

North Georgia News

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McKenzie Hooper named 2018 STAR Student at UCHS

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

Congratulations to McKenzie Hooper, who has been named 2018 STAR Student for Union County High School.

Hooper selected English teacher April Krieger as her STAR Teacher, to highlight the impact Krieger has had on her academic successes.

"Being STAR Student means a lot to me because it's an achievement and a testament to show all the hard work I've put in through my years in school," said Hooper.

STAR stands for Student Teacher Achievement Recognition, and the program is sponsored by the nonprofit

PAGE Foundation.

"To obtain the STAR nomination, high school seniors must have the highest score on any single test date of the SAT taken through the November test date of their senior year and be in the Top 10 percent or Top 10 students of their class based on grade point average," according to PAGEFoundation.org.

In May, Hooper will graduate as one of the top students in her high school class, after which she will pursue an education studying the Korean language in preparation for a career teaching English in South Korea.

"I've always been interested in linguistics, the way languages are derived

and how verbs work and everything," said Hooper.

Her interest in the Korean language specifically stems from its existence as a language isolate, or one that does not descend from other common language ancestors, unlike the Romance languages.

She's hoping to study abroad in South Korea for a year prior to starting her postsecondary education, but if that opportunity becomes unavailable, she'll begin college in the fall.

Depending on her scholarship situation, Hooper is looking to attend either the University of Georgia, the University of California, Los Angeles, or the University of California, Berkeley.

Currently, Hooper is a member of the BETA Club Executive Board, serves as vice president of the Interact Club, is the president of the Spanish Club and treasurer of the United Community Bank Junior Board of Directors.

She competed on the high school swim team her freshman through junior years, and she has a number of college courses already under her belt from joint enrollment and AP classes.

When it came time to choose a STAR Teacher counterpart, Hooper said Krieger's perspective and friendship played a big role in her decision.

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UCHS STAR Student McKenzie Hooper and STAR Teacher April Krieger

Boy Scouts gather with original members of Troop 101



Original Boy Scouts of America Troop 101 Scoutmaster Bud Akins presents the Troop's 1960 charter to FUMC Scouting Coordinator Jeremy Bruce, with five original scouts present. L-R: Joe Cook, Kenneth West, Bud Akins, Jim Cook, Mark Burgess, Jeremy Bruce, Rob Patterson and Bo Conley.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

Blairsville's own Boy Scouts of America Troop 101 began humbly enough, when Bud Akins submitted a charter application to start a local Scout troop 60 years ago, in 1958.

It took two years to hear back from the Boy Scouts of America, but with the Blairsville Kiwanis Club as its founding sponsor, Troop 101 became a reality in 1960.

Today, Troop 101 enjoys sponsorship by the First United Methodist Church of Union County, which welcomes the Boy Scouts with open arms.

Every year in February, the Scouts participate in what is known as Boy Scout Sunday, where they take an active role in a church service

to demonstrate their "duty to God and my country," as the oath goes.

Scouting Sunday fell on Feb. 11 this year, and church members in the 11 a.m. service received a warm welcome into the main sanctuary of First UMC by the young men of Troop 101.

These same young men presented the colors for the morning ceremony, led the Pledge of Allegiance, collected that day's offerings from parishioners, and served a barbecue lunch to guests after the service.

During that Sunday service, Akins made a special presentation for those gathered. Akins was the first Scoutmaster of Troop 101, and he imparted some history to the Scouts, telling them about his initial interest in starting a troop.

It all began when Akins

was in high school, after he had taken on the role of local contact for Atlanta area Boy Scout groups looking for someone to show them through the mountain wilderness.

"They'd call ahead, and I would meet them at Lake Winfield Scott, and I would guide them on the Appalachian Trail," said Akins. "After that, I became a senior, and I was fixing to go out in the working world, and I thought, we need a Boy Scout troop in this county... I believed in the Boy Scouts, so I gave it some good thought, and I applied for it."

When the charter finally came in, Akins served as Scoutmaster for a short time before being drafted into military service, at which point his brother-in-law, Jay Groves, took the lead as Scoutmaster

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Rec Department holds annual Daddy/Daughter Dance



Photo by Lily Avery

A local father and daughter share a dance at North Georgia Technical College during Daddy/Daughter Night on Feb. 10.

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

More than 200 dads and daughters enjoyed a night of festivities and luxury at the Union County Recreation Department's Annual Daddy/Daughter Dance at North Georgia Technical College on Saturday, Feb. 10.

Decked to the nines, the rainy weather did not stop local dads from taking their little girls out to be treated like princesses, with music, dancing, a delicious dinner, photo opportunities and even a limo ride around town to top off the evening.

Each year for the last eight years, the Union County Recreation Department has hosted the event, typically close to Valentine's Day, to celebrate local fathers and their daughters.

"We're all about youth at the recreation department," said Larry "Duff" Conley, Meeks Park Director. "This is

something that we want to do for our girls.

"We want to give them something to do that'll make them feel special, and this seems like the perfect opportunity to do that."

And, according to Conley, this is not just about making sure that the daughters have a memorable evening, but it is also to encourage time spent with fathers and daughters to make memories that will last a lifetime.

"We want to help the community in everything that we do," said Conley. "Giving these dads and daughters a night to spend together and enjoy their time with each other, that's important. We hope to continue offering this every year."

In years past, the event has been held at other locations around the county, but with its increasing popularity, Conley and the rec department have consistently outgrown venues, finally moving to

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Local quilters honor veterans with Quilts of Valor

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

On Saturday, Feb. 10, volunteers with the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild presented nine Quilts of Valor to local veterans.

Libby Stevens of the Union County Historical Society welcomed visitors to the old Union County Courthouse, and Susan Young, liaison for the guild's Quilts of Valor Outreach Group, led the presentations of the quilts.

"We know that the debt we owe our military veterans is beyond repayment, but we honor them and thank them for their honorable service by awarding them a Quilt of Valor," said Susan Young.

The first Quilt of Valor went to Roger McGlen of Blairsville, a Vietnam Veteran

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Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Veterans awarded Quilts of Valor on Saturday, Feb. 10, by the volunteer ladies of the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild.

Development and more highlighted in city council meeting



Photo by Shawn Jarrard
Blairsville City Councilmembers Betty Easter and Tony Dyer on Tuesday, Feb. 6.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

In the Feb. 6 regular meeting of the Blairsville City Council, Mayor Jim Conley led a brief discussion on the

annexation of 83 Conley Rd.

The property, a 13.15-acre tract of land, will soon be developed to include an apartment building, which will benefit the city by adding to the tax digest and increasing the number of Blairsville City

residents. (Union County Sole Commissioner) Lamar Paris and the county have already signed off on it," said Mayor Conley following the meeting.

During the Feb. 6 meeting, City Attorney David Barrett said the city was working to secure a 50-foot easement on the property at Birdie Lane, and that is expected to resolve in early March.

"The developer who has interest out there and who has made a commitment out there on that property requested it to be annexed into the city," said Mayor Conley. Continued the mayor: "One of the advantages of annexing it into the city, whoever lives in the development out there will get inside city rates on water

and sewer, and not outside city rates. There's a big difference in water/sewer rates."

Also in the Tuesday, Feb. 6 meeting, the council heard from its city department heads, including Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Jody Cook, who reported that cleaning agents from a local business had killed some of the digesting bacteria at the treatment facility.

Contacted by the city after the meeting, the business agreed to monitor and address its cleaning processes so as to avoid further problems at the sewer plant.

Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Director Darren Harper addressed the council that Tuesday, reporting that the DDA was interested in installing a downtown directory board

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