

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Enotah CASA begins new tradition in Blairsville

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Enotah CASA presented a special ceremony in Downtown Blairsville on the evening of Saturday, Dec. 5 - the Lighting of the Luminaries.

The ceremony followed the Union County Historical Society's lighting of the Christmas tree at the Historic Union County Courthouse, and volunteers with Enotah CASA lit more than 300 luminaries in and around the Downtown Square.

More than 100 people gathered to witness the ceremony, which Enotah CASA volunteers and supporters hope to make an annual tradition.

Just before the ceremony began, the Smokie Mountain Melodies sang a variety of well-received Christmas carols



to warm the hearts of those gathered in the 45 degree night air.

"Enotah CASA, also known as Enotah Court-Appointed Special Advocates, is a nonprofit organization," said Linda D'Angelo, executive director of Enotah CASA,

following words of welcome. "Our mission is a safe and permanent home, as quickly as possible, for the abused and neglected children in foster care. A Court-Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, is a trained community volunteer appointed by the court to advocate for these abused, neglected children.

"They work in the Juvenile Dependency Court proceedings, and they try to represent the best interest of the child. We cover the Enotah Juvenile Circuit, which is actually four counties - Union, Towns, Lumpkin and White. Last year, across our circuit, we served over 205 neglected and abused children, and our volunteers contributed much. Their devotion gave over 5,000 hours to these children, and they drove over 53,000 miles to visit, be with them, and



placed in court." The Historic Courthouse were cardboard cutouts of children

meant to represent the children helped by Enotah CASA. "Of the 205 children that I mentioned earlier, 10 were

reunited with their parents, eight were placed with a

See CASA, Page 2A

Bob Head to be honored by City Council

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The new off ramp of the Haralson Development Project will be called Bob Head Street, in honor of the hard work and dedication of Bob Head in the community over the past many years.

Blairsville City Council voted in its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 1, to name the street based on a recommendation from the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority.

"Bob Head has done a lot for the city, for the community," said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley. "He served on the United Community Bank's board for, I don't know how many years, but many, many years, back before it was United Community Bank, when it was

just Union County Bank.

"He was a board member for the bank, and since he's no longer a board member, this is just one way of kind of honoring him. He's had a business here in town, and his daddy had a business prior to him here in town. So we just saw that it was fitting to honor him - it's the least that we can do to name a street after him, so that's what we want to do."

Head also serves on the DDA board, and his business, Head Westgate Corporation, has long served the community's construction needs.

Also in the meeting, Rev. Bill Honaker led the invocation, which was the second invocation since the council adopted a policy regarding holding an invocation at council meetings.

Local radio personality



Carol and Bob Head

Pat Malone, for the second time in a row, led those gathered in the Pledge of Allegiance.

City council approved various requests from

department heads in the way of maintenance and upkeep, and DDA Program Manager Darren Harper informed

See City Council, Page 3A

Hilda Thomason a Hall of Famer

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Hilda Thomason became a member of the Atlanta Country Music Hall of Fame during its 34th Annual Awards Celebration on Saturday, Nov. 28.

"It's an honor to be inducted," said Thomason, who has been general manager of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds since 1995, but has served in one capacity or another for nearly 35 years. "I feel that I have worked for it, and it's nice to have this honor.

"But it also is a very nice honor for the Georgia Mountain Fair, because onstage, several of the different musicians that were inducted that night - I knew a lot of them, but some of them I didn't know - they got up on the stage and gave the Georgia Mountain Fair a lot of recognition as they



Hilda Thomason will be making her speeches, because they had played here at the Fairgrounds."

Thomason received her nomination back in August from longtime friend Gary Hammond of the band Little

See Thomason, Page 2A

Hope and healing happen in drug court

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The North Enotah Drug Accountability Court held its second ever graduation ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 3, to honor six participants who completed the rigorous two-year program.

"This is a life transformation," said Barbara Honaker, drug court coordinator for North Enotah. "Drug court changes lives and saves lives, and it saves families. That's what our intention is, to help people help themselves."

During the ceremony, each graduating participant was called up to receive a certificate of completion, which was signed by Superior Court Judge Stanley Gunter, who then gave each graduate the certificate and the pen with which he signed that certificate.

Graduates also received a Drug Court Graduation Coin



Superior Court Judge Stanley Gunter, with Barbara Honaker

meant to be carried in the pocket each and every day, the significance of which was explained by Honaker.

"The graduated coin medallion is a carryover from the sobriety coins, and believe me, that is the one time I see the biggest smiles on our participants' faces, when they come in and they have reached a step in their sobriety," said

Honaker. "It's so exciting - it's probably one of the most exciting things that I get to see them participate in as they go through drug court. But it's a lot of fun for me to see those smiles.

"The coin itself doesn't help our participants stay clean. But as a participant who receives the coin for the payment of the significant

periods of time because of sobriety, the coins give a sense of pride and reward for staying clean as long as they have. It acts as a motivator for the participant to continue. If a person should feel the desire to relapse, all he has to do is to look at the coin, and to just remember all of the progress that's been made up to this point."

As participants went forward to receive their certificates, pens and coins, each said a few words to those who had assembled to witness the major occasion in the transformed lives of each of the graduates.

All graduates expressed appreciation for those who supported them throughout the accountability program, including the drug court team, as well as their family, friends, and new friends made within the program itself.

Also expressing

See Court, Page 2A

Local business donates to Shop With a Cop



Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carrol accepts donation from, L-R, Lisa Baxter, Rebecca King and Teresa Lockaby of Corridor Mortgage Group

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Corridor Mortgage Group of Blairsville made two \$1,000 donations last

week to Shop With a Cop programs, one to the Blairsville Police Department and one to the Hiwassee Police

See Shop with a Cop, Page 3A

UCSO Give-A-Gift continues to receive donations



By Shawn Jarrard
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The Blairsville Cruisers and students from North Georgia Technical College stopped by the Union County Sheriff's Office last week to drop off some very special

donations. On behalf of the Blairsville Cruisers, Club President Pete Barley, Vice President Charlie Brown and member John Fusco delivered a check for \$2,500 to benefit the Sheriff's Give-A-Gift

See Give a Gift, Page 3A

Christmas parade brings holiday cheer to Downtown Blairsville

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville kicked off the Christmas season last weekend with the annual Christmas Parade and tree lighting ceremony sponsored by the Union County Historical Society.

Earlier that Saturday, Dec. 5, Santa Claus made an appearance at the Old Union County Courthouse to take requests from the local youngsters before then taking part in the parade later in the day.

The parade began to roll through town just after 4 p.m.,



featuring live entertainment from The King, Elvis Presley, who performed "Go Tell It

On the Mountain" and other Christmas hits on the back of a flatbed trailer that followed Blairsville Police Assistant

Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter, who led the way.

The stars of the hit Disney movie Frozen followed behind Elvis, as Elsa and her younger sister Anna, both accompanied by Olaf the Snowman, waved and tossed candy to their adoring fans, young and old.

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris rode shotgun during the parade so their hands would be free to wave to the crowd, and more importantly, to toss out candy to future voters.

Several churches, local businesses, and the Boy

See Parade, Page 15A

Vol. 106 No. 50 Inside

2 Sections, 22 Pages

Weather

Thurs: Cloudy Hi 59 Lo 44

Fri: Rain Hi 63 Lo 51

Sat: Cloudy Hi 66 Lo 52

Arrests	8A
Church	9A
Classifieds	3B
Opinion	4A
Legals	5B
Obits	11A
Sports	12A

Vogel Tree Lighting Program Dec. 12 begins at 4 PM

See page 7A

Blairsville Cruisers Christmas Party Fri. Dec 11 6 PM Steve's Steakhouse

See page 8A

Three Dog Night coming to Hiwassee

See page 1B

SPORTS WRESTLING

Fri. Dec 11 @ Towns 4:30 PM

Sat. Dec 12 @ Rabun Gap 9 AM

BASKETBALL

Tues. Dec 8 @ Lakeview 6 & 7:30 PM

Fri. Dec. 11 @ Towns 7 & 8:30 PM