

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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May 22, 2013

Mother Nature cooperates as UCHS bids farewell to largest class ever

By Charles Duncan
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One might expect a flock of butterflies on Graduation Night.

However, T Bentley looked a bit more relaxed on Friday evening than he ever did while being chased by opposing linebackers on the high school football field.

With a capacity crowd watching at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium, Bentley, the Air Force Academy-bound senior and Union County High School's Valedictorian for the Class of 2013, was all smiles as he delivered his Valedictory Address before the crowded stadium, the school board and his 160 fellow seniors.

Bentley spoke from a prepared list of things to remember as he and his fellow graduates hit the streets of life.



T Bentley

He began by asking his fellow classmates to embrace change.

"Tonight marks a big change for us - the end of high school and the beginning of our future," Bentley said.

"With this change comes great opportunity to move forward into territory that we didn't even know possible.

Embrace this change and be ready for whatever may come your way."

He followed by asking the seniors to fill their lives with adventure.

"Class of 2013, we only get one chance at this life, so let's do it right and do it big," he said.

Bentley said it's also best to spend time in service to others. He spoke of the Class of 2013 having the largest contingent of Eagle Scouts ever. He added well-meaning comments about Beta Club projects, 4-H projects, Key Club projects and numerous mission trips by a number of seniors.

"Many people in our class have placed serving others above themselves, and that is just another attribute that makes this class so unique," Bentley said.

Bentley would go on to tell his fellow classmates



The graduating Class of 2013, all 161, made Union County proud on Friday. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

to laugh often, do their best with the abilities given to them by God, marry someone smarter than themselves, to remember that life isn't fair, to celebrate their victories, and to remember where

while others may live in different states or even countries. "I challenge everyone with this tonight, no matter what. See Grads, Page 3A

Trailfest celebrates Reece and his work

Georgia's Poet Laureate, Reece historian, Dr. Bettie Sellers dies at 87



Bettie Sellers

By Charles Duncan
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Clouds threatened overhead on Saturday as the Byron Herbert Reece Society prepared for its first Southern Literary Trail Trailfest at the Reece Heritage Center and Farm along the Byron Herbert Reece Memorial Highway, better known to many as U.S. 129 South.

As anyone familiar with Hub Reece would know, he prayed for rain, and more often than not, welcomed it to soak the soil underneath his well-worn work boots.

On this day, prayers rained just the opposite as the rain dodged the Reece Heritage Center, much to the delight of the more than 100 people who had come to celebrate Reece and Trailfest.

The Rev. Keith Jones emceed the event, and offered a story or two. His mother, Ethelene Dyer Jones, told sto-



David Brose of the John Campbell Folk School performs mountain ballads on the banjo at the first Trailfest at the Reece Heritage Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ries of her acquaintance with Reece, including an interview with the Mountain Poet that was later published in the North Georgia News.

Ethelene Dyer Jones also broke the news of the death of Georgia's former Poet Laureate, Dr. Bettie Sellers, who taught at Young Harris College for 32 years.

Sellers, 87, was a noted author, historian and of course, poet. She was a leader in the Byron Herbert Reece Society, and she understood Reece better than anyone.

Like Reece before her, Dr. Sellers was a legend in her own time. She won an Emmy Award for her role in produc-

ing the film depicting Reece's life.

"Dr. Bettie Sellers was so engaging a presence that it will take us a long time to fully absorb the reality of her passing," said Dr. John Kay, president of the Reece Society.

Dr. Sellers authored several volumes of poetry and was well published in academic literary journals and anthologies. Her many awards include Poet of the Year by the American Pen Women, Governor's Award in the Humanities, Georgia Author of the Year in Poetry, and being named Poet Laureate of Georgia during the

See Trailfest, 2A

Divers recover Fla. man from Nottely

By Charles Duncan
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A Towns 61-year-old man from Green Acres, Fla. Saturday at 8:45 a.m., Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Michael Patrick Manning was pronounced dead at the scene, at 1485 Forrest Drive, Sheriff Mason said.

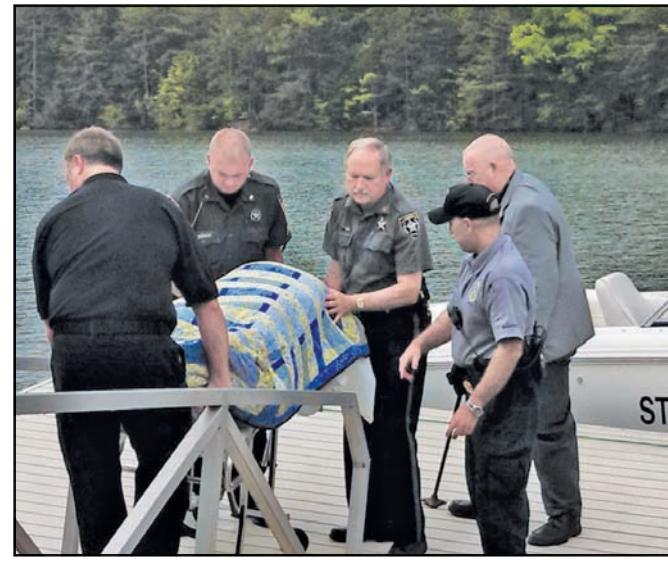
Manning, who was not familiar with the area, was looking for a home on Redbird Drive. He attempted to turn his burgundy Chevy Cruze around and became stuck in the driveway on Forrest Drive, Sheriff Mason said.

"He called his brother and told him he was stuck in gravel," Sheriff Mason said. "They got out and starting hunting for him. They couldn't find him, he wouldn't answer his phone either.

"They called the authorities," Sheriff Mason said. "The last contact was 10:30 p.m. Friday."

Union County sheriff's Sgt. Shawn Dyer was summoned to the area to find Manning and his vehicle.

Through the use of OnStar, Union County 911 was



Union County sheriff's Sgt. Josh Berry, and Sheriff Mack Mason help Union County Deputy Coroner Greg Adams bring Michael Patrick Manning's body ashore Saturday morning at Lake Nottely.

able to track Manning's Chevy Cruze to 1485 Forrest Drive, Sheriff Mason said.

At first, Sgt. Dyer was unable to locate the vehicle. But, while on the phone with OnStar, they pinpointed the vehicle to within 60 feet of Lake Nottely, Sheriff Mason said.

"Through our contact with OnStar, we discovered the gentleman had some medical issues," Sheriff Mason said. "Dyer found the car, and it was

stuck like Mr. Manning said it was. Mr. Manning had driven past the house on a steep side of the lake. He was backed in toward Lake Nottely."

As Sgt. Dyer scanned the area - he found the vehicle at 5:43 a.m. - he spotted a flashlight on the shoreline that was still burning, Sheriff Mason said.

"He looked in the water and saw Mr. Manning's hat,"

See Drowning 6A

Business Expo excels again

By Charles Duncan
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When Cathy Wheeler arrived at Union County Farmers Market on Saturday morning, the rain was not cooperating one bit.

However, Wheeler, president of the Tri-State Business Women, kept her fingers crossed and prayed that Mother Nature would hold back the waterworks for a few hours.

Her prayers were answered as the rains held back until more than 50 vendors were ready to pack it up at the end of a very successful day.

The Seventh Annual Tri-State Business Women's Expo went on as planned without a hitch.

"It was a big success," Wheeler said. "We had a little rain, so we didn't have the bodies that we would normally have, but everybody that came out were serious shoppers."

Tri-State Business Women are a not for profit organization of entrepreneur-



The Business Expo crowd was looking for bargains on Saturday morning at the Farmers Market. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ial women in Union and surrounding counties, who own, co-own, operate and/or accept full responsibility for a business and is or wants to be a positive force in the community.

Not one vendor left early on this overcast Saturday

morning. "We sold some items and picked up leaflets galore," Wheeler said. "We were a pretty happy bunch."

The Business Expo is an opportunity for entrepreneurial

See Business Expo, Page 2A

Woody Gap says so long to seniors

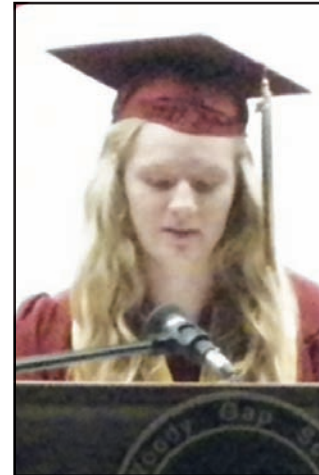
By Todd Forrester
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Woody Gap High School bid adieu to its four members of its Senior Class of 2013 on Saturday.

Haley Aponte, Staci Clark, Amber Gooch, and Alex Roberts each received numerous accolades on this important day in their lives.

Most notably, their diplomas, but they also absorbed some sound advice from State Sen. Steve Gooch, a candlelight service, and a standing ovation before the ceremony concluded.

However, the greatest



Amber Gooch

gift of the weekend may not have been bestowed to the graduating class, but to the community and the nation, as Union County School Superintendent Gary Steppe handed over four of Union County's finest and brightest over to the world and to adulthood.

While the number of students leaving Woody Gap may not be great, you can guarantee that greatness will follow them and their contributions to society will be immeasurable.

Aponte led the prayer, afterwards Roberts led the au-

See Gap Grads, Page 6A

Harkins brothers to be Grand Marshals

By Charles Duncan
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The Annual Memorial Day Parade, scheduled for Saturday at 10 a.m., will have a double feature as the parade's Grand Marshals.

Suches' own Clyde Harkins and I.T. Harkins are the honored duo this year, Union County Historical Society President Bud Akins announced on Monday.

The Harkins brothers come from an impressive military line - all six siblings served in the United States military.

In the 1940s, Ira and his brother Eldo were draft-



I.T. Harkins and his brother Clyde Harkins. Photo/Janice Boling

ed into the U.S. Army, with Clyde, Harley and Ralph Harkins joining the U.S. Navy afterward.

Three brothers saw

combat and they all made it through the war; Eldo, seriously wounded in the Philippines.

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Downtown Development Authority
Blairsville GEORGIA

Arts & Crafts Show
Sat., May 25 • 10am-5pm
Sun., May 26 • 10am-4pm

Historical Mock House located 1 block south of the square on Hwy. 129
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2013 Buy Local Weekend

EAT SHOP PLAY STAY
BLAIRSVILLE - UNION COUNTY

Thursday, June 13 - Saturday, June 15
See page 1B

RELAY FOR LIFE
American Cancer Society

Friday, May 31
Union County Farmers Market
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Memorial Day Parade
Sat., May 25 • 10 a.m.
"For God and Country, Support Our Troops"

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