

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Students, teachers, family and friends tell Ed goodbye

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Hundreds gathered at First Baptist Church of Blairsville on Friday to say goodbye to a centerpiece of the Union County community.

Ed Rohrbaugh, who, just a year ago, stepped down as principal at Union County High School to return to the classroom, died Feb. 25 from injuries sustained in an accident at the family vineyard.

Rohrbaugh, a four-sport athlete at Fairburn High School, and later, a starting quarterback at Troy State University, served as an educator, coach and administrator at Union County Schools for 23 years.

The U.S. flag flew at half-staff at Union County Schools last week in honor of Rohrbaugh.

At Fairburn High School, Rohrbaugh set a state Track and Field record in the half-mile race event, which stood for 25 years until a Rohrbaugh-coached Chris Jones, at Union

County, broke that school. Following high school, Rohrbaugh went on to play quarterback at Troy State University, in Alabama, and then briefly in the NFL for the Houston Oilers.

His most recent adventure was his family's vineyard. He served as wine maker, owner, and builder of Odom Springs Vineyard with his wife and family.

Rohrbaugh was remembered as a leader. His door was always open.

"When you came into his office, he would close his computer and your problem immediately moved to the top of his priorities," said Union County High School Assistant Principal C. T. Hussion. "Ed also believed in his staff and would encourage our teacher leaders to take an active role in helping to shape our school. As a coach and teacher, Ed truly cared about our kids. He would go out of his way to do anything he could to help them. He loved Union County and definitely



Longtime friends of Ed Rohrbaugh exit First Baptist Church with his casket as they prepare for the last ride to Confidence United Methodist Church Cemetery. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

had the 'Eye of the Panther.'" Union County Head Baseball Coach Brandon Bradburn summed up Rohrbaugh

best. "Mr. Rohrbaugh made you think everyday was Friday," Bradburn said.

Following the tragic accident on Feb. 23, an outpouring of love flowed from the Blairsville-Union County com-

munity to Rohrbaugh's family. The community united in Rohrbaugh's honor with prayers and support sent immediately to his wife Sharon (Odom) Rohrbaugh and family.

Union County students – past and present – expressed their love for the man who had been a huge part of their lives during an emotional week with many going to social media, Facebook and Twitter to express their love for Ed Rohrbaugh and his family.

Ed Rohrbaugh was not only an educator, coach and administrator, he served as public address announcer for the Lady Panthers' softball team, where his voice became a staple of those late summer ball games on the diamond.

"It will not be the same without his voice," players said on social media.

His "Let's Go Panthers" battle cry during the late inning rallies is something that will

See Rohrbaugh, 3A

## Blairsville man, 54, found beaten to death in his home

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

A 54-year-old Blairsville man is dead and local and state authorities are searching for his killer, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Jeff Fox was found dead shortly before noon on Saturday at his home at 131 Brown Ridge Road, off Fairview Church Road, in rural Union County.

Sheriff Mason said that while an exact cause of death has yet to be determined, foul play is suspected.

"We're investigating the first homicide of 2014," Sheriff Mason said. "Yes, we definitely suspect foul play as the cause of death."

Union County Coroner Benny Erwin said that Fox's body was sent to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Laboratory for an autopsy by state medical examiners.



Union County Coroner Benny Erwin discusses Saturday's murder on Brown Ridge Road in rural Union County with Union County Sheriff Mack Mason. Photo/Charles Duncan

"Everything is under investigation at this point in time," Erwin said. An autopsy was completed Monday morning, Union County Detective Sgt.



The home where family members discovered the body of Jeff Fox on Saturday on Brown Ridge Road, off Fairview Church Road. Photo/Charles Duncan

Andrew Hammond said. Details of that autopsy

were unavailable at press time.

"It has been ruled a homicide, I can share that much," Sgt. Hammond said. "Everything is still under investigation at this time. We can't share anymore information than that."

Hammond spent several hours on Monday at the crime scene with GBI agents, and the medical examiner that conducted the autopsy on Fox.

Sheriff Mason said that Fox's sister and brother-in-law discovered his body as they stopped by his home on Saturday to give him a ride to the grocery store.

"Right now, everything is under investigation," Sheriff Mason said. "There's not a whole lot that we can share without damaging the integrity of our investigation."

See Murder 3A

## Rotary spawns new community event

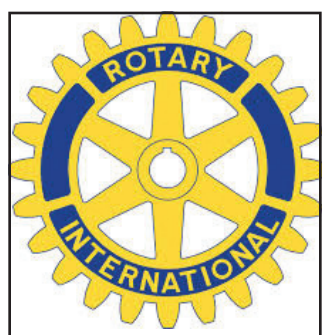
By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

May 24 marks a new day in community celebrations, as the Rotary Club of Union County is proud to present the inaugural Appalachia Spring Awards Gala.

The event will be held in the parking lot at Brasstown Bald Mountain, said event co-organizer Denise Windham.

The event will honor five individuals selected – one each – from the following categories: business, healthcare public service, education, and community volunteerism, Windham said.

The five individuals in the community will be selected by nomination for their achievements in their profes-



sion. "We hope to grow this event," Windham said. "We're going to have a great time. There will be 250 tickets available for the event, plus seating for the winning nominees and their spouses. "We're going to have some great prizes for the winning nominees," she said. "We're going to try to build on this every year and make

it a huge annual event. We're looking for one major sponsor for the event.

"Our primary focus right now is getting nominations for the five categories," she said. "The ticket sales will be down the road, but, over the next 30 days, we need to get the nominees in so we can make our selections. We'll get the ball rolling from there."

"We're looking for service above and beyond what their normal profession would call for," Windham said. "Public safety includes the fire department, the police department, the Sheriff's Office."

"The community volunteer category will have the largest prize," she said, adding that the prize will be a very

See Gala, 2A

## Qualifying continues until Friday

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Qualifying for local, state and federal races got underway on Monday.

Up for reelection in 2014 in local races are Post 2 Board of Education member Tony Hunter, a Union County Republican, a Post 4 Board of Education member John Strickland, a Union County Republican, and Post 5 Board member Julie Barton, a Union County Democrat.

District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison, a Blairsville Republican, is seeking his fourth term as the representative of Union, Towns, Rabun and White counties.

District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, a Dahlonega Republican, is seeking re-



Jeff Langley  
Langley is seeking reelection for his state senate district, which covers Union, Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Lumpkin, and White counties and portions of Forsyth and Pickens counties.



Stephen Allison  
Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley, a Union County Republican.

See Qualify, 2A

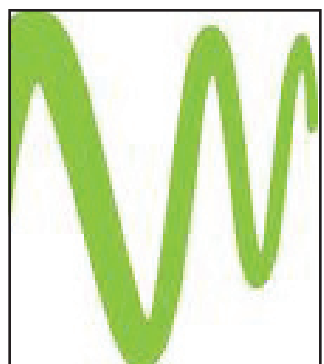
## Windstream agrees to pay \$600,000

North Georgia News  
News Special

ATLANTA – The top watchdog in the Governor's Office of Consumer Protection says his agency has entered into a \$600,000 settlement with Internet service provider Windstream Communications Inc.

John Sours, administrator of the Governor's Office of Consumer Protection said the settlement is over allegations of false advertising.

Windstream provides Internet service to residential consumers and businesses, many of who are located in rural parts of Georgia, where they have very limited options



for Internet service. Sours' agency alleges that Windstream advertised that it would provide certain Internet speeds to its customers that it could not provide and/or guarantee, particularly for Georgia consumers whose

network equipment is supported by copper-fed wires.

It also alleges that when customers called Windstream to complain about their slow Internet speeds, Windstream representatives allegedly misrepresented the time frame within which the customers' Internet speed issues would be resolved, or, in the case of customers whose equipment is supported by copper-fed wires, failed to tell customers that it was unable to resolve the issue.

Also, some of Windstream's "Lifetime Price Guarantee bundle" advertisements falsely implied that the ad-

See Windstream, 2A

## Arbor Day celebration is complete

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Arbor Day Foundation has a motto that reads, "trees make a world of difference," and for the past 20 years, the city of Blairsville and Union County have been on the front lines, fighting the good fight and inspiring their residents to plant, nurture and celebrate trees.

On Thursday afternoon, the Mock House played host to the gala where the Georgia Forestry Commission was in attendance to say "thank you" to the local commu-



The Georgia Forestry Commission presents Blairsville and Union County with the Tree City USA flag last week at the Mock House.

See Arbor Day, 2A

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2 Sections, 20 Pages

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Fri: Clouds Hi 63 Lo 35  
Sat: Clouds Hi 65 Lo 38

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**PTO sponsors Teacher Appreciation Week!**

See page 7A

**Spring Forward**

Time changes Sunday Mar. 9th

**Mom and Son Jammin' Fun Night!**

Mar. 8th

See page 6A

**UNION COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS**

**BASEBALL:**  
Tues. Mar 4 vs. Murphy, NC 5 PM  
Fri. Mar 7 vs. Oglethorpe Co (DH) 5 PM

**SOCCER:**  
Tues. Mar 4 @ Pickens Co 5:30 & 7:30  
Fri. Mar 7 vs. Washington Wilkes 5:30 & 7:30