

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Cummings, Perren and Williams on EMC Board

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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Hiawassee – The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC membership outdid itself at the Annual Meeting in 2015.

In 2014, 3,657 members cast ballots, or 9 percent of the membership.

In 2015, 9,045 members cast ballots, or 22.14 percent of the membership.

The overwhelming winners were Roy Perren, Mickey Cummings and Larry Williams as the makeup of the board now includes six people elected that petitioned to be on the EMC Board of Directors ballot.

Perren defeated Incumbent Towns Director Jerry Nichols 4,186 to 2,412, for a 51.7 percent vote of confidence.

Cummings defeated fellow Union County petition



EMC Board Member Charles Jenkins welcomes three new faces to the Board of Directors on Saturday.

candidates Patrick Malone, and Charles Rich. Cummings received 3,983 votes to 1,513 for Malone, and 1,337 for Rich. Cummings received 47.1 percent of the membership vote.

Williams, who ran

unopposed, won the Fannin County director's post with 62.3 percent of the membership ballot for him.

The membership also imposed term limits on its board of directors. The membership overwhelmingly passed an

amendment to the EMC's by-laws limiting the board members to three, three-year terms.

After the election results were announced, Perren was humbled by the show of support from the membership.

"I'm overwhelmed," he said. "I pledge to do my best to serve the membership, I mean everyone, even if they didn't vote for me, I'll do my best for them."

"I think people are ready to put the past behind them," Perren said. "I think the membership is ready to move forward. I think the vote today was about transparency, I think it was about opening the meeting process. I support both measures."

Cummings echoed Perren's sentiments.

"We need to get down to business," Cummings said.

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Mancuso commits to Spiders

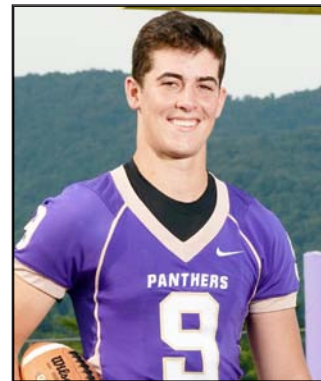
By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County star quarterback Joseph Mancuso gave a verbal commitment to Richmond University in Virginia, earlier this month.

The UCHS senior fell in love with the University after attending football camps at Richmond over the summer, the Spiders then hit the recruiting trail hard, targeting the Panthers' signal caller.

When Richmond's Head Football Coach Danny Rocco proved his program's faith in Union County's Mr. Football by offering him a full scholarship, Mancuso jumped at the opportunity.

"It just seemed right so I committed there," Mancuso said. "I went to some other camps but no one looked at



Joseph Mancuso

me very hard. Richmond was the only school that showed an interest in me."

While academics, the campus and the coaches were selling points, one of the most important pitches that was used to lure Mancuso to The Commonwealth of Vir-

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Culpepper Years Reunion draws a crowd



By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In what felt more like family reunion, Larry and Marie Culpepper welcomed

past students to the Union County Panther Band Culpepper Years Reunion at the First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall on Saturday, Sept. 12.

Trading stories and

embraces, the reunited bandmates, many of whom hadn't laid eyes on one another in four decades, reveled in the celebration that evening.

Those on the reunion

planning committee had prepared media for the event, and everyone in attendance was treated to a DVD viewing of

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Vestal accepts plea deal; gets life in prison without parole

By Charles Duncan
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Cody Lee Vestal will spend the rest of his life behind bars.

The 35-year-old Union County man accepted a plea agreement Monday morning in Union County Superior Court.

A Union County Grand Jury recently handed up a nine-count indictment against Vestal on charges that included two counts malice murder and two counts felony murder, Union County Superior Court records show.

Vestal also faced other charges that included two counts aggravated assault in violation of Georgia's Family Violence Act, two counts aggravated assault, and armed robbery, the latter for taking money from one of his victims at gunpoint.

The sentence brings closure in the March 14 shooting deaths of Vestal's mother, Marilyn Laughlin, and her boyfriend Tony Poat, court re-



Cody Lee Vestal

records show.

A plea for help from Vestal at Rhea Medical Center in Dayton, Tenn., led to the discovery of the bodies of his mother and her boyfriend on Georgia 325 in Union County.

Vestal confessed to Union County Sheriff's Detective Tom Mangifesta that he murdered his mother, 60-year-old Marilyn Laughlin, and her 52-year-old live-in boyfriend Tony Poat, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

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Fine Arts Center is all the rage

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The community turned out in force to support the schoolchildren during the Grand Public Opening of the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Thursday, Sept. 10, filling close to every seat in the nearly 1,000-capacity theater auditorium.

As a reward for their attendance, the students of Union County High School band, chorus and drama, along with Woody Gap School, wowed audiences with almost two hours of musical and acting performances.

As the program entitled



The Fine Arts Center was truly a hit on Thursday at Open House.

"Unlocking the Talent" began, the captivated crowd got to glimpse a spectrum of the new fine arts center's abilities and student talents.

UCHS student Katie Dyer opened the show with her singular rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," receiving a standing ovation for her moving performance.

Union County Superintendent of Schools Gary Steppe introduced from the stage key members responsible for bringing the fine arts center to life, including the Union County Board of Education, the CEO of Southern

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Dohnert admits killing Siggers

By Charles Duncan
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Eric Bruce Dohnert doesn't remember a whole lot about the night of Aug. 24.

He does recall that he and Randy Ray Siggers were drinking beer, and smoked a little marijuana.

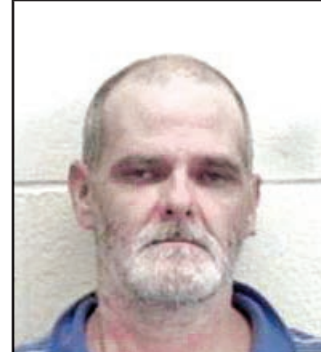
He remembers going to bed and passing out.

It's when he awoke the next morning that he realized the gravity of his actions the night before.

Beside his bed was a bloody "billy club" and in the living room on the couch lay a bloodied Siggers, his body still and lifeless.

That's how Union County Detective Sgt. Andrew Hammond recalls his interview with Dohnert in the Colquitt County Jail.

Dohnert, Sgt. Ham-



Eric Bruce Dohnert

mond said, began to cry when he entered an interview room where Hammond and Georgia Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Ben Couch were waiting.

"He knew why we were there," Sgt. Hammond said. "He didn't hold back, he told us pretty much everything

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Station 2 open house a hit with community

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Although it's not quite fall, Union County Fire Station No. 2 hosted its open house last Saturday afternoon under blue skies and perfect 'fall' weather on Jones Creek Rd.

Beginning at 11 a.m. the station was open for business with hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, the fire engines on display, and two large bouncy houses that were extremely



popular with the youngsters.

"(These events) are a way to thank the community for supporting us through our letter drive each year," said Union County Fire Department Lieutenant David Burnette. "It's what we do with the money. We bought (fire) trucks last September with the donations from the community. They support us, so this is what we do; we buy good apparatuses to protect

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Union County No. 6 in state in donations

North Georgia News
News Special

Shayne Goddard, division director for the Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes Foundation recently presented a "Top Ten Club" Award to Union County Sheriff Mack Mason.

The award was given in recognition for Union County placing sixth in the State for highest donations per capita to the GSA Youth Homes for 2014/2015.

"I accepted this award on behalf of the citizens of Union County who gave their hard earned money to this most worthwhile foundation," Sheriff Mason said. "I hope that the hard work and dedication of this office and its of-



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

ficers had a positive influence on those who donated."

The Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes was established to give our state's most at-risk children the love, safety, and stability needed to become mature, successful adults.

During the late 1950s, Georgia

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Exit Ramp for Haralson Project begins

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Construction began late last week on the Haralson Development Project behind Blairsville City Hall after surveyors marked off land to be protected as wetlands.

Silt fencing has been erected on the site, and construction crews with Colwell Construction Company have

begun moving dirt and removing trees that are in the path of the planned off ramp that will connect Highway 515 in a new four-way stop at Young Harris Street on Pat Haralson Memorial Drive near the Blairsville Square.

Darren Harper, program manager of the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority, urges patience over traffic concerns caused by

construction, which shouldn't really begin to impact traffic flow for another few months into the 120-day project.

"It's early yet," said Harper on expected traffic delays. "Those shouldn't happen until well into the project. It's 120 days - I would say probably at the 90 day mark. And again, it's potential. With any construction project, you don't know what's going to have to

happen and when it's going to have to happen until you get up on it.

"Right now, they're staying within the confines of the property so as not to disrupt traffic, but the biggest challenge will be keeping the parking that we currently have from being impacted. The last thing we want is

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VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

THE WALL IS COMING!

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Department of Driver Services will be changing their hours

See page 8A

Blairsville SARGHUM FESTIVAL

2nd and 3rd Weekends in October at Meeks Park

SPORTS FOOTBALL

Fri Sept 18 @ Fannin 7:30 PM
JV FOOTBALL
Thurs Sept 17 vs. Lumpkin 5:30 pm
CROSS COUNTRY
Tues. Sept. 15 @ West Hall 4:30 PM
Wed Sept 16 @ Murphy 4:30 PM