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# North Georgia News

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## Seniors reflect on next steps with baccalaureate

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County High School and the Class of 2024 hosted the annual Baccalaureate Ceremony at Blairsville's First Baptist Church on Sunday, May 19.

Rev. Chad Underwood of Old Liberty Baptist Church delivered the Baccalaureate Address titled "Your Calling," a message centered on the Gospel of John and the Old Testament books of Jeremiah and Jonah.

"I titled this message today 'Your Calling' because all of us are called to different things in this walk of life, and one of them is certainly your career," Underwood said. "Some of you may be excited about that opportunity; some of you might plan on getting married in the very near future.

"Some of you may have made up your mind you're never getting married and never having children. But I had a cousin who said he's never having children, and a few years ago, he welcomed a baby girl into his life. It changed everything. You just never know.

"For the last 13 years, your schedule has been pretty well set for you. But after this Friday night, you're out into the world, and you have to start making decisions on your own. Not that you don't have friends and family.

"If you look around the congregation, you have people here who support you and will continue to support you. Be thankful for those things. Be thankful for the people in your life. Be thankful you come from a town like Blairsville and have

grown up in a community that supports you, is there for you and has your back."

In closing, Underwood encouraged the graduates to pursue their dreams but urged them to know and love God and to involve Him in all their future endeavors.

"Yeah, we can choose our own path, but what matters at the end is what we've done for God and that we know God," he said. "So, I'm here today to remind you, and yes, I encourage you to follow your own path, but if I can encourage you to do only one other thing, that's to follow God. When you follow God, all the other things fall into place."

Ellie Adams opened the primarily senior student-led service with the welcome invocation, followed by



UCHS Ensemble students performed "Homeward Bound" for their classmates in the May 19 Baccalaureate Ceremony at First Baptist Church. Photo by Todd Forrest

## Memorial Day Parade, Ceremony set for May 25



The Sons of the American Revolution entered this patriotic float in the 2023 Memorial Day Parade, which is set to roll through town again Saturday morning. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Come out and enjoy Memorial Day Weekend in

Downtown Blairsville with the annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony on Saturday, May 25.

Starting at 10:30 a.m., the

parade will feature floats and vehicles themed at "Honoring our Korean War Veterans," to roll through the typical parade

See Memorial Day Parade, Page 2A

## Coaching legend Terry Rogers passes away at 76

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Terry Rogers, the larger-than-life former coach and athletic director for Union County High School, passed away on Friday, May 17. He was 76.

Rogers made an inestimable impact on youth in his hometown of Blairsville and well beyond the borders of Union County, most recently recognized in 2019 with his induction into the Georgia Athletic Directors Association Hall of Fame.

Locally, Rogers is known for his roles as a coach and an athletic director who positively influenced countless young lives for decades in Union County, taking it upon himself to mentor kids both on and off the field.

He was born here, raised here, played football here and graduated from here, and he returned to Union County after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps and earning a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Georgia.

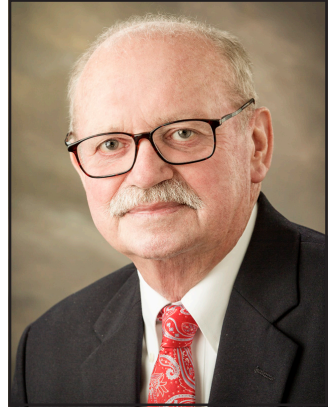
During his 36-year career

at Union County High, Rogers became the most winningest coach, and as athletic director, he was responsible for starting several sports programs, including tennis, soccer and cross country, and he reinstated other programs, like softball and track.

He coached six different sports at Union County High: football, girls' and boys' basketball, girls' and boys' track, and softball.

Rogers raised many hundreds of thousands of dollars for local sports programs, and he spearheaded the renovation and construction of a number of sports facilities over the years.

Here in Blairsville, Rogers was honored in 2017 by being inducted into the inaugural Union County Football Hall of Fame as both



Terry Rogers

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## Harmony Grove Baptist burglarized Sunday morning

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Of all the things to do at church on Sunday morning, probably the last thing on most people's list is burglary. "Thou shalt not steal," after all. But that's exactly what happened at Harmony Grove Baptist Church on May 19.

Harmony Grove was burglarized early Sunday morning, and within six hours of the crime, the Union County Sheriff's Office had obtained arrest warrants on a suspect, who was taken into custody early Monday morning in another North Georgia county.

See Harmony Grove, Page 2A



## Josh Davis to serve as UCHS principal next school year

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

As revealed in the Union County Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, May 14, Union County High School is getting a new principal in Josh Davis.

Currently the High School's Career, Technical and Agricultural Education Director and CEO of the College and Career Academy, Davis will be taking the place of Principal Carol Knight following her retirement at the end of this school year.

"I'd like to compliment Carol on a job well done and a career well served in Union County," said Superintendent John Hill, noting that Knight has been a part of the school system for 30 years as both a teacher and principal.

Now, with her first



New UCHS Principal Josh Davis with outgoing Principal Carol Knight in the May 14 School Board meeting. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

grandchild on the way, Knight looks forward to a new chapter in her life – bittersweet as the

transition may be.

As for Davis, Hill believes See New UCHS Principal, Page 4A



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# Memorial Day Parade...from Page 1A

route around the Blairsville Square.

The event is being put on by The American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121, and according to organizer Jim Yohe, there are currently more than 30 entrants signed up for the parade. That said, it's been a challenge trying to find veterans able to participate.

"The Korean veterans are usually anywhere between 85 and 95 years old," said Yohe, explaining that while

the community has come out to support veterans in droves, many of the soldiers who actually participated in the Korean War have either passed on or are in feeble health.

In 1950, North Korea, backed by the Soviet Union and China, invaded South Korea, which was supported by the United Nations, primarily the United States. It was the first time a U.S. President circumvented Congressional approval in regard to military

hostilities, as Harry Truman's deployment of forces was referred to as "police action."

As the United States' second-deadliest conflict of the Cold War, some 36,000 American troops were killed in the Korean War, and it's estimated that two or three million civilians perished during the three-year duration of the war.

Boasting the longest armistice negotiations in history, talks to end the

Korean War began in 1951 and continued for two years. Technically speaking, the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953 put a stop to active combat, but legally, the war has not yet ended.

"That's why there's so much tension on the 38th Parallel," added Yohe, describing the 160-mile Korean Demilitarized Zone that roughly serves as the border between the Communist North Korea and the Republic of Korea, otherwise known as South Korea.

Jack McCorkle, a retired U.S. Marine, Korean War veteran, and survivor of the horrific Battle of Chosin Reservoir, will be honored as a Parade Grand Marshal. McCorkle was only 19 when, in 1950, he was among 20,000 U.N. troops surprised by a

Chinese force of 120,000 strong.

When all was said and done, only 1,000 U.N. soldiers made it out of the fray. McCorkle and the others are known as the "Frozen Chosin" or "Chosin Few." Following the parade, McCorkle will talk about his experiences in the Korean War.

Retired Lt. Col. Roger Pilcher is this year's other Grand Marshal. He served in the Korean War but was never sent to the front lines; he lied about his age to serve his country and was eventually found out at the age of 16.

Immediately following the parade will be the annual Memorial Day Ceremony at Union County War Memorial Veterans Park, including wreath-laying to honor lost veterans and a keynote

speaker.

This year's keynote speaker will be retired Army Ranger Arthur "Art" McCann, and following his speech, local singer-songwriter Keith Bragg will perform a tribute recognizing the sacrifices of the military.

Any "church, business, civic organization, or other group" is welcome to participate in the parade with decorated floats or vehicles; the minimum requirement is flying the American flag in honor of veteran sacrifice.

All entries will be judged for First, Second and Third Place prizes. Those who want to take part in the parade can email the committee at ga.iraweaver121@gmail.com or visit the Leon Davenport Veterans Center located at 78 Blue Ridge Highway.

# Harmony Grove...from Page 1A

John Thomas Samuel Burton, 36, of Woodstock, Georgia, was arrested in Gwinnett County around 4:30 Monday morning, and he is expected to be transferred to the Union County Jail in the coming days.

UCSO Maj. Shawn Dyer learned of the burglary around 8 a.m. Sunday, when Pastor Scotty Jarrard called him to report that someone had stolen a safe and other items from inside the church, as well as hand trucks used to move the safe and an enclosed trailer on the property.

Jarrard had come in to prepare for the Sunday morning church service when he noticed the crime had taken place, Dyer said.

The suspect, who turned out to be Burton according to the Sheriff's Office, arrived in a pickup truck around 4 a.m. and entered the church through a basement door, likely by "jimmying" the lock, Dyer said.

He also accessed an outbuilding to grab the hand trucks, and he flipped up security cameras on the property so he would not be recorded as he carried out his work, which wrapped up a little after 6 a.m., Dyer said.

Fortunately, the security cameras were still able to catch several images of the suspect, his truck and license plate,

the latter of which matched a truck in the area the day before, captured by Flock license-plate recognition cameras installed by the Blairsville Police Department.

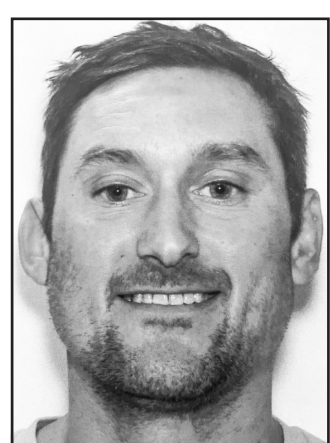
"We were able to get the guy's name and date of birth off his tag number, and upon running that through (the Georgia Crime Information Center), we obtained a picture, which appears to be the same guy that broke into the church," Dyer said.

So, by 10 a.m. Sunday, the Sheriff's Office had identified their prime suspect - Burton from Woodstock - and got to work tracking him down, Dyer said. The license plates for the suspect's truck and the stolen trailer were entered into GCIC to help find both.

License-plate recognition cameras in Gwinnett spotted the truck based on the GCIC filing, and Gwinnett County law enforcement located the vehicle and took Burton into custody the next day.

The church safe was recovered in his possession, according to UCSO.

And though Burton appeared to have been working alone in the burglary, the Sheriff's Office is investigating the potential involvement of another person given the knowledge of the property possessed by a suspect with no immediately



**John Thomas Samuel Burton** known ties to the church.

Burton is facing two burglary charges for entering the church and outbuilding, as well as theft by taking of the enclosed cargo trailer.

Maj. Dyer, who also serves as Blairsville Assistant Police Chief, credited the swift turnaround on cracking the case to the good working relations between the two departments he represents and Gwinnett County law enforcement.

"That's why it is so important to have great working relationships with other agencies," Dyer said.

Harmony Grove Baptist Church is located at 1008 Town Creek School Road in Blairsville, with worship services starting at 10:15 a.m. every Sunday.

# Terry Rogers...from Page 1A

a player and a coach.

The former Panther took great care in advising students and teaching them leadership, regardless of whether a kid was an athlete. In fact, he viewed mentorship of youth generally as a responsibility, and one he took seriously.

In terms of his many successes, Rogers saw them as having come by way of a larger team effort, and he always made sure to credit the superintendents, principals and school board members with whom he worked over the years.

During his career and following retirement in 2006, he made a larger impact as well by holding several leadership positions in athletic organizations at the state and

national levels.

Rogers led the National Organization of Coaches Association Directors as president and vice president, and he also served in a variety of roles with the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association, which he led as president in 2003 and as executive director from 2008 to 2016.

Additionally, he sat on the executive committee of the Georgia High School Association for more than 20 years, and he worked as Nike Coach of the Year Clinic Director in Atlanta for five years.

On top of his other accomplishments, Rogers earned a master's degree in physical education from North Georgia College and

an educational specialist degree from Jacksonville State University in Alabama.

He was the recipient of many honors as a coach and athletic director throughout the years, including Regional Athletic Director of the Year, Class A Athletic Director for the State, and the Lifetime Membership Award and Distinguished Coaching Service Award from the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association.

Rogers also earned the title of national Certified Athletic Administrator in 1995, and he later received an award from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association for 25 years of service as an athletic administrator.

To learn more about Rogers' life, read his obituary in this week's edition of the North Georgia News.

# Reece Farm presents Curtis & Kim Jones, Mountain Gypsy Music! at Heritage Center

Reece Farm presents Curtis & Kim Jones, Mountain Gypsy Music! Reece Farm & Heritage Center Pavilion, Friday May 24, 1-3. Bring your lawn chairs to the pavilion to enjoy two hours of music! Free admission and donations are greatly appreciated!

We invite you to come enjoy the exhibits at the farm before the concert.

Curtis Jones reigns as the most highly respected flat-picking guitarist on the planet, expanding on the legacy forged by musicians such as John Coltrane, David Gilmour, Doc Watson and Tony Rice. Jones is often called by fans and critics alike, "The world's fastest and cleanest" acoustic guitarist, an extraordinary technique that he both teaches and brings to his contemporary guitar performances and productions.

Speed is only a small part of what Curtis can do though. He efficiently plays 22 instruments and is self-taught on all! Through his pure guitar mastery, he has created a new style of Music- "Mountain Gypsy Music" allowing his abilities to weave in and out of Bluegrass, Jazz, Rock, Flamenco, and World Music. It is more original than anything that has been heard since Django Reinhardt!

Kim Jones is an artist, singer, and songwriter. Her vocal influences growing up were Wynonna Judd, Patty Loveless, Janice Joplin, Bobbie Gentry, and Bonnie Rait, and Stevie Nicks. Her Musical influences include Jaco Pastorius, Rich-



**Kim and Curtis Jones**

ard Wright, Bill Evans, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and McCoy Tyner. She sings and plays upright Bass with Curtis' Bluegrass band- Primal Roots, and performs with Curtis in their Mountain Gypsy Music duo. Kim has been singing her whole life but has only just begun to perform in front of Audiences within the past few years. Kim plays and sings with emotion and delta blues style soul. When asked about her goals through music, her response is "I Just want to share it. It's in here, deep down inside, and I wanna let it out!"

Byron Herbert Reece was a farmer and a writer, and his books are available in the

gift shop. The farm is set up as a legacy to him & his family with exhibits, farm animals, local books and crafts. There is also a hiking trail from the farm to Vogel State Park. The farm is also a beautiful venue for your special day with affordable rates. We now have trout stocked in Wolf creek (please follow all Georgia Fishing rules). Check out our "BHR Farm Village" cabin rentals on VRBO!

Farm exhibits are open Wednesday through Saturday 10 until 4; free admission.

8552 Gainesville Hwy., Blairsville, GA; 706-745-2034; FB: Reece Heritage Farm. www.reecefarm.org.

## UCHS Baccalaureate...from Page 1A

Brooklyn Brown's Old Testament reading from the Book of Numbers. Junior Lily Helton delivered the New Testament reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

The UCHS Ensemble performed "Homeward Bound," and Natalie Payne delivered a prayer over the Class of 2024.

Tyler Grasty and Eli Sosensky, along with juniors Izayah Sewell and Carson Collins, led the Candlelight Service symbolic of the "passing of the torch" between classes.

Justin Potts performed "The God on the Mountain" with a guitar accompaniment from Collins.

Reagan Covington introduced Underwood ahead of his address. After Underwood's sermon, Georgia Patton led the prayer for the Class of 2024. Caiden Tanner provided the closing remarks.

The Baccalaureate Service was sponsored by the UCHS Fellowship of Christian Athletes. UCHS would like to thank First Baptist Church, the UCHS administration and FCA sponsors Paige Dyer, Jerry Helton, Chris Miller and Robby Roxbury.

On Friday, Union County High will say goodbye to more than 200 seniors during the graduation exercises at 8 p.m. in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.



UCHS Senior Caiden Tanner offered closing remarks for the 2024 Baccalaureate on Sunday. Photo by Todd Forrest



Old Liberty Baptist Church Rev. Chad Underwood delivered the Baccalaureate Address to a captivated student audience May 19. Photo by Todd Forrest

## New UCHS Principal...from Page 1A



Technology Study Association members received kudos and certificates of appreciation in the Board of Education meeting last week. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

he has made a difference when it comes to getting kids ready to join the workforce, and that he's ready to lead UCHS into the future.

Davis' new position will start with the 2024-2025 school year, and while he will remain the CEO of the College and Career Academy, a new CTAE Director will be named in June.

"He's going to really bring that focus to all of our kids for their careers," said Hill, addressing Davis to add, "We are lucky to have folks like you, sir, to be (these students') teacher."

After the meeting, Davis provided a statement on the board-approved change:

"My approach to leadership will be the same as it has been for the last seven years while serving as CTAE Director and CEO of the College and Career Academy ... Whether they plan to attend a post-secondary institution, join the workforce or military, it is our job to prepare students and ensure they are employable and have ample opportunities for success."

In fact, it was Davis who introduced Career and Technical Student Organizations state-level winners from the Future Farmers of America.

As the high school members of the club were all working, they were unable to be present, but the middle school students were available to be congratulated before the board. All of them were recognized that night by name.

Also honored were the Technology Student Association students. One part of the club went as a group to the TEAMS Competition at the Georgia Institute of Technology, earning First Place in the TEAMS Essay Competition and Third Place overall.

The group also went to the University of Georgia to compete at the TSA State Convention, where several students boasted high placements in categories like Transportation Modeling, Forensic Science, Prepared Presentation, Flight Endurance, Children's Stories, Debating Technological Issues, Architectural Design, Music

Production, Board Game Design and Structural Design.

"Just to let you know, our FFA students and our TSA students, when they go to these state competitions, they're competing against thousands of other students across the state, so these are some very, very big accomplishments for these students," Davis said.

Hill himself received acknowledgment for his "outstanding service" provided over 20 years with the Union County School System courtesy of Assistant Superintendent Tiffany Setzer.

"We wanted to tell him how much we appreciate him and how much we have benefited from (his) guidance," said Setzer, presenting Hill with a certificate of recognition.

Facilities Director Mike Patton said Elementary School construction was progressing nicely, and that the board – and public – can still expect an opening around Fall 2025. Construction should wrap up next March or April, with furniture delivery scheduled for that spring.

## Misty Mountain Quilters Guild May 28 meeting to spotlight creativity

The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild meets on Tuesday, May 28. Sign-in begins at 12:30 p.m. and the general meeting commences at 1 p.m. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall of First United Methodist Church, 938 GA-515, Blairsville, GA. Everyone is welcome, especially new and potential members.

Muriel Pfaff, also known as "The Quilt Teacher," spoke at the Guild's last meeting. Dressed as Martha Washington, Muriel gave us a sense of the people, events, customs and quilts that accompanied the founding of our country. It was a fascinating look at the forces that shape history and change the course of a life. At our upcoming May meeting, Guild members will show quilts made with the same fabric top, but finished with quilt stitching designed by each individual. The creativity of our members will be on full display.

MMQG has more than 160 members, hailing primari-



MMQG member Shirley Deasy unveils her latest creation, full of curved applique and sweeping colors

ly from Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida. Our mission is to educate, share, promote and keep alive the craft and traditions of quilting. The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild is a charitable organization that donates quilts throughout the year to veter-

ans, nursing homes, children's facilities and shelters. If you are interested in quilts or want to learn more about quilting, join us! For more information, visit our website at <https://www.mistymountainquiltguild.org> or email [mmqginfo@gmail.com](mailto:mmqginfo@gmail.com).