



# Happy 4th of July

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75¢

# North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## County prepares to celebrate nation's 246th birthday

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Independence Day celebrations in Blairsville are set to kick off the hottest part of the summer, and this year, patriotic residents have multiple options for where to go and what to do to celebrate the birth of the United States of America.

From Meeks Park to North Georgia Technical College and the First United Methodist Church, as well as the Nottely Marina and Suches, there's sure to be something fun for every family to enjoy.

The big annual Meeks Park Fireworks Display organized by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and Welcome

Center will be ready to go sky high on Monday, July 4, with plenty of free parking to be had inside the park before the show gets underway at dark.

In the central field of Meeks will be several churches and faith-based endeavors providing perks for the public, including Full Throttle Ministries, where guests can pick up one of 800 barbecue plates and participate in a flat-screen TV giveaway.

The Union County GOP will be returning to the Conley Pavilion to hand out free hot dogs to veterans, similar to the group's Flag Day event a couple of weeks earlier, and folks can purchase snow cones, ice cream, and other foodstuffs from various vendors set up around the park.

Just across the way from the park on Georgia 515, North Georgia Tech will be offering room to park for free, and guests there can grab lunch from food vendors and play cornhole and other activities. For the kids especially, there's been word of a balloon artist setting up on that side as well.

Regardless of how people choose to sate their hunger or quench their thirst, the chamber and many civic-minded volunteers have made sure there will be enough to accommodate a massive turnout, with expectations of a tremendous volume of sky gazers this year due to dissipating COVID concerns.

"The fireworks show will probably last anywhere between

See Fourth of July, Page 2A



A particularly patriotic boat decorated for the Nottely Boat Parade in 2021.

Photo/North Georgia News

## Preston Dyer nabs national acclaim with archery skills

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Preston Dyer may not be Blairsville's first or only archer, but at the 2022 USA Archery Collegiate Target Nationals out in California last month, he became the best, not just from Union County, but in the nation.

A Class of 2020 graduate from Union County High School, Dyer has been attending Emmanuel College, a private Christian school in

Franklin Springs, on an archery scholarship. And his skills have only improved since joining the Emmanuel team.

The national competition took place May 19-22 at the Easton Archery Center of Excellence in Chula Vista, California, and in addition to taking the top spot for the barebow contest, Dyer and a teammate placed second in a partner competition.

Dyer has been interested in archery from a young age and decided to pursue the hobby through the local 4H Program

under the guidance of Gerald Potts, and after graduating, he went on to practice the sport at Emmanuel.

Humbled by the people who have helped him along the way, Dyer appreciated their appearance at a June 18 surprise party congratulating him on the win at the Union County Schools Agriscience Center.

"I want to thank my coaches, my parents, (and) my brother," Preston said.

The 20-year-old Blairsville native gave the barebow a try back in April of this year when he got bored of the compound bow, the latter being what Dyer had learned to shoot with.

Aptly named, the barebow does not have a scope or any sort of aiming aid, so like traditional archers of old, Dyer had to learn to rely strictly on his own intuitions to strike his target.

And his intuition has proved true, as out of over 500 competitors from across the country last month, Dyer came out on top and won First Place after just a couple months of practice.

Adding to the difficulty

See Dyer Celebration, Page 6A



Father/son duo David and Preston Dyer at their joint celebration on Saturday, June 18. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## BPD Rubber Duck Derby tickets go on sale July 1



Blairsville Police Chief Bear Baxter and Assistant Chief Shawn Dyer can't wait to get back out on Butternut Creek for this year's Rubber Duck Derby in September. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

It's coming up on that time of year again, when the Blairsville Police Department

gears up for its annual Rubber Duck Derby at Butternut Creek to raise money for the Shop With A Cop Program at Christmastime. Tickets go on sale for \$10 starting July 1.

The first Duck Derby

happened four years ago, in 2019, and was a smash hit with the community then, and it continues to be a smash hit every year.

"This is the fourth annual

See Duck Derby, Page 2A

## Blairsville woman found slain in Palm City, Florida

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Blairsville resident Summer Erskine Wright was the tragic victim of alleged homicide last week in Martin County, Florida, where she was reportedly staying as a guest at the time of her death, according to authorities.

People wishing to memorialize Wright – by all accounts a vibrant member of the community beloved by her family and many friends – may

attend a Celebration of Life "to honor her and say goodbye."

The event will take place Friday, July 1, from 6-8 p.m. at the Byron Herbert Reece Heritage Farm located here in Union County at 8552 Gainesville Highway.

Martin County Sheriff's Deputies discovered Wright, 49, deceased inside the bedroom of a Palm City residence on Wednesday, June 22.

James Stephenson, 61, of Palm City, has been arrested



Summer Erskine Wright

See Wright, Page 3A

## Solid Waste Director passes away unexpectedly

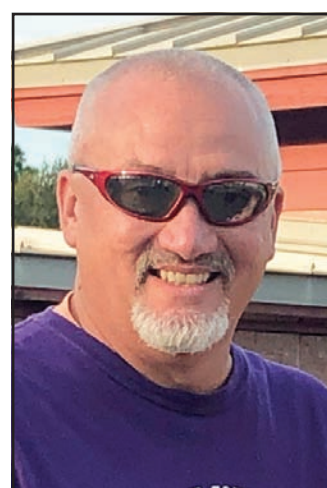
By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

When Bobby Joe Bright passed away from a heart attack at the too-young age of 51 on the evening of Father's Day, June 19, he left behind a loving family and a grateful community.

Bright was the longtime overseer of the Union County Transfer Station, having served 18 years managing the efforts of the site under a rotating roster of companies before Union County Government took the entire operation over in two phases last year.

In addition to his employee management duties, Bright played an integral role in the commercial hauling transition, helping county government – a newcomer in the garbage business – with experience and expertise in bringing together all the various aspects of setting up and running a Transfer Station.

The longtime sanitation professional brought his knowledge to bear in the acquisition of equipment and coordination of professional contacts to get people's household garbage and that of



Bobby Joe Bright

See Bright, Page 2A



Vol. 113 No. 27

Arrests - 2D Legals - 5D  
Church - 3C Obituaries - 5C  
Classifieds - 3D Sports - 2B  
Opinion - 4A

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
for Newspaper Publication  
Friday, July 1 NOON

**Runoff Election Results**  
See page 6A

**Tim Gaffney Memorial Cruise-In July 2**  
See page 6D



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## Fourth of July...from Page 1A

25 and 35 minutes.” Chamber President Steve Rowe said, noting that while in recent years the chamber has livestreamed the brilliant lights, this year, the event will be more localized.

“We did the livestream because there were a lot of cities all over the country that couldn’t have fireworks because of COVID. So, now that they’re all opening up, we don’t see the need to do it,” Rowe said.

Despite some rumors that have been circulating, parking and admission will be free as always. A few spots have been reserved for nursing home attendees and health care workers, but other than that, space is being allotted on a first-come basis.

In fact, the only place where parking is restricted is toward the top of Meeks Park around the pool and tennis courts; because vehicles would be so close to the launch area, the surrounding field and parking lot have been marked as “safety zones.”

“Anywhere else on the (college) campus, anywhere else in Meeks Park, is open to the public,” Rowe said, inviting everyone to attend the Meeks Park Fireworks to “enjoy the food, fun, and fellowship.”

Concurring, Chamber Director of Operations and Marketing Crystal Wagner encouraged people to “come on out; it’s going to be a blast.”

“That’s what we want people to know,” Wagner said. “Party like it’s 1776.”

The campus of First United Methodist Church, with its terrific view of the Meeks Fireworks, will be open all

day July 4, but according to church member Kenny Engle, activities won’t start until 5 or 6 p.m. Church band Overflow will be performing rock, pop and Christian tunes.

“There will be a Quilt of Valor Ceremony for our band leader and his wife; should be around 6 p.m.,” noted Engle.

In a similar vein, several local Veteran Service Organizations will have displays set up at the church to honor the country and the sacrifices American military members have made over the years to protect it.

First United’s Hospitality Team will be handing out free water for all, and kids will get to enjoy free popcorn, face painting and a bouncy house.

Guests can purchase a hamburger basket and lemonade for \$6 from the Boy Scouts of America or head over to the Girl Scouts to buy hot dogs, ice cream, cookies and soda.

“It’s one of the best views in the area,” Engle said of the event. “Hope to see you there.”

The always popular

Independence Day Fireworks Show at the Woody Gap School will be taking place July 4th as well, with festivities kicking off at 5 p.m. and the Suches Fire Department lighting the bright and colorful display at dark.

Folks will be able to enjoy family time together with purchases of hamburgers, hotdogs, chips and drinks, so bring lawn chairs and get ready to enjoy plenty of outdoor activities.

The Suches Fireworks are made possible by the generous support of donors and sponsors, with costs having increased this year due in part to the inflationary state of the economy. Donations for this fun-filled, family-friendly community event can be mailed to P.O. Box 84, Suches, GA 30572.

Over on the lake, the Nottely Marina’s Annual Boat Parade will not actually be held on July 4, but July 2 at noon, as it has become customary over the decades to schedule the event for the Saturday nearest the holiday.

As is also the case every year, there is no registration or sign-up for the parade, and, as Marina Owner Moriah Doucette

said, “It is a surprise on who or what shows up.”

In anticipation of a great turnout, multiple trophies are on standby to award the traditional First, Second and Third Places in the boat design contest, as well as awards for the Most Patriotic Boat, Smallest Boat and “Fun Bunch Boat” that features the most enthusiastic crew.

Doucette wants to emphasize that marina parking will be extremely limited and suggests that guests carpool in order to reserve space. A tip, Doucette says, is that the view of the parade is much better from another boat out on the water rather than from a car on the shoreline.

Additionally, it’s important to remember boat safety – even though the parade begins at noon, folks may linger or return back to the lake for July 4.

“(Turn on) navigation (and) anchor lights, don’t have docking lights or spotlights on underway, make sure children under the age of 13 are wearing their life jacket, (and) know proper boat operation before heading out at night.” Doucette said. “Let’s keep Nottely safe for all this holiday season.”

## Duck Derby...from Page 1A

Duck Derby,” said Blairsville Police Chief Michael “Bear” Baxter. “We always try to have it on the first Saturday in September at the Farmers Market. This year our target is to sell 2,000 ducks. It’s the primary fundraiser for Shop With A Cop.”

Importantly, Baxter noted that 100% of Duck Derby proceeds go to Shop With A Cop.

“We don’t spend our money on anything else but for these kids,” Baxter said. “So, we need all the community help that we can get.

“It’s a huge undertaking, not only monetarily, but with all hands-on deck. We took 125 kids shopping last year, and I’m sure if we’re able to, we’re going to take 125 kids this year. That’s our target.

“There’s a huge, huge need. I wish we could take more, but we can only take what we have money for,” he said, adding that the Union County Sheriff’s Office and several civic organizations and churches take up some of the slack.

Baxter said last year they were also able to provide over 70 families of the Shop-With-A-Cop kids with \$100 certificates to go buy groceries.

“It does take our

community helping us to make it happen,” Baxter said.

Continuing, he said, “We’re going to have a lot of great prizes in the race this year. Of course, the Top Three are monetary prizes. And we’ve got some new sponsors on board this year.”

Baxter said last year the first 84 ducks to cross the finish line won prizes provided by generous local sponsors, with the very last prize duck to finish winning a gas grill. “That’s still on tap for this year,” he said. “We call it the lame duck.”

“Again,” said Baxter, stressing the point, “100% of the money goes to the kids. We don’t touch it for anything else, and that’s what we’re most proud of.”

“Ducks are \$10 each,” said Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer, adding that people can stop by the police station across the parking lot from Blairsville City Hall, or ask any Blairsville peace officer for tickets beginning July 1.

For those unfamiliar with how the Duck Derby works, each \$10 ticket has a number corresponding to a number on a rubber duck.

On the day of the Derby, all the ducks are dumped into Butternut Creek at the Farmers

Market where they float about 30 or 40 yards downstream before being collected upon passing the finish line.

The creek banks are always lined with people cheering and with volunteers from the Safe Pet Project who keep the ducks from getting stuck on the creek’s edges.

Baxter, Dyer, and several officers and volunteers stand at the finish line recording the numbers of the ducks in order as they cross the finish line.

The event is always attended by kids and adults alike, and everybody has great fun and lots of laughs as a community.

It’s an ingenious way to raise money for a wonderful cause, and it’s also a great way for people to get to know the Blairsville peace officers and see them as normal human beings having fun just like everyone else.

“It is a community event, and we have some great partners and sponsors, and we couldn’t do it without them,” Baxter said.

Given the current economic woes impacting the country, both Baxter and Dyer said they expect to see an increase in families needing some help through the Christmas season, so Shop With A Cop will likely be taking on even more meaning this year.

## Bright...from Page 1A

businesses to an out-of-county landfill.

In addition to his working contributions, Bright was known as a family man and lover of the outdoors, with a reputation for conducting himself with honor, humor and kindness, and he will be missed by all who knew him, not least those who worked with him for years at the Transfer Station, which closed for his funeral on June 22.

And county government will miss him as well, for his leadership, customer service and work ethic as well as what he made possible during the Transfer Station’s transition from private to public management.

“We couldn’t have done it without him,” County Purchasing Agent Pam Hawkins said. “We were a little nervous about taking over because we just did not have the knowledge and expertise, and he had it, so we were tickled pink that he came to work for us.”

For his part, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said he, too, will miss Bright, whom he described as “a very unique person.”

“He was smart, hard-working and loyal to whomever he was working with,” Paris said. “He was friendly and a friend to everyone, liked and respected by all who knew him. He was a jokester of the highest level but had a soft heart. He was a devoted family man and

loved his wife Melinda and family so much, and their loss is impossible to fathom.

“Bobby Joe has been responsible for helping remake our Union County Transfer Station into the facility that it is today and appreciated by everyone. We are going to miss him and are just thankful we had the privilege of knowing and working with Bobby Joe. Union County Government has lost an incredible friend and associate.”

The county is still in the process of obtaining all the equipment needed to fully maximize operations at the Transfer Station, which Bright was working on at the time of his sudden passing, and next steps are currently in progress.

“As of right now, we’re not hiring anybody to replace Bobby,” Hawkins said. “We’ve met with the employees that we have, and we’re going to use our current employees, and then hire an extra person to help use the equipment on the commercial side.”

Transfer Station employee Matt White has agreed to take on several of Bright’s managerial duties, and the county is hopeful that an internal reorganization of responsibilities coupled with the hire of at least one equipment operator will keep the station running smoothly for residents.

White has been working alongside Bright for nearly

16 years, in which time he has learned the ins and outs of the business; in addition to operating equipment at the site, White often assisted his former boss in carrying out many of his tasks.

“He and Bobby worked together so long with Waste Management (and before that Advanced Disposal),” Hawkins said. “Everything that Bobby’s been doing, Matt’s been aware of, so Matt is stepping up and gaining a few responsibilities that Bobby had.

“And then, I’m going to try to help as much as I can on my end, too, and we’re just going to try to maintain for about a month and see how it goes before making a decision about hiring somebody to replace (Bobby).”

“Matt has a lot of (the same) knowledge and contacts that Bobby did and was aware of everything Bobby had going on, because Bobby was lining up stuff to get us compactors and roll-off containers and things like that, and they were working on that together.

“So, Matt’s going to keep doing what he’s doing with (operating) the equipment, but also helping us work through where Bobby was at dealing with certain people on getting equipment and materials.”

White will also be working to manage the Convenience Center on Georgia 325 as well as the soon-to-open Convenience Center on Moccasin Road off Murphy Highway and Ivylog Road.

## Downtown vandal to be deported following arrest

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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The 18-year-old who was arrested June 15 for throwing a brick through the front door glass of the Blairsville Police Department is being deported to his home country of El Salvador after illegally residing in the U.S., Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Following his arrest for property damage at multiple downtown locations, two officers with U.S. Immigration

and Customs Enforcement took custody of Jefferson Guevara Hernandez at the Union County Jail on Friday, June 24, to begin the deportation process.

The sheriff made clear that he does not support illegal immigration to this country and will not tolerate such in Union County, saying that his office will take action to remove people living here without legal status.

“This young man was here illegally, destroying business owners’ property, and anyone here illegally will be turned over to ICE,” Mason said.



“We support our federal law enforcement partners.”

In addition to being charged with felony criminal interference with government property for damaging the police department the evening of June 14, Hernandez was facing felony second-degree criminal damage to property for breaking a window at Top Gun Firearms.

# Wright...from Page 1A



**Florida law enforcement taking James Stephenson into custody June 22 for allegedly murdering Summer Wright.**  
Photo/Facebook

and charged with second-degree murder in the killing.

"The suspect reportedly told acquaintances that he hurt a female at that location while the homeowners were out of the country," the Martin County Sheriff's Office said. "Deputies who were investigating this third-party information did locate the body of a female inside a home on that large piece of

property."

Stephenson had been "temporarily residing in a separate structure also located on that piece of property" when the killing occurred, said the Martin County Sheriff's Office, which issued a lookout for Stephenson after finding Wright's body.

A couple of hours after the lookout hit social media, Stephenson was arrested

at a Hooters Restaurant in neighboring Palm Beach County with assistance from local law enforcement and the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force.

According to NBC News affiliate wptv.com of West Palm Beach, a representative from the Sheriff's Office said that Stephenson had reportedly called another woman Tuesday night to confess what he had done, and the woman in turn had called the law.

Martin County Sheriff's Capt. Ruben Romero, according to the affiliate, said Stephenson told the woman that "he had killed somebody, that he had killed somebody in the past, that he was taking guns out of the property, that he had messed up, that he had done some bad things. He had made some suicidal statements as well."

When deputies went to the home to conduct a welfare check, "they saw a blood trail through an open window ... that led to a rear bedroom where the woman's body was found," Romero is reported to have said while also noting head and neck trauma.

Per cbs12.com, Capt. Romero said that Stephenson had a "lengthy criminal history."

"Some of it is violence, some of it's drug-related, some domestic. It's all over the board," Capt. Romero told CBS 12. "He also had a run-in with deputies in Martin County, (being) arrested for a resisting charge for a traffic stop where we believe he was a bit intoxicated."

Stephenson is now facing a charge of second-degree murder in Wright's death, and he remained in jail on a \$1 million bond a press time. He is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.



**James Stephenson**

## The American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 hosts Veterans July 4th Celebration and elects new officers



The American Legion Blairsville Ira Weaver Post 121 elected its 2023 officers at its June membership meeting and finalized plans to host a Veterans July 4th barbecue for Veterans and their families.

"The current elected officers had agreed to serving one more year," according to Dan Wickersham the current Post commander. "However, two new members have agreed to lead the Post in the coming year. It's exciting to have new members to bring fresh ideas and capabilities to the Post, he added."

The elected officers include Mike Merritt, commander; Kathy Merritt, senior vice commander; Roy Bateman, Sr., judge advocate; Jim Yohe, treasurer; and Gene Windham and Derek Kunz as junior vice commanders. The Merritts are new in Blairsville, both having served careers in the U.S. Air Force and retired as colonels.

Appointed members of the Post leadership team

were Richard Snapp, adjutant; Richard Hoibraten, chaplain; Marcus Tuschel, sergeant-at-arms and historian; Dave Patterson and TJ Anderson, junior vice commanders; JW Preston, Sons of the American Legion; and Glenn Cousins, American Legion Riders.

### New Veterans July 4th Cookout Celebration by Ira Weaver Post 121

One of the first activities for the new officers will be the Veterans July 4th American Cookout. Veterans, families and friends are invited to the celebration which begins at 7 PM at the Leon Davenport Veterans Center, 78 Blue Ridge Hwy (across the 76 Highway from Longhorn).

"We'll have free food, fun, games and door prizes," according to Derek Kunz, junior vice commander and one of the organizers. Traditional hamburgers and hot dogs with the standard sides and, of course watermelon, will be available through the generous donations of the local Ingles and Walmart, according to Kunz and Patti Cousins, American Legion Riders, who is also organizing the event.

The drawing for the recent rifle fundraiser will also take place at the Veterans Center during the July 4th celebra-

tion. Tickets will be available until the drawing. All members, and interested Veterans, are encouraged to attend.

The American Legion is the largest and one of the oldest and most inclusive of all veterans' organizations worldwide and devotes itself to mutual helpfulness, mentoring youth, advocating patriotic honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans.

Blairsville Ira Weaver Post121 is home to the entire American Legion family: The American Legion for honorably-discharged Veterans; Sons of The American Legion, whose parents or grandparents honorably served; The American Legion Auxiliary for spouses of Veterans; and The American Legion Riders, those with a heart for motorcycle riding. They all have their membership meeting the 3rd Tuesday of the month in the Veterans Center. The SAL and Riders begin at 5 PM and the Legion and Auxiliary begin at 6:30 PM.

For more information on the meeting or any Post activities email the Post at [alpost121@gmail.com](mailto:alpost121@gmail.com) or visit the website at [legionpost121.org](http://legionpost121.org).



## Union County School System New Student Registration for the 2022-2023 School Year

New and transferring students in Pre-K through twelfth grade (K-12) may be registered for the upcoming school year at Union County Elementary School, 165 Elementary Way, Blairsville, GA 30512. Parents will need to contact the registrar at 706-835-4321 or [registrar@ucschools.org](mailto:registrar@ucschools.org) to schedule enrollment.

The summer enrollment office hours will vary from week to week and will be by appointment only. Please don't wait until school starts to register. The first day of school is Friday, August 12th. Waiting until the end of July or beginning of August to call to enroll your student may cause your child to delay their first day of school.

In order to expedite the registration process, please print the "Enrollment Packet" from the school system's website at [www.ucschools.org](http://www.ucschools.org). A printed copy of the packet can also be picked up at the Elementary School office by appointment. The packet will need to be completed and the required documents indicated below will need to be presented. Your child will not be enrolled until the school has ALL of the required documents.

Documents you must bring when enrolling a student:

Age Verification: The school system requires evidence of the student's date of birth and accepts as evidence a birth certificate or an alternate document from the prioritized list in the state enrollment rule.

Social Security Number: The school system complies with the provisions of O.C.G.A. §20-2-150, which requires a person enrolling a student to provide a copy of the student's social security number or to sign a form stating that the person does not wish to provide the social security number.

Immunization Certificate: The school system requires proof of immunization as required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-771, which includes an exemption for religious grounds and provisions for a temporary waiver.

A Georgia Department of Public Health Form 3231 marked "Complete" for the appropriate grade level shall be considered proof of immunization.

Out of State Immunization Records will need to be transferred to a GA DPH Form 3231 by the Union County Health Department PRIOR to registration. The Union County Health Department is located at 175 Chase Drive, Blairsville, GA; 706-745-6292.

Certificate of Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening (Form 3300): This can be obtained from your child's doctor or from the Union County Health Department, and is required for students who are enrolling in a Georgia school for the first time.

Proof of Union County Residency (2 different documents) Examples include: Current (within 2 months old) lease agreement, vehicle registration

form, mortgage documents, property tax notice, homeowner's or renter's insurance bill, utility bills, etc. A cellphone bill, driver's license, or bank statement are not acceptable.

Withdrawal Form/Report Card from the student's most recent former school.

Returning Enrollment Packets and Documents: There are two ways to get the enrollment packet and documents to the registrar: 1. Scan and email them to [registrar@ucschools.org](mailto:registrar@ucschools.org); 2. Call the registrar at 706-835-4321 and schedule an appointment to bring them to the Union County Elementary School in person

Documentation for Homeless Students: Homeless students, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, shall be enrolled immediately with full participation in school activities, regardless of whether all of the above can be provided at the time of enrollment. The designated employee responsible for care of homeless students shall assist the person enrolling the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth in acquiring the necessary documents for enrollment in accordance with the requirements of the state enrollment rule and the McKinney-Vento Act.

Please feel free to contact the Enrollment Office by phone at 706-835-4321 or by email at [registrar@ucschools.org](mailto:registrar@ucschools.org) if you have any questions regarding student registration.

# Dyer Celebration...from Page 1A

of this feat were the weather conditions that day in California where Dyer competed.

"You could see the flags waving (on the live feed)," said Preston's mother Donna, commending the amount of focus it took for her boy to be able to aim without a scope in heavy winds.

Upon returning home, Donna Dyer got to work readying a surprise for her son, made all the more special by becoming a joint surprise celebration in recognition of her husband David's 50th birthday falling on June 27.

"It was a nice surprise," said David, preferring to say that the party was "mainly for" Preston. Interestingly, Preston said the same thing, having believed that his father was supposed to be the focus for the evening.

"I think it's a little extra," noted Preston with a shy grin when confronted with the fact that he was also to be celebrated.

Worth noting, too, is that, since Preston graduated in 2020, he didn't get to have a traditional commemoration of that achievement, as his

senior year was interrupted by COVID-19, giving Donna even more reason to go all-out and rent the Agriscience Center for the day.

"I felt like he needed to be recognized," Donna added, regarding both of her son's accomplishments.

Jetta Cooper, an "honorary Dyer" and best friend of Preston's grandmother, was happy to brag.

"He's the best," said Cooper with a proud smile. "We're honored to have him here ... A little boy from Blairsville (won the National Championship). I love it. What are the odds?"

As it turns out, Cooper helped bake the marble cake for the Dyers' celebration, which featured a couple of edible photographs of David and Preston.

On the subject of food, the family also prepared a meal for the event, and Donna helped set up an ice cream bar with a multitude of toppings for even the pickiest palate. Before everyone sat down to the meal, Donna took a moment to address those gathered.

"I want to thank everybody for coming," she started before becoming overcome with emotion. "You know, I felt like Preston deserves (recognition), and David deserves it."

Closing out with a request to pray for her family and mother, who, though recovering from pneumonia, still managed to help prepare food and set up tables and decorations, the blessing was said, and folks were free to eat and mingle as they pleased.

As for what Preston plans on doing after college, he has a general idea. Currently, he's studying to be an agriculture instructor, feeling that archery is more of an avocation than an occupation.

That being said, the possibility of continuing to shoot for the stars using his archery talents is not entirely off the table.

"We'll just have to see how things go," Preston said. "It takes a lot of money to go to the big shoots and everything."

Congratulations, Preston, on your hard work and dedication paying off, and Happy Birthday, David.



The surprise party cake featuring a shot of the Dyer men enjoying the outdoors with their respective passions.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## Union County Dems side with state-winning candidates

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The June 21 Democratic Primary Runoff Election in Union County resulted in a majority of local voters choosing to support candidates who went on to win in four statewide elections.

Election Day voting took place at the 11 pre-assigned precincts of Union County, with a single week of early voting having occurred the prior week, and everything went off without a hitch thanks to the tireless efforts of the Elections and Registration offices.

Appearing on the ballot were candidates who failed to clear the majority threshold in the May 24 Democratic Primary, with nominees for the Nov. 8 General Election being selected as follows:

Charlie Bailey defeated Kwanza Hall for Lieutenant Governor, Bee Nguyen defeated Dee Dawkins-Haigler for Secretary of State, Janice Laws Robinson beat Raphael Baker for Insurance Commissioner, and William Boddie Jr. won against Nicole Horn for Labor Commissioner.

Runoff Elections have historically featured low voter turnouts, and given that this was a Democratic runoff in a

heavily Republican-leaning area, an even smaller number of people cast ballots in the local election last week.

Just 1.83% of the Union County electorate – that's 363 of 19,889 active registered voters – voted in the election, though, since this was a primary runoff, the only people eligible to vote in the election were those who either didn't vote previously or voted Democrat or nonpartisan.

The 2022 General Election will be held on Nov. 8 and will feature the election of political party candidates who cleared the primary and runoff rounds of voting.

## Quilts of Valor honors WWII veteran and his granddaughter at Ceremony on June 21, 2022

By: Susan Young

On Tuesday, June 21, 2022, Misty Mountain Quilters Guild QOV quilters Nancy Durden and Sue Young were honored to award two QOVs to local veterans who have been touched by war. The Award Ceremony was held at the home of one of the veterans. Several family members were present for the ceremony. QOV quilters make it our mission to support our local veterans with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.

Quilts of Valor Foundation is a national organization of volunteer quilters, comprised of women and men from every state of the union. Quilts of Valor quilters come from all 50 states and overseas, and more than 313,000 quilts have been awarded to men and women who are veterans of current and past wars, including many veterans from WW II, Korea, Viet Nam, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Misty Mountain QOV Quilters have awarded over 880 Quilts of Valor to local veterans and injured active-duty troops in Germany and Afghanistan. Anyone can nominate a veteran who has been touched by war for a Quilt of Valor—including the veterans themselves!

If you or a veteran you know wants to know how to be nominated for a Quilt of Valor, please go online to <http://www.qovf.org/> and click on the words "NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS" on the red banner at the top of the page, and then look for instructions on the "Online Nomination Form".

Misty Mountain QOV group is always looking for people who wish to help us make some of these quilts for heroic American veterans. If you would like to help, please go to the following website: <http://www.mistymountainquiltguild.org/>, click on the word "Projects" on the left side of the home page, and then look for the QOV group information.

**Shannon Kidney, Rome, GA, US Army E4, served in Operation Enduring Freedom 2000-2007**

As a child Shannon says she dreamed of doing something bigger than herself and serving our country. She is proud that her mother was in the Air Force and the Navy, and her Dad was a Navy Sea-



Horace Sullivan is 100 years old and the last surviving member of his bombing group from World War II where he was stationed in the Pacific. His granddaughter Shannon, who served in the Army during OEF, was also awarded a QOV that day. Photo includes Shannon Kidney, Horace Sullivan and his partner, Wilma.

bee. All of her grandfathers served as well – she definitely comes from a military family!

Shannon entered the Army in the year 2000 and went through Basic Training at Fort Jackson. She was a 91q, a pharmacy tech, while active duty. While in the Kansas National Guard, she worked with the medical group to get soldiers medically cleared for deployment. She took a hearing conservation course and then worked closely with the audiologist, Col. White. She uploaded hearing tests so that when the soldiers were deployed, they could rapidly see the previous hearing testing and be alert for changes.

Some of her duty stations included the 121st Hospital in Seoul Korea, and Dewitt Hospital at Fort Belvoir. She also served with the Kansas and Texas National Guard. She achieved the rank of E-4.

For her honorable service, Shannon was awarded 2 Army Accommodation medals, the Army good conduct medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism medal.

After her military service, Shannon used her GI Bill and Army College Funds to go back to school and become an RN. Now she works as a Sexual Assault Nurse examiner part time to give back to her local

community. She also mentors through the ACP program and loves it. Shannon says this is the first quilt she has ever owned and is so proud to have received it.

**Horace Sullivan, Blairsville, GA, WW II Veteran, Army Air Corps, served 1942-1945**

100-year old Horace Sullivan went to Basic Training at Fort Pierce and then advanced training at Camp Blanding near Jacksonville, FL in 1942. Horace was sent to the islands south and west of Japan and worked as a ground radar operator in the Asian-Pacific Theater. He served in the same unit with the grandfather of our other awardee, Shannon. Horace is now the last remaining member of the Bombing Group he served in. The unit flew B-24s to fight the Japanese.

Horace came home in 1945 and worked his whole life in many outdoor jobs, but he also worked at the Holiday Inn and Howard Johnson's hotels for part of his career. He moved to Blairsville and now enjoys the mountains and the great view from his deck. He met his partner Wilma 20 years ago, who is now in her early 90's, and they are cared for by each other and their family. Horace is very happy to be the recipient of a QOV.