

North Georgia News

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176 set to graduate from UCHS, WGHS, MACA and MEC

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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At 8 p.m. at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium, 133 graduates will bid farewell to their alma mater, Union County High School.

UCHS Principal Ed Rohrbaugh said he knows this is an exciting day for seniors.

"We hope your graduation from UCHS is the first of many major accomplishments you will have during your lifetime," Rohrbaugh said. "Your leadership has set a



Cameron Schuette
standard for the classes that follow, and your presence at Union County High School will be missed." Cameron Schuette, who also has a STAR Student award as part of her



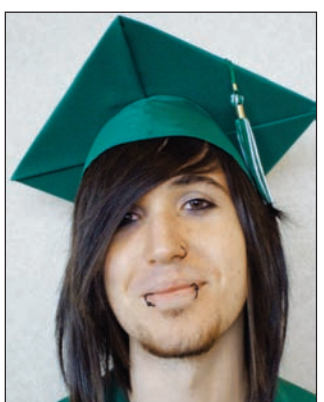
Hannah Mott
multi-talented education career, is the Valedictorian for the Class of 2012. The Salutatorian is Donald Jeffrey Ward.

Superintendent Gary Steppe praised the Senior



Jonathan Beck
Class for setting a high standard for future graduates.

"Your academic accomplishments have been many," Steppe said. "You have set a high bar for



Steffan Lucarelli
those who will follow you. You have brought honor and respect to yourselves, your families, your school and our community.

"You will be missed, but the world needs people

like you for the betterment of mankind," he said. "I wish each and every one of you great success in your future endeavors."

On Saturday, at 2 p.m. at the Woody Gap Gymnasium, the Class of 2012 for Woody Gap will walk the aisle.

Hannah Mott and Hannah Arbour are at the top of their class respectively. Mott is the 2012 Valedictorian and Arbour is the 2012 Salutatorian for Woody Gap.

Principal Jinjer Taylor

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Griggs sentenced to 10 years; must serve 320 days in state prison

By Charles Duncan
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The former Union County Deputy Tax Commissioner Joy Griggs will spend 320 days in the Georgia Women's Prison in Claxton for theft by taking and violation of Oath of a Public Officer, Union County Superior Court records show.

She will spend the remainder of her 10-year prison sentence handed down last week by Senior Circuit Judge Hugh Stone, on probation, Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said.

Griggs was accused of taking \$65,230.95 using 55 county checks made out to herself, and or to herself and her husband Tully Griggs between May 30, 2009 and June 1, 2010.

Joy Griggs entered a plea of guilty to counts 1 and 57 of the Union County Grand Jury 58-count indictment against her from April 2011, Langley said.

Last Tuesday, Joy Griggs appeared before Judge Stone in Union County Superior Court.



Joy Griggs

After hearing the proposed sentence by Langley, Judge Stone stared sternly at Joy Griggs and called her a thief. He agreed that the sentence proposed by the Enotah Circuit prosecutor was appropriate.

In addition to the probation and prison time, Joy Griggs also must pay a \$5,000 fine plus fees and Court costs totaling an additional \$1,440 for a total of \$6,440, Union County Superior Court records show.

Also, she must perform 96 hours of community service and give up her rights under the Fourth Amendment regard-

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Gunter, Stencil among finalists for judgeships

By Charles Duncan
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Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal has disclosed the short list of candidates to fill the unexpired terms of former Enotah Circuit judges David Barrett and Lynn Alderman.

Two of those candidates are very familiar with the Northeast Georgia Mountains.

Former Enotah Circuit District Attorney and current executive director of the State Prosecuting Attorney's Council, Stan Gunter made the short list.

Current City of Hiawassee City Manager and



Stan Gunter

local attorney Rick Stencil also made the short list.

Stencil lost a bid in 2006 to fill the vacancy of retired Superior Court Judge Hugh Stone. His opponent and

eventual replacement for Judge Stone - Lynn Alderman.

Also making the short list, White County attorney Stan Lawson, Lumpkin County attorney Raymond George and White County Magistrate Judge Joy Parks.

Of the three other finalists, Union County residents remember George, who lost a bid to become Enotah Circuit District Attorney to Incumbent Jeff Langley.

Gunter, whose father once presided over the Mountains bench, was unavailable for comment regarding this story.

Stencil, who also has served as City Attorney for the



Rick Stencil

city of Hiawassee, is humbled by the Governor's selection of him as a finalist for one of the Circuit's judgeships.

"I still have to let this See Judgeships, Page 3A

Relay For Life raises \$66,000-plus

By Janice Boling
Staff Writer
North Georgia News

Relay For Life had a whole different feel this year.

Maybe it was the new venue at the Union County Farmers Market, maybe it was the memories of last year's windstorm, maybe it was the group of volunteers, and maybe it was a mixture of weather, smiling faces, and generous hearts.

Whatever the reasons, Relay For Life touched people's hearts like never before in the 18 years that Union County has hosted the event. The tagline this year was, "Staying Strong in the Fight Against Cancer."

Staying strong is key for survivors, family members,

and friends.

"It was another incredible year," said event co-organizer Sue Upchurch. "It was a wonderful community event because we had tons of children having fun playing games, we had families, churches and groups coming together to make a difference, even if just for one night."

The goal for Union County's Relay event was \$81,000. In down trodden economic times, the community came together to raise more than \$66,000 for the cause.

"It was incredible," Upchurch said. "We had people literally bringing jugs of pennies to the event to chip in. Folks nickel and dined it and did the best they could."

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The 2012 Relay For Life rally bowled over the Union County community. Rain didn't dampen local spirits. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Sen. Gooch, Rep. Allison speak to CBA

By Todd Forrest
Staff Writer
North Georgia News

Prison reform, a balanced budget and getting Georgians back to work were the topics of

discussion at the Conservative Business Alliance's monthly meeting at the Blairsville Civic Center last week.

Two men who know the inside story on these topics, See CBA, Page 6A



District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison speaks to Conservative Business Alliance last week in Blairsville. Photo/Todd Forrest

Sheriff, MEC team up for Second Chance

By Charles Duncan
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Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens knows the benefits of an education.

And with the help of the Mountain Education Center High School, he's making sure inmates 17 to 21 years of age do to.

Sheriff Stephens and MEC have teamed up for a pilot program called Second Chance, a program that allows inmates ages 17 to 21 to earn their high school diploma while serving time in the County



Sheriff's Sgt. Susan Rhodes

Detention Center.

He put Staff Sgt. Susan Rhodes in charge of the program. Working with MEC Assistant Superintendent Larry Shook, she took it and ran with it.

"Second Chance has developed as a partnership with the Mountain Education Center and the Union County Sheriff's Office," Shook said. "This came about with a need to help the kids in the 17- to 21-year-old age group that get in jail and don't have a high school diploma."

"We have a wonderful success story with the Union County Sheriff's Office," Shook said. "We have two students who have earned their diplomas and will walk at the MEC graduation ceremony on May 31st."

"We're trying to make a positive difference in their lives by giving them an opportunity if they fit the criteria to earn high school credit," Shook said. "They can finish and graduate while they're incarcerated."

Sgt. Rhodes has taken to the program like a mother over-seeing her children's education.

"The students have finished the state test, they passed and I've never seen two young people more excited in my life," Sgt. Rhodes said. "One

See Second Chance, Page 6A

Larry Trulove



Candidate for Tax Commissioner See page 2A

Deaver, Sosebee head to Nationals



Colton Deaver and Trent Sosebee, Union County Skills USA team members are headed to Nationals after taking top honors in state competition for welding sculpture and Precision Machining Technology respectively.

Qualifying for local offices begins Wednesday

By Charles Duncan
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Qualifying for 10 local posts begins on Wednesday in Union County.

Local offices up for election this year include two seats on the Union County School Board of Education, Union County sheriff, Union County sole commissioner, Union County tax commissioner, Union County coroner, Union County surveyor, and Union County Clerk of Court

of Superior Court.

Also on the list, Chief Magistrate Judge and Probate Judge, both of which will be non-partisan elections this year, with elections being held on July 31st. Those candidates must qualify with the Union County Election Board.

The posts, previously bipartisan, were changed to non-partisan posts by the Georgia General Assembly with support from State Rep. Stephen Allison and State Sen. Steve Gooch. Candidates seeking office

either as a Democrat or Republican in the July 31st Primary must qualify with the local political party.

Both Partisan Primary Elections will be held on July 31st.

Seats in Georgia House District 8 and in District 51 State Senate are up for grabs. Also, qualifying will be held for the vacant 9th Congressional District seat.

Qualifying takes place on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Candidates who have al-

ready declared their intentions for the July 31 Primary include Republican Lee Knight and Democrat Larry Trulove for Tax Commissioner, Republican Charles Rich for Sole Commissioner, and Republican Mack Mason for Union County Sheriff.

The incumbents holding the county offices also are expected to qualify for reelection.

For details on registering to vote in the July 31 Primary call the Voter's Registrar's Office at (706) 439-6016.

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Spring Arts & Crafts Fest

By Janice Boling
Staff Writer
North Georgia News

The 5th annual Spring Arts & Crafts Festival will be held on Saturday, May 26th and Sunday, May 27th in downtown Blairsville. Over 50 talented artists and craftsmen have been accepted as vendors and promise to bring a variety of wares

to Union County for the event.

Vendors set up their exhibits around the square for two days of arts, crafts, demonstrations, entertainment, and good food. Everything from paintings and jewelry to See Spring Fest, Page 2A

Memorial Day Parade

The 2012 Memorial Day Parade will be held on Saturday at 10 a.m. in Downtown Blairsville.

The parade route will wind around the Historic Downtown Courthouse and conclude at the Union County War Memorial Park. The guest speaker for the

2012 event will be Retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major Arthur Joseph McCann III.

McCann served in the Army Airborne ranger and infantry units for more than 27 years. For more details about the event, including specifics turn to Page 9A.