

# County Meeting...from Page 1A



Construction is nearing completion on the brand new pavilion at Meeks Park, which is located adjacent to the baseball fields at the upper part of the park. Photo by Mark Smith

# Gowder..from Page 1A

Initially, Heaton and both Gowder brothers were federally indicted in April 2018, with a superseding indictment taking place of the original in January 2019. That first superseding indictment included 62 additional charges against Heaton.

Heaton, Mike and David Gowder all pleaded not guilty to the charges contained in the original and superseding indictments.

Then, David changed his plea to guilty in a March 15 Change of Plea Hearing, admitting to one count of prescribing oxycodone without a legitimate medical purpose.

Resulting from his guilty plea, David agreed to forfeit his Georgia medical license. Furthermore, he is facing up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1 million, and his sentencing will likely occur after his former co-defendants' trial comes to a close.

The second superseding indictment handed up on March 19 features Mike Gowder and Heaton as the only defendants in the federal prescription drug case, and last week, both men once again pleaded not guilty to the federal charges against them.

Federal prosecutors have asked the state and U.S. Marshals to produce as witnesses in the upcoming trial four individuals who are currently serving state prison sentences for various drug-related offenses: Timothy Harkins, Julie McPherson, Curtis Mason and Kevin Rogers.

For reasons unknown at press time, the request for Harkins had been returned unexecuted by U.S. Marshals on March 18.

Gowder and Heaton stand accused of many criminal charges – 150 for Gowder and 213 for Heaton – involving alleged illegal prescription drug activity in at least three states, including conspiracy to dispense and distribute controlled substances “outside the usual course of professional medical practice and for no legitimate medical purpose.”

They are presumed innocent of the charges, according to the U.S. District Attorney’s Office in Atlanta, “and it will be the government’s burden to prove each defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.”

Prior to their Feb. 4, 2016, arrests in Union County, Mike Gowder was the CEO of Union General Hospital and Dr. Heaton ran a family practice clinic in Blairsville.

Heaton also served as the director of the hospital’s Nursing Home and as a member of the hospital’s Board of Directors, per court documents.

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Special Advocates.

“Our volunteers’ role is to be able to speak for the best interests of children that have been abused and neglected, most of which have been removed from their homes. And, quite unfortunately, an overwhelming number of them are removed even from our county.”

“What we seek to do and work diligently on is to get a safe, permanent and stable home for each and every one of these children. The purpose of April Child Abuse Prevention Month is to build that awareness and to fight it, so that the numbers don’t continue to increase.”

D’Angelo said 324 blue pinwheels will be placed on the south side of the Historic Union County Courthouse opposite Cleveland Street. Three hundred and twenty-four is the total number of abused and neglected children who were removed from their homes across the Enotah District in 2018.

Moving along, Paris approved a contract for Hayes, James and Associates to monitor groundwater and methane at the Deep South Farm Road Landfill and Transfer Station.



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris presenting a proclamation to Enotah CASA Executive Director Linda D’Angelo in the March 21 commission meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

The term of the contract is three years, 2019 through 2021, and readings are taken four times each year. The cost of the contract is \$31,700.

Paris also approved a contract for Hall Booth Smith

P.C., Attorneys at Law, to provide representation for the Tax Assessor’s Office regarding tax issues and tax appeals on an as-needed basis. There is no retainer fee for this contract.

## Free AARP tax preparation

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is offering a free in-person tax preparation service at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, 7 Ewing Street, Blue Ridge, GA every

Friday from February 1 - April 12, 2019, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Call or text (706) 455-8023 for an appointment. Walk-ins welcome, first come, first serve.

## Allegheny Lodge #114 Upcoming Events

**Allegheny Lodge #114 Shotgun Raffle**

Allegheny Lodge will be holding a raffle with a grand prize of a Mossberg 835 .12 ga Ulti Mag Turkey Shotgun; 2nd prize of \$75 cash; and 3rd prize of \$50 cash. Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20.

See any lodge member or call 478-731-6050 for tickets or more information.

Drawing will be held at the lodge on April 15th.

**3rd Annual Allegheny Lodge #114 Golf Tournament**

On Saturday, May 4th, the Allegheny Lodge will hold their 3rd annual golf tournament. Number of prizes per flight will depend on number of teams. Early Bird registration of \$60 per player is offered through April 4th. After April 4th the cost will be \$75 per player. For more information call Ivy at 478-731-6050, Bud at 706-781-7903 or Jim at 706-835-8735. NT(Mar27)3CA

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