

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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August 17, 2016

Union County millage rate lower than last year

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The county portion of property taxes to be collected in 2016 will be \$77,215 lower than last year, thanks to a lowered millage rate.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris set the new millage rate – 5.788 mills – in a meeting called for the specific purpose of setting the rate on Thursday, Aug. 11.

The new rate is a tenth of a mill lower than the 2015 millage rate, which was 5.888 mills and levied \$7,128,400 in county property taxes that year, as compared to the new rate that will levy \$7,051,185 for 2016.

And though the new

millage rate will leave the upcoming 2017 budget about \$680,000 short compared to the current budget, Commissioner Paris decided to lower the rate anyway for several reasons.

After having studied the most recent county audit of the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2015, which saw General Fund revenues up \$1.64 million compared to the previous year, the commissioner noted that the county was in strong financial shape with a solid 4.7 months of potential emergency reserve funds, a position that could help to close the budget gap if needed.

Commissioner Paris also said he believes that he and the various county department heads will be able to make budget cuts and adjustments

to reduce that deficit.

“Based on the fact that we have had a good revenue year this last year, and that our county reserves have been able to increase this year – even though our budget next year is going up and may even exceed, and probably will exceed, the amount of revenue that this millage rate will bring in, we’re still going to try to pass along a little bit of savings to the public,” said Commissioner Paris in the meeting.

Added Commissioner Paris: “We’re optimistic about revenue projections for this year, too, that they will exceed what we estimated. So unless we have a disaster in the economy, we really think that we’ll be able to be in as good a shape at the end of this year

as we are at this point in time now.”

Keeping the millage rate the same as last year would have also resulted in an upcoming budget shortfall, but the commissioner wanted to pass on a break in property taxes, however much revenues were up last year and so far this year.

“I’d already determined that we wanted to lower the millage because we had a good year,” said Commissioner Paris. “I don’t want to save up this big reserve and take the taxpayer’s money and draw interest on it – they had rather draw interest on their own money.”

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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris announced in a meeting on Thursday, Aug. 11, his decision to lower the millage rate ahead of property tax bills being mailed out this fall.

Blairsville man killed in Murphy Highway crash

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

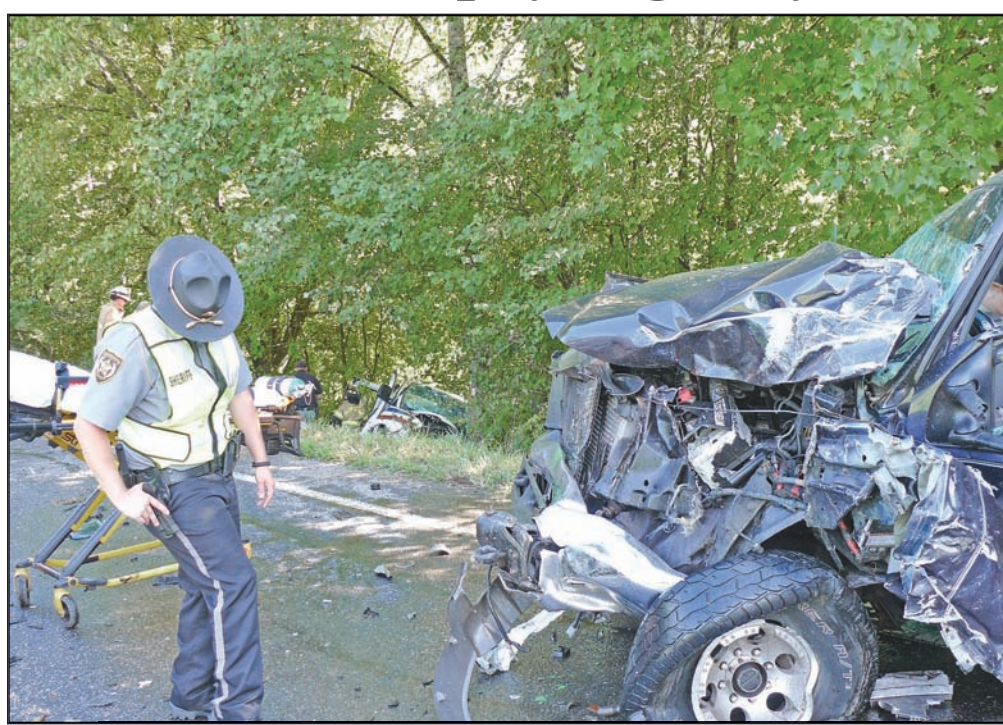
A 37-year-old Blairsville man died in a two-car crash that occurred Tuesday, Aug. 9, on Murphy Highway.

Michael “Mickey” Whatley perished in the accident, which happened about 150 feet south of Leslie Lane on US 129-N, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Whatley was driving a Mike’s Heating & Air van south on Murphy Highway, when a Ford truck traveling in the northbound lane crossed the double-yellow centerline before striking the front of Whatley’s vehicle with its front, according to state patrol.

Both vehicles spun counterclockwise, with the truck coming to a stop facing south in the southbound lane of Murphy Highway, while

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According to Georgia State Patrol, this truck crossed into oncoming traffic on US 129-N and struck a Mike’s Heating & Air van, an accident that took the life of Michael “Mickey” Whatley. Photo/Frank Uhle

Just around the corner: wildlife and forest management awareness



UGA Experiment Station Superintendent Ray Covington and Ag Chatteahocchee RC&D will be joining forces with the Andagat-Chatteahocchee M&F to bring a Forestry Day to the area. The event will promote wildlife and forest management awareness

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

After a hot and grueling

summer, what better way to celebrate the month of September and the coming of fall than with a “SepTIMBER”

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Community members to dance for Enotah CASA

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Everyone loves a good reality show, especially when all the contestants can be found at the local diner for lunch.

Enotah CASA, for Court Appointed Special Advocates for children, will be hosting a Dancing with the North Georgia Stars event on Saturday, Nov. 5, at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

The event, a spin-off on the hit reality TV show, will feature 11 local celebrities from both Towns and Union counties performing a wide variety of dances with professional dance partners.

Following the show will be a Dancing with the North Georgia Stars Gala at the North Georgia Technical

College, where members of the community can meet the celebrities, their dance partners, and enjoy a night of festivities.

The dancers will compete to win one of two awards, the People’s Choice Award and Judge’s Award. A combined score of each couple’s costumes, choreography and technical performance will decide the winner of the Judge’s Award.

People’s Choice Award will be determined by which couple received the most votes. Votes can be cast for each couple by either purchasing a ticket or donating money to Enotah CASA in the couple’s names. Both awards are presented the night of the event.

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Angela Thompson Puleo and Lee Knight will be performing in the Enotah CASA Dancing with the North Georgia Stars in November.

Kuykendall celebrates 60 years of cutting hair

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Passage of time is marked by the changing of calendars, fashion trends, music hits, and the list goes on – unless you are Bill Kuykendall, who numbers the years in haircuts.

Kuykendall began his career as a barber on Aug. 9, 1956. Since embarking on this lifelong journey, Kuykendall has worked in countless shops across Towns and Union counties, though he eventually settled down at his two current locations, in Blairsville and Hiwassee.

“I didn’t have any license or anything, I just opened up a shop,” said Kuykendall, speaking of his start 60 years



Bill Kuykendall has been cutting hair for 60 years. Here he is in his Towns County establishment, Chatuge Barber Shop. Photo/Lily Avery

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Allegheny Lodge No. 114 honors county’s first responders

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

One of the simplest ways to express appreciation is with a big, warm meal, and that’s exactly what the masons of Allegheny Lodge No. 114 cooked up for the county’s first responders the morning of Wednesday, Aug. 3.

“We came up with doing this breakfast for the law enforcement and the first responders after all the recent events that have happened around the country,” said Ronny Benfield, who is the 2016 Worshipful Master of Allegheny Lodge No. 114. “We thought they should be appreciated for the jobs they do, and putting their lives on the line for the community. So we thought we would do a breakfast as a thank you for

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Sheriff Mack Mason and Seth Dyer of the Union County Sheriff’s Office, front left, enjoy a meal with members of the Allegheny Lodge No. 114. Photo/Doug Shea

Farmers Market patrons receive wildlife education



Produce is probably the hottest commodity during the Union County Farmers Market’s five-month season. Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
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Local agriculture awareness reached new

heights at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 13, for the market’s special event highlighting the

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Boy Scouts hold
Big Country
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PANTHERS
Softball
Tues. Aug 16 vs. Dawson Co 6 PM
Thurs. Aug 19 @ East Hall 5 PM

Football
Thurs. Aug 18 vs. Rabun Gap 7:30 PM
(Scrimmage)