

North Georgia News

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County being considered for Discovery Channel series

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Detective Lt. Daren Osborn of the Union County Sheriff's Office received an interesting phone call around the middle of December.

The caller was a producer from the Discovery Channel.

"They're trying to do a series on crimes on the Appalachian Trail," said Lt. Osborn, who met with the producer and her film crew last week. "They were here for three or four hours, and shot some interviews with me, Sgt. Lamar Dyer and Capt. Chad Deyton."

Preliminary research for

the series includes segments from the sheriff's offices of different counties along the nearly 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Maine to Georgia.

Specifically, the producer and her film crew approached the Union County Sheriff's Office to talk about Meredith Emerson - one of 12 people murdered along the Appalachian Trail since its inception and creation in the first half of the 20th century.

On New Year's Day, 2008, Emerson drove from her place in Buford out to the Byron Herbert Reece Trailhead, on a daytrip with her dog. This is where her car



Detective Lt. Daren Osborn of the Union County Sheriff's Office

was eventually discovered.

Gary Michael Hilton, a drifter, was on this same

part of the Trail that day, and Emerson was last seen alive walking with an older man,

presumably Hilton.

Emerson was reported missing the next day.

As authorities would soon find out, Hilton was a killer with a specific M.O. He kidnapped his victims from National Forest areas, drove them to ATMs, then stole their money and killed them.

Emerson was kidnapped in Union County, but she was discovered in Dawson County, where Hilton led authorities to her body in the Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area.

She was Hilton's fourth known murder victim. Hilton was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the brutal kidnapping and murder of Emerson, before being

convicted for the murders of John and Irene Bryant in North Carolina, and for the killing of Cheryl Dunlap in Florida.

Lt. Osborn wasn't with the Union County Sheriff's Office at the time of Emerson's death, so the film crew spoke mainly with Sgt. Dyer and Capt. Deyton about Emerson last week.

"We went up to the Trail," said Lt. Osborn. "They took some shots up there at the Appalachian Trail at the Byron Herbert Reece Trailhead parking area. We went on up to the top, where the Trail actually goes through the Walasi-Yi building at Neels Gap."

See Discovery, Page 2

BRMEMC to hold town hall meetings for membership

By Todd Forrest
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Young Harris - Mickey Cummings of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors announced at the Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting on Friday, Jan. 8, that the EMC will hold a pair of Town Hall Meetings that will be open to the public.

The first meeting will take place on Monday, Jan. 25, at the Clay County Courthouse's multi-purpose room in Hayesville, NC. The



Mickey Cummings

second meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 26, at the Union County Schools Fine

Arts Center. Both meetings will begin at 6 p.m.

"We're trying to move

on from what has happened in the past, and we want to move on to the future," Cummings said. "We want constructive criticism, we want your comments. If something is going good, we want to hear about it. If something is going bad, we want to hear about that as well."

Cummings, speaking to the Mountain Movers and Shakers during their weekly meeting at Mary's Southern Grill, told the audience that transparency within the

See BRMEMC, Page 14

City council takes care of New Year's housekeeping

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Rhonda Mahan, Betty Easter and Martha Cone were happy to take their Oath of Office after winning reelection in November

Jan. 5. "Raise your right hands," said Janna Akins, Blairsville City Attorney, administering the Oath of Office, after which Easter, Cone and Mahan swore to uphold their offices.

Following their swearing-in ceremonies, the

See Council, Page 2

UC Sheriff's Office squad room, interview area close to completion

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Union County Sheriff's Office is nearing completion on its first significant addition since the construction of a second office building outside the jail in 2007.

Augmenting the backside of the Criminal Investigations building, the new 16 feet by 28 feet addition will serve as a multipurpose workspace.

For the first time since the Union County Jail started taking inmates in June of 2002,

the sheriff and his investigators will have a dedicated interview room.

"When the jail was designed and built, they realized immediately that they had no office space, so they had to build these buildings out here," said Union County Sheriff Mason of the two office buildings outside the jail. "The population of the county and the crimes and calls for service have just outgrown the facility, to where this is something that we really need. It doesn't look like much, but it's really going

See UCSO, Page 3



Chief Deputy John George and Sheriff Mack Mason inspect new building addition at the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Colwell Detention center graduates another K-9 class

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

After having proven an instant success, the Rescued Program at Blairsville's Colwell Probation Detention Center (CPDC) has celebrated 14 graduating classes since its inception in June of 2012.

The program takes dogs from local shelters, including the Humane Society Mountain Shelter of Towns and Union counties, as well as Castoff Pet Rescue, and provides them to the CPDC for its detainees to use in the Rescued Program.

According to Rescued

Officer Phillip Carter, the program, with assistance from Cold Nose College in Murphy, NC, along with Two Paws Up, provides an opportunity for the inmates to receive a certificate in dog grooming and Good Manners Training (obedience) that can be used to find employment upon their release.

The 10-week program also provides a computer skills class, courtesy of North Georgia Technical College, along with resume building, and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church offers a spirituality based problem-solving class.



CPDC detainee with the dog he has spent the last 10 weeks with, showing what they have learned

See K-9, Page 14

Chamber Business After Hours a rousing success

By Shawn Jarrard
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Congratulations to Roberta Ford of Mary Kay Cosmetics, who received Business of the Quarter honors for the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce's first quarterly Business After Hours meeting of the New Year.

The meeting took place above chamber headquarters in the Union County Community Center on Thursday, Jan. 7, and was sponsored and catered by The Sawmill Place Restaurant.

Chamber members use



Roberta Ford receives her Business of the Quarter certificate from Interim Chamber President Patrick Malone

Business After Hours meetings to network among each other, in what the chamber hopes will be

an exchange of ideas toward the betterment of both businesses with the community and the

community itself. The main difference in this first Business After Hours in 2016 was the addition of Patrick Malone as interim president and CEO of the chamber.

"I'm the new Cindy," said Malone to general laughter, before introducing Ford. "The big event for this evening is the introduction of our Business of the Quarter. As you all know, Roberta is an independent consultant with Mary Kay. She's been a member of the chamber since 2013, very active. She was a

See Ford, Page 14

Blairsville-Union County bid farewell to Williams

By Shawn Jarrard
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Surrounded by friends and family, outgoing president Cindy Williams received a fond farewell at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce headquarters in the Union County Community Center on Tuesday, Jan. 5.

Dozens of chamber members, including current and past chamber board members, turned out to wish Williams well in her future endeavors, as she continues to grow in her career as president/CEO of the Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber of Commerce.

Williams, who served nine and a half years as president of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, thanked everyone



Cindy Williams speaks to those gathered for her going away party

for their presence that evening.

"I know it was a big surprise to a lot of people,

See Williams, Page 3

Seabees to host March 5 gala event



Richard Hoibraten, left, and Ed Crenshaw go over the details of the March 5 Seabee Ball

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Navy Seabee Veterans of America Island X-3 held their first meeting of the New Year on Friday, Jan. 8, and the major topic at hand was the first ever Seabee Ball of the North Georgia Mountains.

The Seabee Ball, slated for March 5 at the Union County Community Center, will celebrate the 74th anniversary of the implementation of the U.S. Navy Seabees.

"This is a pretty big deal, because usually you might have three around the entire United States of America, maybe

See Seabees, Page 3

Vol. 107 No. 2
20 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Sunny Hi 53 Lo 31
Fri: Showers Hi 49 Lo 35
Sat: Cloudy Hi 44 Lo 25

Inside
Arrests 8
Church 9
Classifieds 17
Opinion 4
Legals 19
Obits 11
Sports 12

Relay For Life Kickoff
January 22nd
See page 6

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC TOWN HALL MEETING
See page 7

Important Election and Qualifying Dates
See page 8

SPORTS
BASKETBALL
Tues. Jan. 12 @ Fannin County 6 & 7:30 PM
Sat. Jan. 16 vs. Social Circle 2 & 3:30 PM