

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Chamber honors STARS of Union County High, Woody Gap

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Every new school year, Union County High and Woody Gap School seniors earn the distinction of being STAR Students through the Professional Association of Georgia Educators Foundation.

The STAR Student at each school is the highest scoring SAT taker in a single sitting of the test among his or her classmates, and this year's STAR Students are Will Harkins of UCHS and Ernest Waldroup of Woody Gap.

Harkins and Waldroup were recognized for their achievements at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce's "Evening with the Stars" annual banquet on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at the Community Center.

Once chosen, the students must each pick a STAR Teacher, represented by the educator they feel had the biggest impact on their school careers.

Harkins honored science teacher Alecia Frizzell as his STAR Teacher.

"I want to thank Mrs. Frizzell for always pushing me forward and encouraging me to be the best me," Harkins said. "Receiving this award has shown me that hard work and diligence does pay off."

"All it takes is the right mindset and a good work ethic. These two qualities will get you farther in life than anything."

Driving his point home, Harkins concluded his remarks that evening by quoting famed Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who led Britain during World War II: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts."

The senior made sure to thank his parents for their support, UCHS for the opportunities it offers, and his friends for the challenges they present. And Harkins thanked the Chamber of Commerce for sponsoring the "Evening with



L-R: Alumna Chris Mathis and students Evelyn McBride, Joseph Farris, Zoe Sanchez, Jessie Holbrooks, Will Harkins and Ernest Waldroup were honored Feb. 11 for their contributions as "Stars" in the Union County School System.

Photo by Mark Smith

See STARS, Page 3A

'Courthouse View' development on hold in Downtown Blairsville

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Citing rising building costs, local entrepreneur Steve Cockerham has decided to put his proposed mixed-use development known as "Courthouse View" on hold indefinitely.

The building was to be situated on land he purchased from the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority, specifically the Haralson Property parcel located across from Foodland Grocery.

Designs for the 15,000-square-foot "Courthouse View" feature three floors, 10 retail spaces for future businesses, four two-bedroom condos, and an outward aesthetic meant to blend in with the Historic



A digital rendering of the proposed "Courthouse View" development at Pat Haralson Drive and Bob Head Street. The building design took many cues from the Old Courthouse in Downtown Blairsville.

Downtown area. However, when two rounds of construction bids came back well over initial cost estimates, Cockerham said he

experienced the disappointing realization late last year that he could not financially justify the building.

See Courthouse View, Page 2A

Woody Gap celebrates Homecoming, crowns Mossinger queen



Woody Gap freshman Gretchen Mossinger was crowned 2020 Homecoming Queen Saturday by last year's Queen Chayil Aponte, who returned from college to bestow the generational honor.

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES - Woody Gap School hosted its Homecoming Basketball Games, Ceremony and Mixer on Saturday, Feb. 15, and the events were delayed the week before due to a half-foot of snow.

To kick things off, the school hosted Ladies and Men's Alumni Basketball Games, wherein former students "returned home" - hence Homecoming - to go up against current students in a friendly

competition. Having alumni involved with all of Homecoming is something that Woody Gap does so well compared to many other schools, and the educators out Suches' way pride themselves on having students and past students come together and share in the school spirit.

And leading up to Homecoming Night, both staff and students at every level are involved in a week of festivities like "Hat Day" and "Falcon Spirit Day," which is something teacher Sheila Collins Tritt said

makes Homecoming at Woody Gap that much more special.

"Everyone here gets along," Collins said. "We have Kindness Days, where the big kids go get the little kids and eat lunch with them, and sometimes the older kids take them to fish. This school works as a family, so we do Homecoming here as a family."

"Back when I went to school here, we had a homecoming that was just the older students, but we want everyone to be involved."

See Homecoming, Page 8A

Commissioner Lamar Paris elected to ATVG Board leadership

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was elected Second Vice President of the Association of Tennessee Valley Governments at the organization's recent annual meeting.

Paris will expand his leadership capacity on the board in 2021, when he is slated to become 1st Vice President, and he will assume the presidency of the Association of Tennessee Valley Governments, or ATVG, in January 2022.

The commissioner has been a member on the ATVG Board of Directors for the past two years, and he serves with board members from local governments in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina and Tennessee.

ATVG represents the nearly 1,000 local governments in more than 200 counties located



Commissioner Lamar Paris

within the Tennessee Valley Authority service region.

The mission of the 501(c)(4) nonprofit is "to serve the mutual interests of local governments and their partners in both the public and private sectors in the seven-state Tennessee Valley region," according to atvg.org.

"We advance the interests of our members at the national, regional and state levels," the website continues. "We use our strong, collective voice to work on a nonpartisan basis for solutions to critical issues that affect us all."

There's a strong educational component to the ATVG also, with meetings featuring TVA trainings that encourage local government officials to learn more about the bigger picture of how living in the Valley, as well as current TVA happenings and potential grant funding opportunities.

Paris said that, perhaps most importantly, ATVG Board members benefit by getting to work with other elected officials to advocate for the needs of Valley residents, which enables organization members to bring lessons learned in the group back to their home counties.

See Paris, Page 2A

Early voting begins March 2, runs through March 20

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Three weeks of early voting for the March 24 Presidential Preference Primary will begin on Monday, March 2.

Every weekday between March 2 and March 20, during the hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., registered Union County voters will be able to cast their votes at the Union County Courthouse, even during lunchtime.

Usually, early voting occurs at the Registrar's Office in the courthouse, though in order to better accommodate

new voting equipment and anticipated longer voting lines this election cycle, early voting will take place in the Jury Assembly Room located on the courthouse's bottom floor.

Voters who find themselves too busy to vote during the scheduled weekdays will be able to take advantage of one weekend day of early in-person voting on Saturday, March 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the courthouse, also during lunchtime.

Signs will be posted at the courthouse indicating where voters should go to cast their ballots, and since this

is a primary, voters will need to declare a political party to receive a ballot.

Election Day for the Presidential Preference Primary, in which voters will be selecting a presidential candidate to lead their party of choice, will be on Tuesday, March 24, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. That day, voters should report to one of the 11 pre-assigned Union County precincts.

Registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day will be eligible to vote during early voting, and Monday, Feb. 24.

See Early Voting, Page 2A

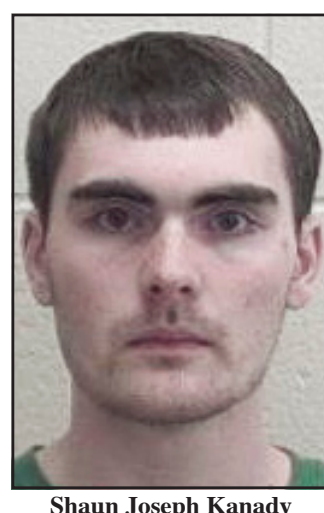
Two Blairsville men arrested on child pornography charges

News Special
North Georgia News

On Wednesday, Feb. 12, agents with the GBI Child Exploitation and Computer Crimes Unit, with assistance from the Union County Sheriff's Office, executed search warrants at two Union County residences.

The search warrants were related to two separate investigations related to the sexual exploitation of children.

As a result of the investigations, the following individuals were arrested and



Shaun Joseph Kanady



Steven Michael Hildebrandt

Vol. 111 No. 08
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Showers Hi 43 Lo 25
Fri: Cloudy Hi 46 Lo 24
Sat: Cloudy Hi 53 Lo 33

Arrests 7A
Church 2B
Classifieds 3D
Opinion 4A
Legals 5D
Obits 4B
Sports 2C

SPORTS
BASKETBALL
Girls State Sweet 16
vs. Butler Feb. 19th 7 PM
SOCCER
Feb 18 vs. Riverside 5:30 Boys
Feb 21 vs. Banks 5:30 & 7:30

Woody Gap
Band of Steel
Gala Feb 22

12th Annual
Watershed
Gala
February 27th

American Cancer Society
Daffodil Days
2020
See page 6A

See page 6C

See page 5C