

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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May 30, 2018

America's fallen remembered at War Memorial Park

By Mark Novak
North Georgia News Staff Writer

Every year, the Memorial Day holiday serves as a stark reminder that freedom isn't free.

And every year, the residents of Union County, veterans and civilians alike, gather to mark the occasion in honor of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

"We're here to remember our fallen heroes, those men and women who believed a cause greater than themselves," said Army Veteran Chuck Honaker during this year's observance program. "And they believed that this cause was worth even the risk of giving their own life for."

"It was a cause worthy

of fighting for, also. That cause was freedom, liberty and the American way of life."

Hundreds of people gathered at Union County War Memorial Park on Saturday, May 26, in remembrance of those who vowed to protect the freedom enjoyed by millions of Americans today.

Memorial Day 2018 is May 28, but the local observance occurred over the Memorial Day Weekend.

The North Georgia Honor Guard presented the colors for the ceremony, and local Vietnam Veteran Bill Honaker – Chuck's dad – opened the event with a prayer for the fallen.

"It is time to remember and pay homage to those who are listed on these granite monuments and those

whose names are inscribed on thousands of monuments around the world," said the elder Honaker. "Wherever the mortal remains of comrades lie, the ground is hallowed. We gather here to show our undying thanks for their role in making the world a safer, better place to live."

Veterans of Foreign Wars District 2 Cmdr. Richard J. Hack, a Vietnam Veteran with the U.S. Marine Corps, was the keynote speaker during the May 26 Memorial Day Ceremony.

"Let me start by saying this is a beautiful park," said Hack. "Freedom is not free, just like the sign says. Today, I'm going to try to explain something that is very dear to my heart – why we have a

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Photo by Lowell Nicholson
Retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Roy Hamby, center, with his wife Linda, left, and District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, right.

UCHS Class of 2018 ready for the future



Photo by Shawn Jarrard
UCHS Class of 2018 Valedictorian Ally Horinek during her big graduation speech on Friday, May 25.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News Assistant Editor

The future wore purple and white during the Union County High School Commencement Ceremony for the Class of 2018 in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday, May 25.

At 195 students, it was Union County's largest

graduating class to date, and they gathered that evening to celebrate the milestone at hand in front of hundreds of friends and family members.

The occasion was bittersweet. Most of the students had spent the last 13 years of their lives together, and each was all too aware that it was the

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Six Woody Gap seniors walk for graduation



Photo by Todd Forrest
Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill turning the tassel of Montana Barnes at the May 26 Graduation Ceremony

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News Staff Writer

SUCHES – Six Woody Gap School seniors bid farewell to high school and became members of the extended family known as Woody Gap alumni when they received their diplomas on Saturday, May 26.

Montana Barnes, Austin Clark, Lakota Graham, Destiney Holloway, Eliza Wilkins and Kirsten Woody took center stage that morning inside the Woody Gap Gymnasium, as family, friends, faculty and staff attended to pay tribute to the 12-year grind put in by these fine students.

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MECHS Union site graduates 21 seniors



Photo by Mark Smith
MECHS Union Site Director Roy Perren with 2018 graduate Lexi King.

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News Staff Writer

BLUE RIDGE – The Mountain Education Charter High School held a combined graduation ceremony for the Union, Fannin and Gilmer sites at the Fannin County High School Performing Arts Center on Thursday, May 24.

Of the 64 graduates from the three combined sites, Union site graduates accounted for 21 of them.

Both Union and Towns students attend the MECHS Union site.

Lexus Walden from the Fannin County site was 2018 valedictorian, and Dakota

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Union County seniors earn millions in scholarships and HOPE

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News Staff Writer

To a dictionary, a scholarship is nothing more than "a financial grant in aid to a student by way of college or foundation."

But to students receiving such aid, a scholarship means so much more – among other things, it's a means to a bright future and the reward for hard work.

Of the 195 graduating Union County High School seniors, 85 members of the Class of 2018 earned scholarships totaling a staggering \$1.25 million, as announced during

Senior Scholarship Night in the Fine Arts Center on Tuesday, May 22.

"Of that \$1.25 million, around \$75,000 was donated locally by local businesses and families," said High School Principal C.T. Hussion. "That is amazing, pouring that much money into the graduating students. But 132 out of 195 are HOPE eligible, and that should be around \$6 million in savings."

HOPE is an acronym for Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, and it's a lottery-funded program run by the state. HOPE provides tuition assistance to qualified students

at eligible Georgia colleges.

"One thing that would be great to recognize, because this is probably the best accomplishment of all, over the last four years we have been No. 1 in all North Georgia schools," said Hussion. "Not just Northeast Georgia, but out of 82 high schools, we're No. 1 in HOPE Scholarship."

Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill echoed Hussion's amazement, adding that he was extremely proud of all the students' accomplishments.

"And I'm very, very thankful for the donations

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Photo by Mark Smith
UCHS seniors Emmi Schakat and Cole Wright receiving their scholarships to West Point Military Academy on Tuesday, May 22.

Big Cheese raided by UCSO, other drug arrests

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News Assistant Editor

When it comes to drugs, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason has a clear message for would-be violators of the law.

"Sooner or later, you'll be caught," said Sheriff Mason. "And when you are, you are going to jail, and you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent."

The sheriff's comments come on the heels of yeoman's work being done by the Narcotics Division of his office, under the leadership of Capt. Chad Deyton.

Deyton and his team of investigators work around

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Photo by Shawn Jarrard
Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office in the midst of a drug raid at The Big Cheese pizza restaurant on Murphy Highway near Pat Colwell Road.

Atlanta drug dealer sentenced for selling to Union County youth

News Special
North Georgia News

ATLANTA – Derrick Douglas, aka "Dre," has been sentenced for conspiring to sell heroin to minors and young adults who traveled from North Georgia to the English Avenue community to purchase drugs, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta.

Douglas also sold fentanyl, a particularly deadly narcotic, to an undercover officer.

"Douglas sold heroin to

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Derrick "Dre" Douglas

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