harper, who runs Visit Downtown Blairsville, the Valentine's-themed fundraiser acts as an excellent way to help Habitat and the community while connecting local businesses with customers.

"Last year, Habitat and I did this, and it was kind of a throw-together event," Harper said. "This time of year is

usually hard for our merchants. It is after Christmas, it is the first of the year, this has been an election year, which also makes people hesitant to spend money. So, it has been rough, and we wanted to bring this back this year.

"It is not only a way for Habitat to raise awareness and funds, but also drive traffic to our downtown businesses. We had a lot of people participate this year, which shows that it is effective for them, because someone might come in and purchase something they might have been holding off on, knowing some of those proceeds are going to a good cause."

The local Habitat for Humanity Operations Manager



Cathy Wheeler
Habitat for Humanity

Cathy Wheeler was happy to report that 25 local businesses participated this year, and the group is already looking to expand the event in 2022.

"At the end of the three-

See *'Share the Love'* Page 6A

January Term 2021 Grand Jury Indictments

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2021 of the Union County Grand Jury, which met recently for the first time since January Term 2020 following a COVID-19 hiatus:

Bryan Aaron Berryman, burglary in the second degree; theft by taking; criminal damage to property in the second degree; possession of methamphetamine.

Kimberly Dawn Blauvelt, burglary in the second degree; theft by taking; criminal damage to property in the second degree; possession of methamphetamine; crossing the guard lines with drugs.

Jasper Cole Dease,

Mark Larry Berryman, burglary in the second degree; theft by taking; criminal damage to property in the second degree; possession of methamphetamine.

Kimberly Dawn Blauvelt, burglary in the second degree; theft by taking; criminal damage to property in the second degree; possession of methamphetamine; crossing the guard lines with drugs.

Jasper Cole Dease,

aggravated battery. Mack Erwin Harrison Jr., cruelty to children in the first degree; simple battery.

Angela Renee Collins, cruelty to children in the first degree; battery, Family Violence.

Anthony Wayne Barber, battery, Family Violence; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person, or resident; elder threats.

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Murphy Hwy crime spree leads to arrest of sleeping suspect

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County Sheriff's Deputies arrested a man last week following an early morning crime spree in the vicinity of Worley's Tires on Murphy Highway, UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Billy Joe Elkins Jr., 36, of Morganton, was taken into custody around 7 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, and charged with theft by taking, entering auto, first degree burglary, second degree burglary, disorderly conduct, loitering, and probation violation for a prior drug conviction.

Authorities aren't sure how Elkins came to be in the area that morning, and he reports that being able to

remember, but the alleged criminal activity began around 3 a.m. when a man living on Harkins Young Road got up for work and saw his floodlight activate, Osborn said.

The homeowner went outside to see what made the light turn on and witnessed Elkins entering his vehicle before scaring the intruder off, Osborn said.

At some point over the next three and a half hours, Osborn said Elkins managed to take a motorcycle from one residence, which passing motorists later reported seeing him pushing down Murphy Highway, and a TV plus two duffle bags filled with items stolen from another home.

The first 911 call didn't come in until around 6:30 a.m.,



Billy Joe Elkins Jr.

however, when an employee of Worley's Tires reached out to say he had seen Elkins lurking behind the business. Elkins saw that he'd been spotted and proceeded to be spotted and

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