

# April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month



L-R: Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley with Molly Cousin, Betsy Ramsey, Jessica Moreland, Natasha Kreisle, all of S.A.F.E., Inc., and Commissioner Lamar Paris for the signing of the Sexual Assault Awareness Month proclamation

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

One in four girls and one in six boys will experience a sexual assault before the age of 18, a sobering statistic that highlights the immediate need for preventive education and robust awareness programs in Union County, in Georgia, and in the nation at large.

“(Abuse) is prevalent everywhere, and it’s definitely prevalent up here,” said Molly Cousin, executive director of S.A.F.E., Inc. “Even though people don’t like to think about it – so people don’t really talk about it, but that’s pretty normal – it’s definitely prevalent.”

Many know S.A.F.E. for its thrift stores in Towns and Union counties, and supporting those stores through donations and shopping certainly helps S.A.F.E. provide the many services that it does for so many here in the North Georgia Mountains.

“We cover a lot of different issues,” said Cousin. “We have a domestic violence program, we have a sexual assault program, and we have a child abuse program. Not only do we have a 15-bed shelter and a crisis line, but we also do outreach services and we have a child advocacy center.”

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley joined members of S.A.F.E., Inc. outside the old Union County Courthouse on Wednesday, March 30, for the signing of a proclamation declaring April 2016 as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month.”

“Sexual Assault

Awareness Month calls attention to the fact that sexual violence is widespread and impacts every person in this community,” according to the proclamation. “Rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment harm our community, and statistics show one in five women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives.

“Child sexual abuse prevention must be a priority to confront the reality that one in six boys and one in four girls will experience a sexual assault before the age 18. Young people experience heightened rates of sexual violence, and youth ages 12-17 were two and a half times as likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault.

“We must work together to educate our community about sexual violence prevention, supporting survivors and speaking out against harmful attitudes and actions. Prevention is possible when everyone gets involved. The first step is increasing education, awareness and community involvement.

“We join advocates and communities across the country in taking action to prevent sexual violence. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and each day of the year is an opportunity to create change for the future.”

The initials in S.A.F.E. stand for Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, and according to its website at [www.safeservices.org](http://www.safeservices.org), the nonprofit has “served Towns and Union counties since 1989 by providing safe shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.”

“S.A.F.E. offers a comprehensive array of services including Legal Advocacy, Social Services Referrals, Survivor Support Groups, Parenting Support, Child Advocacy, Outreach and Education, and Medical Advocacy for victims of sexual assault,” according to the website. “Our purpose is to help those who have been affected by abuse. While the process of seeking healing from abusive relationships is complex, through access to a comprehensive array of services, victims can find hope.”

Those looking for more information on how to volunteer can visit the S.A.F.E. website or call the office at (706) 379-1901. There is also a 24/7 confidential crisis hotline for those who wish to discuss their abusive situations at (706) 379-3000, though S.A.F.E. urges those in need of immediate attention to call 911.

“Domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse are a lot more prevalent than people give credit to,” said Cousin. “It’s happening all the time. When you’re being abused, you often feel very alone, you feel like nobody understands.

“We have advocates who are literally there to listen to you and to help you with whatever you need. There’s no judgement involved. We’re not going to tell you what you have to do, and we’re not going to tell you that what you’ve done is wrong. We’re there to support you and to empower you. It’s very important to recognize that you are not alone.”

Smith was extricated from her Subaru by Union County Fire & Rescue and transported to Union General Hospital.

Nicotra was transported to Union General Hospital, as was her front-seat passenger, Marilyn DiCastro, 60, of Murphy, NC.

Backseat passenger Paula Jean Murphy, 52, of Murphy, NC, was transported to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville.

All three survivors suffered serious injuries, the indictment shows.

According to State Patrol, Smith’s auto insurance was canceled on May 13.

The incident occurred on May 28, though Smith was arrested eight months later. According to State Patrol, this can happen for a number of reasons, including due to a potential backlog at the GBI Crime Lab when awaiting results of blood tests.

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Clark died from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle head-on collision on U.S. 129 North, near the North Carolina line in Union County.

She passed away at the scene of the crash that occurred at approximately 4:49 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Clark was a backseat passenger in a blue 2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee driven by Laurie Catherine Nicotra, 63, of Murphy, NC, according to State Patrol.

Nicotra’s Jeep was struck by a black 1997 Subaru Legacy Outback, which was being driven by Smith.

According to the Patrol, Smith was traveling in the left southbound lane, headed toward Blairsville. Nicotra was traveling north in the single

northbound lane headed toward Murphy.

While attempting to negotiate a right curve, Smith’s Subaru traveled into the northbound lane, directly into the path of the Jeep Cherokee, according to State Patrol.

The left front of the Subaru struck the right front of the Jeep Cherokee, according to the State Patrol. A secondary impact occurred as the Subaru rotated clockwise and the Jeep Cherokee rotated counterclockwise, according to the GSP.

The left rear of the Subaru struck the right rear of the Cherokee. The double impact on the Jeep caused the vehicle to overturn on its passenger side and land on its top.

Clark, a backseat passenger, died at the scene;

# Grand Jury hands down January Indictments

**By Charles Duncan**  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Gregory Wade Gschwind, three counts terroristic threats.

Larry Farley, two counts criminal attempt to commit a felony, six counts aggravated assault, aggravated stalking, battery in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act, two counts third-degree cruelty to children, discharging a firearm while under the influence, hindering an emergency call, false imprisonment, terroristic threats, making a false statement.

Dylan Joseph Maiani, theft by deception, theft by shoplifting.

Jesse Gordon Somervell, theft by deception, theft by shoplifting.

Dave James Patterson, aggravated assault, false imprisonment, simple battery in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act.

Julie Diana McPherson, three counts Violation of Georgia’s Controlled Substance Act, first-degree burglary.

Anita Kim Lawson, six counts theft by taking, four counts making a false statement.

Robert Thomas Kolar, possession of methamphetamine, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, driving without a valid driver’s license, failure to maintain brake lights in good working condition, first-degree burglary.

Evan Reed Daves, theft by shoplifting.

Timothy Gene Myers, two counts possession of a controlled substance, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, criminal attempt to commit a felony, two counts theft by shoplifting, two counts sale, distribution, possession of dangerous drugs.

Joseph Matthew Uribe, fleeing, attempt to elude a police officer, speeding, reckless driving, no proof of insurance.

Jessica Chase Doan, robbery by intimidation, possession of a controlled substance.

Sammy Henderson, making a false statement, driving with a suspended license, failure to maintain lane.

Michael Anthony Sanders, trafficking methamphetamine, or amphetamine, driving without a license, giving false information to law enforcement, failure to stop at a stop sign.

Ivry Jayne Tallent, trafficking methamphetamine.

Devan Whisper Jackson, theft by bringing stolen property into state, use of license plate to conceal identity, driving without a license, flee or attempt to elude law enforcement, obstruction.

Michael Curt Roberts, aggravated assault, second-degree burglary, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct.

Robert Donald Kaley, first-degree burglary, making false statements, criminal trespass – malicious interference, criminal trespass, stalking, hindering emergency call, theft by taking.

Freddie Michael Meeks, aggravated assault, terroristic threats, and two counts third-degree cruelty to children.

Casey Lynn Outz, eight counts third-degree forgery, seven counts theft by deception.

Mario Hernandez, driving without a license, use of license plate to conceal identity, no proof of insurance.

Richard Scott Dilbeck, possession of methamphetamine, driving on a suspended license.

Zachery Lee Dixon, three counts computer pornography, solicitation of sodomy from a child under 18 years old.

Richard Douglas Brown, first-degree cruelty to children, simple battery in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act.

Angela Renee Collins, first-degree cruelty to children, simple battery in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act.

Michael Shane Pickelsimer, terroristic threats, battery in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act, disorderly conduct.

Rocky Lee Robinson, three counts sale of marijuana, possession of more than an ounce of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Sheri Rae Barber, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Robyn Elizabeth Cothren, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Perry Evans McVay, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Charles Paul Milam, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Jesse Dean Hollingsworth, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Adrienne Marie Pitre, Max, criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Jack Edward Worthy, criminal attempt to commit a felony, possession marijuana, less than an ounce, possession of drug-related objects.

Kilmer Fain Burgart, second-degree criminal damage to property.

Tamara Gromowa, possession of a controlled substance.

Kevin William Rogers, possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana, less than an ounce.

Russell Floyd Harrison, aggravated assault in violation of Georgia’s Family Violence Act, aggravated assault, false imprisonment, terroristic threats, and five counts first-degree cruelty to children.

Dana Michelle Nicholson, insurance fraud, theft by conversion.

Socorro Nicole Coffey, two counts first-degree burglary, two counts theft by taking – firearm, second-degree burglary.

Anthony Ray Parker, second-degree burglary.

Jeffery Horace Fields, making a false statement, driving under the influence, violation of duty upon striking a fixed object.

# Yoakam plays for two hours, gives two encores

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For nearly two hours and two encore performances, Dwight Yoakam thrilled fans at Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, April 2.

The show featured oldies, goodies, and even a few new tunes from the Honky Tonk musician, from his 2015 album “Second Hand Heart,” as well as a several covers that sounded as good live and coming from Yoakam as they did on record from the original artists.

More than 1,700 people attended the concert, and Yoakam didn’t disappoint – he danced all night long in his Blackjack cowboy boots, seeming to only increase his energy as the night wore on.

Of course, those gathered knew they were in for a treat that evening.

“I’ve been a fan for a real long time, and I heard he was coming so I had to be here,” said Zachary Reece of Blue Ridge, who was seeing Yoakam for the first time in concert.

Reece attended the concert with his younger brother Seth and his mom and dad, Karen and Greg.

As for why he’s such a fan, Reece said that Yoakam was “kind of a throwback – he’s been doing it a long time, and he’s adapted pretty good. It’s hard to be this good for this long.”

Larry and Rebecca Broach drove two hours from Bostwick to see Yoakam in concert, and while Rebecca said she was a bigger fan than her husband Larry, Larry said he’d been enjoying Yoakam’s performances for years and years, of both his acting and his singing.

“The first time I ever saw him was when he was young, and he was on some talk show,” said Larry Broach. “He sang ‘Ring of Fire,’ and that was the best I’ve ever heard it in my life. I don’t know if he’s ever recorded it, but I saw him sing it and he put it in his style.”

Fortunately for Mr. Broach, Yoakam devoted several minutes to that particular song, covering Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire” for the enthusiastic crowd that did more than its



Blairsville’s own Shannon Carroll with Dwight Yoakam backstage before the show on Saturday, April 2

fair share of singing along that evening.

Yoakam performed countless tunes, among them “Please, Please Baby,” “Little Sister,” “Streets of Bakersfield,” for which he traded San Francisco for Georgia in the lyrics, “It Won’t Hurt,” and more.

Everyone got to their feet during “Guitars, Cadillacs,” chanting along with the “hillbilly music,” and after the show finished, Yoakam walked offstage – only to return a few minutes later for an encore performance.

“Thank you all again very much for making us feel so welcome here tonight and coming out to see us, and any who have ever come to see me before, thank you for doing so,” said Yoakam. “It’s been kind of a season of loss in the music business, as everybody I know is aware, a lot of folks have died in the last couple of months that were sudden deaths it seemed to a lot of us that were fans of their music.”

“One of them who passed was Glenn Frey, and that really got to me a lot, and I know it got to a lot of other Americans. So let’s sing this for Glenn tonight.”

Yoakam started in on “Peaceful Easy Feeling,” which kept everyone on their feet, and following the tribute to the recently departed Eagles

member, Yoakam and his band ended the concert with “I Feel Fine” by The Beatles.

Only, it wasn’t the end. After leaving stage, Yoakam returned for one more encore, one more song, and it was a doozy – “Suspicious Minds” by Elvis Presley.

The crowd knew that to be the end of the show, however, when Yoakam thanked everyone once again for coming, then tossed his guitar pick into the audience for one lucky fan.

Helping out that night were many members of the Towns County Lions Club, Towns County CLEA, and Towns County Sheriff’s Office deputies.

Lion Henry Harnage carried the club’s Ibanez guitar backstage just before Yoakam’s performance so that the Country Music icon could sign it.

Harnage can be found at the entrance to the Anderson Music Hall each show, selling raffle tickets for the chance to win a guitar that is signed by each performer to grace The Hall in a given year.

So far, the guitar has quite the list of names, including Ronnie Milsap, the entire crew from Casting Crowns, and now Dwight Yoakam.

Joining Harnage this show was his granddaughter, Aliyah, who is from Kennesaw and is on Spring Break.