

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Seniors Chambers, Rogers earn top honors for UCHS Class of 2019

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Carson Chambers has been named valedictorian of the Union County High School Class of 2019, and fellow senior Adalyn Rogers will serve as salutatorian.

The announcements came during the Senior Awards Ceremony that took place on Thursday, May 16, at the Fine Arts Center.

Parents and friends of the soon-to-be graduates attended the ceremony, which is put on annually to celebrate the achievements of graduating seniors during their time in the school system.

With more than 200

graduates, the Class of 2019 is the largest graduating class in Union County history.

"This is an event I really like because you have the parents and the students, and that's really important, because you all have done a tremendous job at raising these kids," said High School Principal C.T. Hussion. "One thing I'd like to do is thank Sara Stewart, Colleen Collins, Katie Kelley, and Dr. (Melissa) Bridges.

"They work very hard. I mean, y'all don't understand, they start right around spring break and they are working tirelessly to get this event together, and scholarship money, and graduation in order, and all of the things and programs that

are so nice is because of all their hard work."

The program began with students being awarded based on their academic successes in various subjects throughout the year.

Students that plan on going into the military also received recognition, with the Class of 2019 being among the largest graduating classes to have military participation.

"These students of this class are brave," said Hussion. "Seventeen people are going into the armed forces, and they just outdo every other graduating class. Normally, there are only four or five that go, but this class has 17."

As for Valedictorian

Chambers, who attended all years of school between kindergarten and senior year between kindergarten and attendance, she plans to advance her education at the University of Georgia.

"I plan to major in biology with pre-med intent," said Chambers. "It's such an honor to be valedictorian, and it took a lot of hard work."

"I want to thank a lot of people, especially my parents, and all of my family members that have supported me along the way and the teachers that have helped me get here."

"I'm humbled to be a member of this class. Everyone brings new ideas to the table, and everyone has their own strengths, See UCHS Class of 2019, Page 3A



UCHS Class of 2019 Salutatorian Adalyn Rogers and Valedictorian Carson Chambers at Senior Honors Day on May 16. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Aponte, Mott share spotlight at top of Woody Gap's senior class

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

SUCHES – Senior Chayil Aponte, May 16, as she waited to hear whether she would represent the Woody Gap School Class of 2019 as its valedictorian.

"It's been really stressful and really hectic lately," said Aponte. "Whenever (Principal Carol Knight) was making the announcement, I started to feel really cold inside. I get that way when I'm really nervous, but then they said my name, and just like that, I was relieved."

Aponte wasn't the only Woody Gap student feeling a bit nervous that morning, as fellow senior Luke Mott learned that all of his hard work had paid off with the announcement that he would be class salutatorian.

"The last year has been a bit of a hustle, but it hasn't been too bad," said Mott, who will soon leave for Parris Island, South Carolina, to begin his next



Woody Gap School Class of 2019 Valedictorian Chayil Aponte and Salutatorian Luke Mott in Suches. Photo by Todd Forrest

chapter as a U.S. Marine. "For us, the seniors, it's been about looking back on our previous school days and cherishing the good times."

"It's also been about looking forward to the future and what we'll have to do with our lives after high school."

With all of his long-term goals set, now Mott can begin prepping for something a bit more short-term: his graduation speech.

"I'll probably just wing it like I always do; I don't

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## MEC students gather for awards, recognition at annual Honors Night



MEC dual enrollment students Calli Burgwardt, Victoria Hilbish, Victoria Singleton and Taylor Jones with Counselor Emily Cobb on May 16. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Mountain Education Charter High School hosted its Union Site Honors Night on Thursday, May 16, at the Brackett Room behind United Community Bank.

The Union Site features

students from both Union and Towns counties.

"This is the first time we have done Honors Night in this way," said Administrator Roy Perren, explaining that, this year, more than just seniors were included.

"And typically, we do scholarships at graduation, but

we are going to be doing those tonight too, so this is a really exciting night, and we have a great crowd here to support these students," said Perren to the parents and students gathered for the occasion.

Graduation coaches Gina Young and Angie Burns See MEC, Page 7A

## Annual parade, ceremony and festival to highlight Memorial Day Weekend

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Each year, the brave men and women who have died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces get one day set aside specifically for their remembrance – that day is Memorial Day.

The Memorial Day holiday is observed each year on the last Monday in May, landing Memorial Day 2019 on Monday, May 27.

Which means that on Saturday, May 25, Union County residents will turn out by the hundreds for the annual Memorial Day Parade as it rolls through Downtown Blairsville starting at 10 a.m.

The 2019 Parade Grand Marshal will be World War II Veteran Ronald Taylor, a



The Blairsville-Union County Memorial Day Parade is always a popular activity for patriotic residents and visitors.

Blairsville resident who entered active military duty in April 1943.

Parade organizers

encourage the entry of patriotic floats or cars into the parade, and entrants should keep in

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## GDOT announces potential 2020 start date, detours for Georgia 515 project

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Department of Transportation conducted a Union/Towns Detour Open House at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center on Tuesday, May 14.

GDOT officials held the meeting in Blairsville because most of the detours that will take place during the upcoming widening and straightening of Georgia 515 between Blairsville and Young Harris will be in Union County.

Unlike the last public meeting on this project held in April 2017, the Detour Open House gave the community "eyes on the different detours that are going to take place during the construction," said GDOT District One, Communications Officer Katie Strickland.

"So, there are a couple of



Fire Chief David Dyer and Battalion Chief Richard Jones studying one of the many detours planned for the upcoming Georgia 515 construction project. Photo by Mark Smith

phases of construction for this detours," said Strickland. "There widening and also a bunch of See GDOT, Page 2A

## Missing boy returned safe and sound by bevy of first responder agencies

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Editor@nganews.com

When a 5-year-old autistic boy wandered away from his Union County home and became lost on Thursday, May 16, first responders hit the ground running.

The 911 call alerting authorities to the disappearance came in shortly after 1 p.m. that day, detailing that the boy was last seen asleep in his bed around 10 a.m.

Fortunately, it was a warm afternoon with plenty of daylight left to search, though time was certainly of the essence, as temperatures were to reach into the mid-50s that evening.



Towns County and Georgia State Patrol divers search a pond near the then-missing boy's home on Thursday, May 16.

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## Fire Station 4 breaks bread with guests at annual Open House event

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Fire Department Station 4 volunteers pulled off another Open House on Saturday, May 18.

The theme for 2019 was prevention of chimney fires with an informative display presented by Aspen Hearth & Home.

Station 4, located at 93 Moccasin Road, covers the northernmost precinct of Union County and includes Stations 7 and 8.

The Open House event is a way for Station 4 to thank all the people who generously donate their hard-earned dollars to keep the facility



One-year-old Decker Tincher, son of volunteer firefighter Montana Tincher, at the Station 4 Open House on May 18. Photo by Mark Smith

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