

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wildfire contained; caution urged during drought

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

U.S. Forest Service officials discovered a wildfire last Wednesday afternoon that is visible from the Brasstown Bald Visitor Center, covering about 3 acres some 4,000 feet up on Chimneytop Mountain near the Arkaquah Trail in Union County.

The Arkaquah Trail has been temporarily closed due to its proximity to the fire, the cause of which is still under investigation.

USFS firefighters fought the fire all that Wednesday, Oct. 26, and work continued the next day to establish a control line around the fire.

Since then, 95 percent of the fire has been contained by a control line. The remaining

5 percent of the 3 acres is in a rocky area where firefighters have been unable to establish a control line, though they don't expect the fire to be a problem there because there's not much to burn in that particular area, according to Judy Toppins, public affairs officer with the U.S. Forest Service out of Gainesville.

"Basically, there's a line all the way around the fire that we would not expect the fire to go past," said Toppins. "That line could be a natural break that the fire wouldn't normally pass, like a stream, for instance. Or it's a line that we've created by removing all the fuels - that can be just raking the fuels out of the way, even."

Added Toppins: "What they're doing now is called

mop-up mode, and it's where they're just making sure that that line is staying clear. And if there are any fires at all, they're getting those out, but otherwise it's pretty much just making sure that they're maintaining that perimeter and letting that fire burn out within that 3 acres."

As far as a timeline goes, the fire could take days or weeks to fully burn out, due mostly to the steep terrain and amount of woody debris in the area, and should be highly visible in Union, Towns and surrounding counties.

"It's not an area that we have done prescribed fire in the past, where we would have removed a lot of the fuel loads, because it's in a congressionally designated Wilderness Area - it

See Drought, Page 2A



Here is a view of the Chimneytop wildfire from Brasstown Bald's southern webcam. Smoke from the fire can be seen billowing leftward in the middle of the picture.

Union General brings medical services to Suches

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES - For the people of Suches, last Thursday, Oct. 27, was a big day as the Suches-Union General Hospital Clinic opened its doors to the public for a preview of the new area healthcare facility that will officially be in business on Monday, Nov. 14.

Members of the community and county officials, such as Union County Fire Chief David Dyer and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, gathered to participate in the Open House event, sharing food, company and tours of the new facility.

While the Suches community has previously had a medical center, it has been out of a physician since Dr. Don Pruitt retired a little over a year ago. Since then, the community has been in desperate need of a clinic that does not require residents



Union General Hospital is opening its Suches Clinic on Monday, Nov. 14. The new clinic features a helipad and all state of the art equipment.

to drive an hour to either Blairsville or Dahlonega.

"Someone came to me, actually a doctor that was thinking about moving up

here, and asked if we could work on that a little bit," said Paris. "The people of Suches were used to having a medical facility. So, I got with

Larry Garrett and we came over here and looked at the building. "So, we decided to go and see if the hospital could

See Suches, Page 2A

Serial burglars hit another local store

By Shawn Jarrard
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Investigators with the Office believe that the early Sunday morning burglary of the Food Heaven convenience store is connected to a series of burglaries across much of North Georgia.

The Oct. 30 burglary, according to UCSO Sgt. Lamar Dyer, was likely perpetrated by the same individuals as those who committed the Aug. 31 burglary of the Marathon Station up Murphy Highway near the Georgia/North Carolina state line.

"It's basically like it was down at the state line store, the only difference is they went in through the front door (instead



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

of a side entrance)," said Sgt. Dyer. "They went in, cut the alarm, took the DVR and took the safe."

"As of right now, the

See Burglars, Page 3A

Domestic violence denounced in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris spoke out against domestic violence in the October Commission Meeting by declaring the entire month of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"One in every three teenagers, one in every four women, and one in every six men will experience domestic violence during their lifetime, and approximately 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year," said Commissioner Paris in the Oct. 20 meeting.

"When a family member is abused, it can have long-term damaging effects on the victim that also leave a mark on family, friends and the community at large. Families are indispensable



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris in the Oct. 20 County Meeting.

to a stable society, and they should be a place of support to instill responsibility and values in the next generation."

See Meeting, Page 3A

Home of World War II Vet burns in Suches

By Shawn Jarrard
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Suches native I.T. Harkins, known locally as one of the six Harkins siblings, escaped a fire that started in his home Sunday evening just prior to 6 p.m.

The 98-year-old World War II Veteran was home by himself when he noticed the fire and went out into his front yard.

Several passersby saw the blaze and stopped to offer Harkins assistance, including putting in a call to 911.

Lt. Doug Pruitt of the Union County Fire Department said that Station No. 5 out of



IT Harkins home caught fire Sunday evening. Photo courtesy of Lisa Arbour

See Harkins, Page 2A

Farmers Market ends season with Halloween candy

By Shawn Jarrard
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The last day of the regular season at the Union County Farmers Market ended mostly on the sweet side of bittersweet, as children attended in costume to trick or treat their way through a Halloween-themed market on Saturday, Oct. 29.

Six young market attendees even competed in the annual Pumpkin Carving and Decorating Contest, each walking away with an award befitting their uniquely creative design skills.

On the bitter end of bittersweet, the occasion marked the end of many months of social gathering, not to mention all the money made by vendors during the five full months of the market - though at least they won't have to be

up before dawn every Saturday for a while.

Market Manager Mickey Cummings finds the end of each season bittersweet as well, though he's proud of each successive year at the Farmers Market, which has seen continued growth year after year.

"I think this has been our best year," said Cummings. "In the height of the season, we were having 5,000 or 6,000 people every Saturday. It slowed down after Labor Day because of kids going back to school, but then it's picked back up last week and this week a little bit, so it's been pretty busy."

Added Cummings, concerning the close of the season: "At one point, you're going to be glad to have a rest and not have to come out every

See Market, Page 4A



Two-year-old Georgia Bragg and 1-year-old Avery Rogers attended the Farmers Market on Saturday, Oct. 29, as Baby Bop and Kitty Catt respectively. The two are first cousins.

Moore talks water, laments lack of rainfall

By Lily Avery
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The Hiwassee River Watershed hosted its Sixth Annual State of the Water presentation at the Union County Community Center on Tuesday, Oct. 25.

In the meeting, HRWC Executive Director Callie Moore addressed the state of the rivers and lakes within the Upper Hiwassee River Basin, sharing data concerning the water properties that had been accumulated over the previous year.

While the Tennessee Valley Authority has not yet released new data for the four major lakes within the basin, Moore did identify areas of concern for certain streams running through the basin that could cause problems for the



HRWC Executive Director Callie Moore delivered the 2016 State of the Water address on Tuesday, Oct. 25, at the Union County Community Center.

See Moore, Page 4A

Vol. 107 No. 43
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Showers Hi 76 Lo 46
Fri: Sunny Hi 67 Lo 39
Sat: Sunny Hi 68 Lo 40

Inside
Arrests 2C
Church 3C
Classifieds 2D
Opinion 4B
Legals 4D
Obits 4C
Sports 2B

Election Results Newspaper will be available on Wednesday, November 9th after 10 AM

See our special election results insert for all the details and results from the General Election.

Election results will also be available at www.nganews.com

FALL BACK