

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Scottish Festival to take over Meeks Park this weekend

By Charles Duncan
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Union County was carved from Cherokee County territory during the Georgia Land Lottery of 1832.

Originally inhabited by Native Americans, the area became more desirable to white settlers with the discovery of gold in the late 1820s. Many of the families who came to settle the new county were of Scottish descent.

So, it wasn't much of a stretch when, almost 15 years ago, the county's tourism committee developed the idea of an annual Scottish Festival thanks to committee member Jim McAfee, who floated the idea of focusing on the community's rich Scottish Heritage.

first came into the United States, kind of got pushed onto the backburner, and so they settled in the mountainous areas, noted McAfee, a founder of Blairsville's Annual Scottish Festival.

The mountains here, along with the hills and fields, reminded these settlers of Scotland. The mountain mists, the beautiful clouds and the frequent rains made Union County feel very much like home.

If natives research their family history, especially the history of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, they'll find their Scottish ancestors.

The early settlers of Union County included many Scottish families, such as the Duncans, McAfees, McClures, Gillespies, Hendersons,

Wallaces and Gordons, and all one has to do is look in the local phonebook to see that the names are Scottish.

For 14 years the Scots have gathered at Meeks Park on Georgia 515 in Blairsville. Highland dancers, Scottish athletes, family clans, bagpipes and drums and traditional musicians come here to celebrate their heritage.

Sheepdogs, highland cattle, falcons and birds of prey all come with their handlers.

This was the dream of McAfee, a local realtor.

In 2003, McAfee was on the board of directors of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. The board was looking for an intriguing family-focused occasion to bring guests to Blairsville as well as to be an

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Parade of Tartans at the 2016 Blairsville Scottish Festival. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Farmers Market celebrates 10 years with thousands of visitors

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a packed house and 84 vendors at Saturday's 2017 grand opening.

"Most of the time we don't have this many cars in the parking lots until the middle of July, so we've had quite the turnout here today," Mickey Cummings said.

According to Cummings, more than half of the 84 vendors were farmers, with 38-40 of those selling produce to go with along a few plant and honey vendors.

"This has been an awesome start for the Farmers Market," Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris



The Union County Farmers Market is now open for the season! Photo/Lowell Nicholson

EMC committee nominates members for upcoming election

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Elections are just around the corner for the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors, meaning three seats will be up for grabs in September.

Members of the board serve three-year terms, and the seats up for election this year are those currently filled by Charles Jenkins of Union County, Steven Phillips of Towns County and Chris Logan of Clay County.

The EMC Board of Directors has experienced a fundamental change in leadership in the last few years, beginning with the pivotal 2014 election that saw

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A view from inside the Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee during the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC 2016 Annual Membership Meeting. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

UCSO: Sex crimes involving minors 'on the upswing'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Attention Union County parents: sex crimes involving minor children are on the rise.

According to the Union County Sheriff's Office, the current trend in sex crimes primarily involves older teen boys and young men becoming sexually involved with younger girls.

The consequences of being charged with a sex crime include prison time, thousands of dollars in court costs, and having to register as a sex offender, potentially for life, which affects where an offender can live and work when they get out of jail.

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Detective Sgt. Tom Mangifista and Detective Marc Pilote of the Union County Sheriff's Office. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Reece Society remembers the Man in 14th Annual Meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

More than 50 members of the Byron Herbert Reece Society met on Saturday, June 3, to honor the Life and Letters of Reece.

This year's meeting was bookended with milestones from Reece's time on earth, as 2017 marks the centennial celebration of the poet's birth, and June 3 was the 59th anniversary of Reece's death.

A poet, novelist and an avid writer of letters, Reece is perhaps Union County's most famous native son.

The Reece Society exists "to preserve, perpetuate, and

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Sanford Freeman, left, with Keith Jones. Freeman is the incoming 2017-2018 chairman of the society, and Jones is the outgoing chairman. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

UCFD, Home Depot team up to provide free smoke detectors



L-R: Union County Firefighter David Ueltzen, Home Depot Manager John Wischmeyer, Union County Fire Chief and EMA Director David Dyer, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Union County Firefighter Will Barton. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

News Special to
North Georgia News

In March of 2017, Union County Fire Department applied for a grant from Home Depot to purchase smoke detectors.

Home Depot awarded a grant in the amount of \$1,500 that would allow the fire department to purchase 371 smoke detectors.

The fire department has been involved in a free smoke detector installation program for the past 15 years, and members of the department have installed over 500 of these lifesaving detectors in homes throughout Union County.

The funds for these previous detectors have come from department funds and grants.

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Allegheny Lodge welcomes Grandmaster Leazer



Mason David Cook as George Washington, with Dr. Gary Leazer, Grandmaster of Masons in Georgia. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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