

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

December 19, 2012

## Merry Christmas!

### County offers \$1,000 reward for road sign thefts

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

If you know who stole 20 road signs in the Stoke Rock community, you could soon be \$1,000 richer.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said the Christmas Spirit when it comes to catching a thief, or thieves.

In what is becoming an increasing problem in North-east Georgia communities, road sign thefts are on the rise.

It's happened in Rabun and Towns counties with



**Lamar Paris**  
thousands worth of county road signs being swiped. Now, Union County signs are

the target of thieves. "They can't be stealing them for metal value," Union County sheriff's spokesman C.J. Worden said. "Nowadays, most of the road signs are fiber glass."

"It may not be anyone local stealing the signs," Worden said. "There have been several incidents of sign thefts in Rabun and Towns counties."

In Rabun County, a handful of varsity football players were sentenced to community service and \$300 fines for their part in stealing signs in that county.

They also were allowed to continue playing varsity

football. No suspensions were handed down by the school, according to media accounts of the incident.

In Towns County, sheriff's deputies recovered 35 of 41 stolen road signs in a field, Towns authorities have said.

Still, the thefts in Union or any county could end up costing someone their life, Commissioner Paris said.

"Those stealing the signs may not realize that the very signs they steal may mean that the Sheriff's Office, Fire Department or ambulance being delayed by as

See Signs, Page 6A

### City to open bids for tree-clearing at airport

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley will open sealed bids for clearing trees for the approach to Runway 8 at the Blairsville Municipal Airport at 11 a.m. on Wednesday.

The sealed quotes for the construction of improvements to Blairsville Municipal Airport include obstruction clearing for the approach to



**Jim Conley**

### Suches achieves national recognition for Village Post Office

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Suches - The tiny hamlet at the intersection of Georgia 180 and Georgia 60 has received national recognition.

Wolf Pen Gap Country Store has become part of the U.S. Postal Service, recognized as the first Village Post Office in the United States.

The hours at the Historic Suches Post Office are being trimmed to 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. beginning in 2013, part of a national cost-saving cut-back program being implemented nationwide in small rural communities.

Angie Ross, marketing manager from the Atlanta District of the U.S. Postal Service, said Wolf Pen Gap Country Store is the very first Village Post Office nationwide.

"The Gooch family has put a lot of hard work into this store," Ross said. "We're thrilled to have the opportunity to put a village post office here. It's a win-win situation."

In July 2011, the Postal Service announced the concept for the village post office where it related to convenient access to products



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris buys the first book of stamps from store owner Doug Gooch at the nation's first Village Post Office, Wolf Pen Gap Country Store. Photo/Charles Duncan

and services in rural areas across the nation, Ross said. "Many of you know that in early 2013, which is going to be late January, the Suches Post Office hours are going to change," Ross said. "Those hours are going to be 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday. "In October, we had a community meeting in Suches and those hours were determined by the feedback we got from

the community," Ross said. "We're here to open this Village Post Office to supplement the needs of this community by providing additional options such as stamps, picking up postal supplies and mailing options. You can mail at the Post Office or you can mail here." Wolf Pen Gap Country Store also offers extended hours for customers, the store is open from 7:30 a.m. to 7

p.m. Monday through Friday and 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Ross said. "It's our plan for the concept to continue to grow around the country," Ross said. "We can provide customers nationwide with the opportunity to do business with us. "It is our plan for this Village Post Office to be here for many years to come." Ross said. The concept is designed to of-

fer postal services in communities that don't have a post office or, hours at the local post office have been tightened to meet budgetary constraints. The letter is the case in Suches. Although Store Owner Doug Gooch isn't the Postmaster, he was raised in the Suches community and his family history included the town's Postmaster. "My grandfather was postmaster of Sarah Post Office, just up the road here," Gooch said. "He had a coun-

try store and back in the back he had a little post office. "As a child, I remember helping him post mark mail and packages with the old rubber stamp," he said. "My cousin Lloyd Gooch was postmaster at Suches Post Office for many years. "I remember going there as a teenager and picking up love letters from my wife Nancy

See Village, Page 3A



The Gooch Family was humbled to become a bigger part of the Suches Community. The store is the first Village Post Office in the nation. Photo/Charles Duncan

### Twenty kids go shopping with a Cruiser

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

For two consecutive years, a handful of Union County Middle School students have witnessed the Christmas miracle of giving - first-hand.

Each student received a \$250 cash gift from the Blairsville Cruisers and went Christmas shopping for themselves at Walmart.

Only, these children didn't shop for just themselves, they shopped for their parents, siblings and grandparents.

It's easy to see that their idea that it is better to give than receive.

"We even had one young girl whose friend was short on having enough money for a present for her folks," said Cruiser Wayne Tanner. "The first young girl had money left over, she wanted to give the extra money to her friend so she could buy that gift."

"It warms your heart to see these young kids taking care of each other," Tanner said.

The Cruisers took 20 children shopping in 2012, up seven from 13 shoppers in 2011.

Tanner said it's



The Children Kids were all smiles last week at Walmart. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

the Cruisers goal to take more children each year. "We've been blessed by this community," he said. "I don't want to leave anyone out. Walmart's been real good to us. So's Subway and O'Reilly's Auto Parts in town. A lot of folks have contributed to this cause."

What the Cruisers do is sort of like Shopping With a Cop, and Give-a-Gift Christmas, only it's a whole separate deal.

It's the Cruisers way of giving back to the community. Of course, it's just one way they give back.

They're also a major

contributor to Shop With a Cop, and Give-a-Gift Christmas.

When the dust is settled, it's likely that they've handed out almost \$20,000 each year in Union County.

If you see a bright red convertible with 400 Reindeer Power, you can bet there is a Cruiser at the wheel.

They also help families in need. They've handed out several hundred dollars to families with sick children at home and families in dire need in this cash-strapped economy.

See Shop, Page 3A

### Historical Society honors John Kay

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Historical Society held its final meeting of the year at The Brackett Room at United Community Park last week.

The guest of honor for the evening was John Kay, who was given an award for the Preservationist of the Year for his significant contributions at the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

"This is a well deserved

See Kay, Page 2A



Historical Society President Bud Akins, left, presents Preservationist of the Year honors to The Reece Society's John Kay. Photo/Todd Forrest

### Mock Trial team in action

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County High School's Mock Trial Team recently held a two-week Mock Trial event at the Historic Union County Courthouse.

As a part of Union County High School's Business Law class, the Mock Trial team brings to life courtroom procedures, from the opening statements, witnesses, closing arguments, charging the jury, deliberation, and the verdict.

See Trial, Page 2A



Amy Payne's award-winning Mock Trial team was in full swing last week at the Historic Courthouse. Photo/Todd Forrest

Vol. 103 No. 51  
3 Sections, 34 Pages

**Weather**  
Wed: Sunny Hi 61 Lo 39  
Thur: Rain Hi 52 Lo 26  
Friday Sunny Hi 44 Lo 27

**Inside**  
Arrests 8A  
Church 13A  
Classified 2B  
Opinion 4A  
Legal 3B  
Obits 15A  
Sports 10A

**BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY THEATER**

**Blue Ridge Community Theater 2012 Season Tickets on Sale**

See page 17A

**IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE**

Sunday, Dec. 23 • 2:30 p.m.  
Peacock Playhouse

See page 17A

**UCHS JV Basketball**

Thurs., Dec. 20 • 5pm  
vs. Tellico Plains, TN  
Fri., Dec. 21 • 11am  
@ Tellico Plains, TN

**EARLY DEADLINE**

For All Advertisements  
12 noon Friday  
For Articles 10 a.m. Friday