

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Flags raised at Major Davenport Veterans Center

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Seven recently installed flags at the Maj. Davenport Veterans Center received a warm dedication on Friday, July 29, and now, eight flags fly high above the center each morning.

Veterans, officials, family and friends gathered from Blairsville and the surrounding areas to take part in the mesmerizing ceremony, meant not only to dedicate the flags, but to remember those veterans that each flag represents, and all of the sacrifices that have been made in the name of freedom.

"Union County and all of the North Georgia mountain area has a very large influence of veterans and veterans' families that live up here, as well as across the state

of Georgia," said Vietnam Veteran Ron Schott. "We felt that as a collective group of veterans' organizations, it was only fitting and proper that we dress up the front of the building."

"We wanted to give recognition to each of the branches of service that provided protection and recognition to the United States of America. That is why we've decided to bring about these flags, and the American flag."

The first of the eight flags to rise into the air was the black POW flag.

Vietnam Veteran and Rev. Bill Honaker read aloud a poem to remember those Prisoners of War who are still missing, those who never found their way home, and those who did come home, but who will carry the memories of captivity for the rest of

their lives.

The Union County High School Band led a drum roll before the raising of each flag, followed by the anthem of each specific branch. The U.S. Coast Guard flag followed the POW flag, which was in turn followed by flags of the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Army and the Georgia State flag.

As the wind blew the seven flags high above the crowd, a silence swept across the dozens of people gathered for the event. Hands raised in salute or lifted solemnly to cover hearts, and the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the American flag found her place among the rest, blowing in the breeze.

The North Georgia Honor

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Veterans and the North Georgia Honor Guard salute newly installed flags at the Maj. Davenport Veterans Center during the Flagpole Dedication Ceremony on Friday, July 29. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Open house Thursday, school starts Friday

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

After nearly three months of summer vacation, many returning students are apt to feel waylaid by the start of another school year set to begin on Friday, Aug. 5.

Administrators with the Union County School System, however, seem more excited than ever to get back to hitting the books for the 2016-2017 school year.

"We're ready and we're excited," said Union County High School Principal John Hill. "We have generated schedules for over 870 high school students, so we've grown again this summer, very excited about that."

"We've had a lot of great kids move into the area to school here, and we're



Last year, hundreds of school children flocked to buses at the end of the first school day.

just really excited about that, and for new challenges and continually improving on what

we've been doing. The school made a lot of gains last year.

"I believe we did a lot of

things right, and we're going to continue to improve that

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## School millage rate to remain the same



Board members Keith Potts and Cindy Byers share a word at the special called Board of Education meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Board of Education met the morning of Wednesday, July 27, to propose the school system's millage rate ahead of property tax bills this fall.

Because the rate will be remaining the same this year

as the last – 11.787 mills – the board will be setting the rate in the August board meeting, which will be Tuesday, August 16, at 7 p.m.

As to the meeting held a special called meeting to propose the millage rate, Superintendent Dr. Fred

See *Millage*, Page 2A

## Union youth takes third in national competition

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

On a recent trip to Fort Carson, Colorado, 16-year-old Patrick Colwell, did-Union County proud – he placed third in the J2 Division of Double Trap during the 2016 National Junior Olympic Championships.

And he did it having never even shot Double Trap before qualifying.

Colwell was able to perform so well for several reasons: his natural abilities;

all of the practice he's gotten shooting with the Union County 4-H Shotgun Team; some timely advice the day before the competition from a couple of new friends he'd made in Colorado; and nightly phone calls from his USA Shooting coach back home in Georgia.

"The international is all about speed and eye/hand coordination, and that target acquisition," Coach Mark McGillis remembers telling Colwell. "It's not the green leafy backdrop we have in

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USA Shooting Coach Mark McGillis with Patrick Colwell, who finished third in Double Trap during the National Junior Olympic Championships

## GMRC executive director Danny Lewis retires

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Danny Lewis presided over his last monthly meeting as executive director of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission on Thursday, July 28, inside the Union County Community Center Ballroom.

While the purpose of the meeting was to discuss business, finances and upcoming projects, the primary focus shifted to honoring Lewis, who announced his retirement earlier in July to spend quality time with family after working for more than

four decades in government.

Heather Feldman presented a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted Lewis' achievements throughout his career with GMRC. Feldman will be the stand-in executive director for GMRC pending further discussion on who will permanently fill the position.

"Thank you, on behalf of all staff of GMRC, for your leadership and your support and your guidance," said Feldman. "You've propelled this organization to new heights, and for that we thank

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Danny Lewis has retired as the executive director of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, embracing old friend and former GMRC chairman Sen. Steve Gooch

## UCSO working hard to combat methamphetamine

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office have been hitting the streets hard and heavy in their attempts to keep meth out of the county.

"The sad thing is, we lock 10 up for distribution of methamphetamine – within three months, 10 more have taken their place," said UCSO

Detective Sgt. Tyler Miller.

Added UCSO Capt. Chad Deyton: "And it's not necessarily just Union County that's overrun with it – everywhere is getting beat up by it."

On Tuesday, July 26, UCSO investigators arrested the following individuals connected with a recently established meth ring originating out of the Atlanta area, according to the

sheriff's office:

Jeremy Lee of Young Harris, five counts distribution of methamphetamine, possession of controlled substance with intent to distribute, two counts possession of controlled substance, use of communications in committing or facilitating a drug transaction.

Jacob Sawyer of Lawrenceville, possession of

controlled substance with intent to distribute, possession of marijuana less than 1 ounce.

Jacob Lee, three counts distribution of methamphetamine, one count fleeing or attempting to elude police, two counts obstructing or hindering law enforcement officers.

Jason Stepp, distribution of methamphetamine, See *Meth*, Page 4A

## Gurtler will be next District 8 State Representative

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

After the Tuesday, July 26, Republican Primary Runoff Election for the State House of Representatives District 8 seat, Matt Gurtler is on his way to the Capitol Building in Atlanta come January, having taken 60.9 percent of the vote over Republican challenger Kent Woerner.

Gurtler gained 3,476 votes district-wide, while Woerner tallied 2,236.

In the contest between the two Rabun County residents, the race in Union



Matt Gurtler County was no contest, with Gurtler garnering 75 percent of

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## "Welcome To The Adolescent Brain" at Fine Arts Center

North Georgia News  
News Special

Internationally renowned speaker, Michael Nerney will be returning to Blairsville on Tuesday, August 9th to present "Welcome to the Adolescent Brain". This informative and entertaining presentation features the latest research on the structure and neuro-chemistry of the brain of the tweens and teens, exploring the psychological and social motivations behind their thinking. This event is open to the public and starts at 6:30 PM at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Have you ever wondered why kids act the way they do? Could you help them make better decisions for their future? Can you help them manage stress? This evening forum will help parents ex-



Michael Nerney explore the underlying reasons for risky adolescent behavior and what parents can learn from this information to help them build communication and trust with their child, setting boundaries and consequences. See *Nerney*, Page 2A

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**PANTHERS**  
Football  
Scrimmage Game  
Friday Night!

Friday,  
August 5th  
Senior Center  
Pavilion and  
the Dog Park  
will have special hours  
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**GEORGIA MOUNTAIN FAIR**  
Ronnie Milsap  
in Concert  
Thursday, August 11

Attention  
Blairsville Water  
Customers  
be prepared for an outage  
Thursday, August 4th,  
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