

North Georgia News

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Union County students honor veterans with special ceremony

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools held their annual Veterans Day Ceremony on Friday, Nov. 9, at the Fine Arts Center.

The ceremony was originally scheduled to occur at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium, where it has been held in prior years, but due to inclement weather, the ceremony was moved indoors.

Veterans and guests filled the Fine Arts Center to capacity that Friday, also accommodating teachers and school staff, the school band and choir, and as many students as could fit.

Assistant Superintendent David Murphy said students who couldn't fit into the auditorium were treated to the ceremony via closed circuit television in the classrooms.

Union County High School senior Claire

McPherson served as emcee for the event, and she gave the invocation, which was followed by the Posting of the Colors by members of the North Georgia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol out of Blairsville.

U.S. Army Sgt. First Class David Chovan sang a beautiful rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" to a completely hushed audience.

"Union County School District would like to welcome everyone to today's Veterans Day Ceremony," said McPherson in her opening remarks. "We would like to especially recognize our community's veterans. Thank you for your service and for being here with us today."

McPherson went on to describe every conflict up until the present day in which the U.S. Armed Forces have stepped in to fight for freedom.

"As a representative of the students of Union County Schools, I would like to thank you for your service to our country," said McPherson.

Throughout the ceremony, the Union County School Chorus and Band gave perfect deliveries of "God Bless the USA," "Thank You Soldier," "The Armed Services Medley," "America the Beautiful" and "Stars and Stripes Forever."

"Each and every one of you, our veterans, volunteered your lives for a country that you love," said student and keynote speaker Sahruj Salazar. "For how can one truly understand or explain the gravity of offering one's being for an entire nation?"

"What drives an individual to literally surrender themselves to an unforeseeable future, one full of uncertainty, yet faithfulness to a cause?"

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Air Force Veteran Misty Chavers receiving her Quilt of Valor in the Nov. 9 school ceremony. Photo by Mark Smith

Paris: 'Thank you to everyone who supported SPLOST'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County voters approved the SPLOST V ballot referendum in the 2018 General Election, meaning that the 1-cent countywide sales tax that's been in place since 1997 will continue through March 2027.

The measure passed with 7,153 YES votes to 4,167 NO votes, giving it a 63.19 percent margin of victory.

A SPLOST, or Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, is a 1-cent sales tax that is collected by counties for up to six years for the purposes of funding county and city capital outlay projects such as roadwork, public safety equipment, infrastructure, etc.

The total sales tax in Union County is 7 cents on the dollar, which includes a penny for current SPLOST IV collections.

Since the county is already collecting SPLOST money, the sales tax rate



within the county will simply stay the same at 7 percent when SPLOST IV expires and SPLOST V begins in April 2021.

SPLOST V is expected to collect \$24 million over its six-year collection period, just like SPLOST IV.

Looking back over the history of the SPLOST in Union County, most people would be able to identify a handful of SPLOST projects in just a moment's time.

The Farmers Market, new vehicles for the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department, the Saddle Club Arena and Suches Community Center, Meeks Park and Meeks Park 2,

the Splash Pad at Meeks Park, the Hyron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, and many more projects have been built, purchased and/or improved using SPLOST dollars.

After the polls closed on Nov. 6, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris headed over to the Board of Elections Headquarters on Hunt Martin Street to learn the results of the SPLOST vote.

"I always felt that it was going to pass, but it actually having passed, it's just a relief," said Paris. "I hope that this is verification that we've been doing a good job with the money, and that realized that it's helped make Union County a better place to live, work and play."

Added Paris, "I'm very pleased and appreciate the public supporting our SPLOST. I know that everybody didn't agree with all the projects, but it's a great asset to our community and to our kids and

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Students raise over \$4,500 with Painted Chair and Silent Auction



Students and teachers who helped to make the Painted Chair Auction a success on Nov. 8. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Painted Chair and Silent Auction was a huge success on Thursday, Nov. 7, allowing students to raise over \$4,500 for future

entrepreneurs. Held at the Union County Community Center, the event was the brainchild of members of the Union County High School Entrepreneurship Program, a collaboration between students and their

teachers. The proceeds of the event will go toward helping local young entrepreneurs develop product prototypes and compete in regional, state, national and international

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Marines celebrate 243rd birthday of the Corps in Blairsville



Area Marines and other veterans celebrated the 243rd birthday of the Marine Corps on Saturday, Nov. 10, at North Georgia Technical College. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Marines and other veterans celebrated the 243rd birthday of the United States Marine Corps with a ball at North Georgia Technical College on Saturday, Nov. 10.

The keynote speaker for Saturday's ball was retired U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. John Croley, who served in operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom.

Retired Marine Corps Col. Mike Nunnally introduced

the guest of honor with a few words about their pasts together.

"Welcome to a night with the Marines," said Nunnally. "We are glad all of you are here this evening, and we welcome you."

"It gives me great pleasure to introduce our guest of honor tonight, Maj. Gen. John Croley. John is one of the few general officers that I can say that I know personally."

"John and I go back to major days in squadrons, when both of us had No. 1 on our

back during Desert Storm as the first two units activated since Korea for Operation Desert Storm."

Following Nunnally's introduction, Croley took the podium to give his speech on the importance of recognizing the Marine Corps.

"There are many generations of Marines here, from World War II to Korea, Vietnam, Southwest Asia, and many other campaigns that we recall here this evening," said Croley. "This is a time for

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Union County FFA hosts Blue Ridge Classic Livestock Show

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Future Farmers of America from 12 counties came together to participate in the Blue Ridge Classic Livestock Show at the Union County Agriscience Center on Saturday, Nov. 10.

"I think our first year has been phenomenal," said Ryan Talton, ag teacher and Young Farmer instructor at Union County High. "Our sponsorship for this show has been awesome."

Sponsors for the show included Lady Antebellum,

The Blue Ridge Cattlemen's Association, FFA Alumni, AgGeorgia Farm Credit, and the Union County Young Farmers Association.

Students worked hard to prepare for the show and practiced thoroughly to ensure they presented their cattle properly.

Each student was judged based on his or her control of the cattle and awareness of the judge's presence around them.

"They have to figure out what the best qualities of their cattle is, and they have to fix the cattle in a position to show off the best qualities," said Talton. "If she has a wasted neck,

then you'd pull her head up a little. Or if she doesn't have a defined shoulder, you could put that foot somewhere that better shows off her features."

"These kids have tried getting more and more practice for when we get to that final show in February. They put in all that work in the summer to work on showing off the cattle."

The show was divided into categories and divisions that separated the students into their individual age group and skill level.

As the age groups increased, the difficulty and

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Students demonstrating their show cows at the Blue Ridge Classic Livestock Show on Nov. 10. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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