

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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May 9, 2018

## Local Christians gather for National Day of Prayer

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

More than a hundred Christians from churches all over Union County gathered at First Baptist Church Blairsville for the National Day of Prayer event on Thursday, May 3.

Members of Joshua's Warriors, a local men's Christian organization, ushered the event, greeting people and handing them programs as they arrived at the church sanctuary.

Richard and Sharon Morrison, long-time Union County residents, coordinated the National Day of Prayer event in Blairsville, as they have for the past six years.

The Morrisons said the event has been a staple of Blairsville-Union County culture going back several generations, though the National Day of Prayer actually pre-dates the Revolutionary War, according to NationalDayofPrayer.org. This year's "Unity"



Photo by Mark Smith

Richard and Sharon Morrison coordinated the local National Day of Prayer event for the sixth-year running.

themed event opened with pledges to the Christian flag and the Bible.

Blairsville resident and Army veteran Chuck Honaker led the Pledge of Allegiance,

followed by a call to prayer by Richard Morrison and a "Prayer of Thanksgiving" by Pastor Terry Stuart.

One of the most moving See Day of Prayer, Page 8A

## Supt. Hill asks for additional school resource officer in budget

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Assistant Editor

The Union County Board of Education held a public budget meeting on Tuesday, May 1, to discuss key aspects of the upcoming FY19 school budget, including the addition of a new school resource officer.

Superintendent John Hill kicked off the meeting by welcoming the few guests who attended that morning, stating that the purpose of the meeting was to gain input from the community and taxpayers on the budget process.

Expenditures and revenues both are up significantly in the FY19 tentative budget, due almost entirely to state-mandated spending and funding measures.

On the expenditures side, step increases and scale adjustments in teacher salaries will cost the school system an additional \$325,000. These are mandatory increases that take into account the length of a



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill and Federal Programs Director Dr. Paula Davenport in the May 1 school budget public hearing.

teacher's career and their level of education.

However, it's the 4.09 percent increase in the local contribution to the Teachers Retirement System that's costing

the schools – and by extension, the taxpayers – the biggest increase in expenditures from FY18 to FY19.

"For us, that adds up

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## Hundreds attend annual Ramp Day at Farmers Market

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market opens for the season on June 2, and people got a good preview of things to come with the annual Ramp Day event on Saturday, May 5.

So, what is a ramp?

Besides being wildly popular this time of year, a ramp is a wild onion that looks very much like a scallion. They can be eaten raw, but most folks like them cooked, or rather, deep fried.

Kristy Kumler, who fried batches of ramps a la carte that Saturday, said she started serving them up at 9 a.m. last year and ran out by noon. That's why she decided to wait until 10:30 a.m. this year, to make them last longer.

Lisa King and Ray Covington celebrated Ramp Day 2018 at the Farmers Market

by cooking up square-cut potato fries to go with their ramps, and Covington's daughters, Aliceyn and Reagan, dished out a ramp mixture spread over crackers.

Husband and wife duo Bill and Pat Johnson spent the morning spooning out ramp salsa from a large kettle, to the delight of folks like local couple Paul and Lynn Van Wyk, who attended the market that day to sample all the rampant ramp goodness.

"They're very good," said Mrs. Van Wyk. "They taste a little bit like an onion and a little bit like garlic."

Rosemary Bradley, also of Blairsville, said she thought the ramps were milder this year because of all the rain. She said the taste varies from year to year depending on the weather.

Working hand in hand with the ramp enthusiasts were folks from the Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen's

Association, represented at the Farmers Market by Richard Myers, Joe Garner, Wesley Hoppgood and others.

Together, these cattle aficionados celebrated Beef Day right alongside Ramp Day by manning a large smoker containing a veritable herd of beef shish kabobs.

Working in tandem with the guys at the smoker were Sabrina Garrett, Teresa Hamilton and Brenda Brookshire, also of the Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen's Association, serving those shish kabobs to a long line of hungry people.

Under the vast porticos of the Farmers Market were vendors of all sorts, and some had the year's first crop of watermelons, cantaloupes, peaches, strawberries and sweet potatoes.

Other items for sale by

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Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Roy Fortenberry with his 14-month-old granddaughter Sydney, trying her first ramp during Ramp Day 2018 at the Union County Farmers Market.

## GBI responds to suspicious package false alarm at hospital

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Assistant Editor

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation sent two special agents to check out a suspicious package inside the main entrance of Union General Hospital on Friday, May 4.

Fortunately, it was a false alarm – the unmarked box contained a bunch of magazines – though the front area of the hospital was locked down for nearly two hours during the event.

It all started when a hospital security guard spotted the box behind the counter of the Information Desk typically occupied by volunteers with the Union General Hospital Auxiliary, according to Union

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Photo by Shawn Jarrard

GBI Special Agent Mitchell Posey, center, with first responders from the Union County Sheriff's Office and Fire Department at Union General.

## Baxter: 'Thank the Lord nobody got hurt' in chase

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Assistant Editor

The Blairsville Police Department, in conjunction with the Union County Sheriff's Office, stopped a high-speed chase the evening of Thursday, May 3.

John Roy Donnie Hester, 32, of Ellijay, was arrested that night and charged with a number of crimes by authorities, including fleeing and attempting to elude a police officer, speeding, reckless driving, driving while license suspended, driving with a suspended tag, no proof of insurance, failure to maintain lane and more.

The chase began after

See Chase, Page 3A



Photo by Mark Novak

The '91 Honda Accord of John Hester that was stopped by Blairsville Police on Thursday, May 3.

## City council asks Downtown Development Authority to start on downtown parking

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Assistant Editor

The Blairsville City Council heard complaints about parking from several Downtown Blairsville businesses at the regular city meeting on Tuesday, May 1.

Addressing the council during the Public Comments portion of the meeting, Mike Collins shared his disappointment with the current downtown parking situation – a

gravel lot behind his business he called a "big dust bowl."

Collins is the co-owner and operator of Michael's Italian Life Caffe, and he said that promised parking was a big reason why he moved his business from Hiwassee to Blairsville in January 2015.

"Initially, back in November of 2014, we were told, 'Well, this is the plan,'" said Collins. "The exit ramp's going to come in, we've got

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Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Blairsville City Councilwomen Rhonda Betty and Bethy Easter in the Tuesday, May 1, regular city meeting.

## Early voting continues ahead of May primary

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Assistant Editor

Early voting for the May 22 General Primary and Nonpartisan General Election is well underway.

Every weekday between now and May 18, during the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., registered Union County voters can cast their ballots at the Union County Registrar's Office.

The Registrar's Office



is located within the Union County Courthouse and will be open to voters even during lunchtime.

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CCC NEEDS YOU!

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