

North Georgia News

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Bitterman ready to lead Union County Schools as new athletic director

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, April 9, the Union County Board of Education hired former Buford High School principal Dr. Banks Bitterman to serve as the system's new athletic director and high school assistant principal starting next school year.

And after just a few short days, the consensus among his soon-to-be colleagues is that Bitterman is a homerun hire.

"This is a huge win for Union County, not just the high school, but all the way down to the primary school and Woody Gap - everybody will benefit," Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill said of the man he considers a mentor.

Back in 2013, Hill sought

out the former Buford High principal shortly after it was announced that he would be the next UCHS principal.

Despite having never met the man previously, Hill dropped in on Buford High one day, and Bitterman immediately took him under his wing.

"I just showed up as a stranger to 100 miles away and took up four hours of his time, and he invested that time totally in me," said Hill. "From then on, anytime I had a question, an issue or anything I needed help with, I could call him."

"That told me all I needed to know about his character. So, when this job opened up and he applied and interviewed, it became an absolute no-brainer that he is probably the best individual in the United States of America for this position,

and I will stand on that."

High School Principal C.T. Hussion said he has heard nothing but praise over the recent hire, adding that the addition of Bitterman proves that UCHS will not settle for second best when it comes to the education of its children.

"I've talked to a lot of people around the state, and everybody is just gushing," said Hussion. "On the assistant principal side of things, there's a lot that he can offer, and there is a whole other level that we are about to go to."

Bitterman is a graduate of Douglas County High School and the University of West Georgia, and he comes to Union County High after two years as a business owner in the private sector following his departure from Buford in

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Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill with Dr. Banks Bitterman and High School Principal C.T. Hussion. Photo by Mark Smith

Annual Easter Egg Hunt attracts hundreds of kids, parents to Meeks Park

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Hundreds of people attended the annual Union County Recreation Department Easter Egg Hunt at Meeks Park on Saturday, April 13, despite cloudy skies and the threat of rain.

Park Director Larry "Duff" Conley said his crew put out about 4,000 candy-filled plastic eggs this year: 1,500 for the toddlers to 4-year-olds group; 1,500 for the 5 to 8-year-olds; and 1,000 for the 9 to 12-year-olds, all at the upper ball fields.

People began showing up at about 10 a.m. that Saturday, and within 45 minutes, there

were literally hundreds of parents and children milling about in anticipation of filling baskets full of the prized eggs.

The main event began at 11 a.m. with an announcement of the "rules of engagement."

For the youngest group, parents were told they could accompany their children but that the kids must be able to walk and pick up their own eggs.

The other two groups of kids had to hunt on their own, but not until the starter said, "Go."

As always, the youngest group stole the show, with parents pointing out potential quarry to their adorable little ones as they walked beside

them.

Next, the 5 to 8-year-olds had a go at the Easter eggs in the outfield of one of the baseball diamonds. As they were let onto the field, a few kids became so excited that they made an early start for it and had to be corralled before the "Go" signal was given.

And last were the older kids, who also made a good show of collecting Easter eggs.

All children who participated in the hunt received a ticket for a raffle that was conducted after all the groups had finished hunting. A boy and a girl from each group won a prize.

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Egg hunting for some is a full-contact sport, though kids always keep it civil in the annual Union County Recreation Department Easter Egg Hunt. Photo by Mark Smith

STEMI Summit highlights local heart attack victim; first responders honored



By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On the stormy evening of July 24, 2018, North Georgia native Floyd Petty suffered a major heart attack.

Floyd's wife of 57 years, Loretta, immediately called Union County E-911 Dispatch, and Operator Lynn Powell took the call.

Loretta wanted to get her husband into their car and drive

him to Union General Hospital because she thought it would be faster, but Floyd said, "No, get the ambulance."

Powell advised her to stay there and wait for the

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Residents honor Derrick Whittle's memory by donating to Memorial Blood Drive

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

It's been nearly eight years since Union County Sheriff's Deputy Derrick Whittle died from injuries he sustained in the line of duty.

While making his way to a domestic call involving a gun on September 2011, his vehicle went off the road in a sharp curve and struck a tree, causing his fatal injury.

And each year since his untimely death, Whittle has continued to make a difference in his community by inspiring others, through his memory, to give the gift of life.

Jim and Sharon Whittle, parents of Derrick Whittle, teamed up with Blood Assurance to host the Seventh Annual Derrick Whittle Memorial Blood Drive on Thursday, April 11, at the Blairsville Walmart.

All told, donors gave 59 units of blood this year, which has the potential to save 177 lives.



Jim and Sharon Whittle at the Annual Derrick Whittle Memorial Blood Drive on April 11 at Walmart. Photo by Mark Smith

School board unanimously approves 30-acre land purchase for \$315,000

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

All members of the Union County Board of Education approved the purchase of a 30-acre tract of land for \$315,000 from Avis Shain in the Tuesday, April 9, regular school board meeting.

The land, located behind the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center, is being purchased for \$10,500 per acre, which Superintendent John Hill said was a really good deal.

Hill also said that he considers the purchase a "forward-looking investment."

"During my time as an employee here, I have seen opportunities that the board and the superintendent had to purchase property," said Hill.

"A fine example of that would have been the property that the county is building the Rec Gym on (below the football stadium)."

"At the time (about 1998), the school district didn't need the land because of the size of the district. But fast forward 20 years, and we sure could have used that property."

Shaw is a well-known member of the community and a retired nurse who served many years of her career with the Union County Health Department.

The funds for the land purchase will come from SPLOST IV monies, as there was a budget surplus from the projects it funded.

Moving along, Assistant Superintendent David Murphy

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The Union County Mock Trial Team being recognized in the April 9 Board of Education meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

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