

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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June 20, 2018

Union Site receives MECHS graduation award

By Mark Novak
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Young Education Charter High School Union Site Director Roy Perren accepted the Brasstown Bald Regional Graduation Award in the first ever MECHS Banquet and Awards Ceremony on June 14.

The ceremony took place at the Rollins Campus Center of Young Harris College, and Perren accepted the award in recognition of the Union Site achieving the highest graduation goal within the MECHS West Region.

"We're excited to get this award. It's a reflection of the hard work of our students and our staff at the Union Site," said Perren.

Students from both

Towns and Union counties attend the Union Site in Blairsville, and MECHS also has sites in Bartow, Dawson, Elbert, Fannin, Forsyth, Gilmer, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, Murray, Pickens, Rabun, Stephens and White counties.

"Not only do we want to recognize every site that meets their graduation goal, we also want to give special recognition to our regional award bearers," said Dr. Joe Cash, MECHS Director of School Performance. "Each of the awards is named after the point of highest elevation located in each of our three regions."

"The regional recipients will display this award for the upcoming school year and strive to keep the award next year."

For the Central Region, the White County Site received the Tray Mountain Award, and in the East Region, the Rabun Bald Award went to Bowman County.

Maria Britt of Union County, who serves as Director of Strategic Planning at MECHS, was honored that Thursday for her outstanding work in the schools.

"This lady has made me a better leader by being with me and working with me over this past year, and I feel certain that she's done the same for everyone that she's touched," said MECHS Superintendent Dr. Wayne Lovell. "She's also left an imprint on this organization."

Continued Lovell: "If you had a chance to look at the strategic plan and the direction

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MECHS Union Site Director Roy Perren, center, receiving the Brasstown Highest Graduate Percentage Goal Award for the West Region on June 14. Photo by Mark Novak

Miller to resign as Chief Judge; Langley declines consideration

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Editor

Following 10 and a half years of judgeship in the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Superior Court Chief Judge Murphy C. Miller has decided to step down from the bench effective July 1.

"It's my time to go," said Miller. "I've been doing this a long, long time, and it's time for me to move on and do something else, and kind of have a changing of the guard to let some new folks come in and pick up the mantle. Things will carry on and all will be fine."

Added Miller: "It's been a privilege to serve (the citizens of the circuit). I've found it very rewarding. I know I wasn't always right, but I did the best that I could."

Miller has made practicing law his life's work, and come November, he'll have been at it for 38 years.

A graduate of Emory



Murphy C. Miller



Jeff Langley

University and the Woodrow Wilson College of Law, he began his legal career as a lawyer in his hometown of Young Harris before going on to serve as a workers' compensation administrative law judge.

After then-Gov. Sonny

Perdue signed the Georgia Indigent Defense Act of 2003 into law, Miller became the first circuit public defender for the Enotah Judicial Circuit of the Ninth Judicial Administrative District of Georgia.

His rise to superior court See Judge, Page 2A

Jarrard named editor of NGN, TCH

Shawn Jarrard has been named the new editor of the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald.

Jarrard, 33, started with the newspapers in August 2014, and he was promoted to assistant editor earlier this year, in January.

Publisher Kenneth West made the announcement last week that Jarrard would lead the papers.

"Shawn has done a fine job at both newspapers," said West. "He's been with us going on four years now, and I am confident he'll do a great job in his new leadership position."

Added West: "I've always believed the community should have a say in what appears in the newspaper. That's why we'll continue to listen to and keep the community involved moving forward."

Jarrard replaces Charles Duncan, who faithfully led the Herald since 2008 and the North Georgia News since 2012.

"I want to say thank you



Shawn Jarrard

to Charles for his mentorship and guidance over the years," said Jarrard. "And thank you to Mr. West for allowing me the opportunity to serve these wonderful mountain communities in an even greater capacity."

Looking ahead, Jarrard said that both newspapers will maintain their sharp focus

on the hometown news that matters most to the distinct communities of Union and Towns counties.

"When it comes to covering local news, we regularly ask ourselves, 'What do our readers need to know to stay informed?'" said Jarrard. "The way we see it, our job is to let everyone know what's going on in these North Georgia Mountain communities."

"Whether we're finding out how local news is being spent or reporting on school safety, veterans or the farmers market, we promise to keep doing what we do best – producing high quality news content for our community-oriented newspapers."

Jarrard is a native of Gainesville and nearby Hall County, and he graduated from West Hall High School in 2003.

He lived and worked in Athens for about 11 years following high school, during which time he earned two

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Harper departs chamber; Miller weighing options

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Editor

Al Harper has resigned as president and CEO of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, effective June 14.

In an interview following his resignation, Harper told the North Georgia News that he'd decided to pursue another opportunity.

Harper came on board as interim president in January to bridge the gap between the December 2017 resignation of then-chamber president Regina Allison and the hiring of a permanent replacement.

On Feb. 20, nearly two months into his interim tenure, the chamber board hired Harper to lead the establishment.

And though he helmed the chamber only briefly, Harper said he felt confident the organization was in fine shape moving forward.

"My big mission was to get the office automated, get things running smoother – computer systems and software and everything – and I've done that," said Harper. "We got the new website up, and business wise, we've got virtually everything in the office automated now."

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Al Harper

Williams named new agriculture agent in Union/Towns counties

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Editor

It's a point of pride round these parts that people still know how to grow things.

Case in point, both Union and Towns counties have farmers markets, and plenty of people here in the North Georgia Mountains make a living growing and selling fruits and vegetables.

And since it's always okay to ask for advice, folks will be pleased to learn there's a new community resource that's here to help: Jacob Williams with the University of Georgia.

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New Union/Towns Ag Agent Jacob Williams in his Towns County office. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Historic Hunter-England House ready for visitors

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In 1832, John Hunter built the cabin that is now known as the Hunter-England House.

The home was originally located a few miles south of Blairsville off Gainesville Highway in Choestoe, near the turnoff for Georgia 180.

Sadly, it had fallen into severe disrepair over the years, but now, people can find the historic house restored to near original shape at the Union County Farmers Market.

Members of the community held a special dedication ceremony for the home on Saturday, June 16, to mark the completion of the renovation.

Several generations of Hunter-England relatives

attended the ceremony, some of whom met there for the first time.

Charlie Hunter, 92, is the great-great grandson of John Hunter, and he shared some family history on the house during the dedication.

According to Hunter, his great-great grandfather came to this area when he was 52 years old, and he was one of the first settlers in the Choestoe area of Union County.

As the story goes, John, his wife and young children lived in a covered wagon while he built the house, which is thought to be the oldest house in Union County today.

The cabin became known as the Hunter-England House after John's youngest daughter married Daniel England.

Union County Sole

Commissioner Lamar Paris was on hand at the dedication, and he told the story of how the Hunter-England House from Choestoe came to be restored at the Farmers Market.

Paris had been trying for years to find out who owned the property at the cabin, looking through tax records and the like. But as luck would have it, someone from South Georgia who just happened to be driving through one day in 2008 saw the cabin and recognized it for what it was.

That person, said Paris to his chagrin, simply strolled across the road and found the owners, negotiated a deal and bought the cabin.

The new owner then disassembled the cabin and sold it to the county at a premium, See Hunter-England, Page 6A



Visiting the Hunter-England House at the Farmers Market is almost like taking a trip through time. Photo by Mark Smith

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North GA Technical College

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EARLY DEADLINE

The DEADLINE for the 4th of July Paper will be THURSDAY, JUNE 28th at 4 PM