

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

September 7, 2016

Audit puts EMC in clear; Annual meeting Saturday

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Aside from the Taylor and Taylor Construction debt, consisting of an unpaid power bill of more than \$62,000 from the company of former Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Director Terry Taylor, a thorough audit of the EMC's books has discovered no financial wrongdoing.

In a called meeting with members of area local media on Friday, Sept. 2, several of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors relayed the findings of a recently completed forensic audit, which cost the EMC a total of \$75,981.47 to conduct.

The reason for

conducting the audit that was initially called for late last year, the board said Friday, was to address concerns of the membership over the financial health of the EMC, and also to lay the books bare to give any potential new general manager a "clean slate."

"The forensic analysis and examination of the books and records of the (BRMEMC) by DHG Forensics did not identify any apparent unauthorized disbursements or any additional abuses in the billing and collection process," read Director Roy Perren from Livingstone, the lead director of DHG Forensics.

Continued the statement: "As with every organization for which we conduct such examinations, we did identify

areas where we believe internal controls and policies could be strengthened and have provided recommended changes to the Blue Ridge Board and management to address those concerns.

"In the course of our examination, we found the knowledge, cooperation, and organization of the staff of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to be commendable, which greatly assisted in the efficiency and effectiveness of this examination."

Last fall, the board selected the Forensics Accounting Group of Dixon, Hughes, Goodman LLC out of Charlotte, North Carolina, to do the audit, and "while one board member has used DHG for accounting at their business, no one on the board or working

for BRMEMC has had any previous dealings with the Forensic Accounting Group of DHG," said Perren Friday.

The audit, which started this spring and wrapped up recently, closely examined three years' worth of disbursements at a total of 12,300 checks amounting to \$72 million, spanning January 2012 through December 2014.

DHG found "no transactions that they believed required further investigation," according to the board's statement Friday.

The following areas were taken into account during the audit: cash disbursements, credit card charges, payments,

See BRMEMC, Page 2A



Jeremy Nelms is the new general manager of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

Three inducted into Union County Agriculture Hall of Fame Saturday

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Played host to Farmers Union County a special ceremony to honor three remarkable local farmers who were inducted into the Union County Historical Society Agriculture Hall of Fame on Saturday, Sept. 3.

"Each year we induct members into the Hall of Fame," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "Those we inducted are driving members of agriculture in Union County, and all three individuals that we're honoring today do just that."

This year, the three inductees are Anne and Jimmy Spivia, and longtime agriculture enthusiast Brenda Brookshire.

The induction was held shortly after the Annual Tractor Show and Parade,



Jimmy and Ann Spivia, along with Brenda Brookshire, join the agricultural ranks of the Union County Agriculture Hall of Fame at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, Sept. 3. Photo/Lily Avery

which also served as a way to highlight the importance of local farmers and the business of agriculture in the area.

"Agriculture has such

a huge place in Union County because, without it, we wouldn't be able to survive," said Historical Society

See Hall of Fame, Page 2A

Area businesses advised to keep no cash after hours

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Sheriff's Office has a message for area businesses – don't keep cash on premises after hours.

This warning comes after the Aug. 31 overnight burglary of the Marathon Station at the Georgia/North Carolina state line, in which five masked individuals disabled the store's security system before breaking in and removing the safe from the store, according to the sheriff's office.

After further investigation, the sheriff's office determined late last week that the individuals involved were likely not local. They are being considered as part of an organized group carrying out similar crimes



Julio Antonio Piloto

all across the Southeast, from nearby counties to Mississippi and down around Florida, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

"Their MO is basically

what we have here," said Lt. Osborn. "They have a sledge hammer, a baseball bat, one carries a backpack with tools in it. They have anywhere from eight to 12 members and are considered armed and dangerous."

Another trait of this organized group is that it will usually return to a community for another burglary, according to Lt. Osborn, and they seem interested only in stealing money.

"What we're encouraging businesses to do is, do not keep any money in their business overnight," said Lt. Osborn. "We're stepping up our patrols, especially at night, to businesses. If you need escorts to the bank, call 911 and we'll provide that, no problem. We're going to do everything

See Burglary, Page 3A

Blairsville Cruisers take car show to Union County Nursing Home

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Residents of the Union County Nursing Home enjoyed a fun-filled day of classic cars, old melodies and memories of younger years with the Blairsville Cruise-In at the bi-annual Cruise-In on Sunday, Sept. 4.

"We've been doing this about eight or 10 years," said Blairsville Cruisers Vice President Charlie Brown. "We do a show here twice a year, one in May and another in September. This is a really good day today. We usually run between 35 and 40 cars."

See Cruisers, Page 3A



Union County Nursing Home residents enjoy a day outside, complete with old-time music and plenty of automotive memories. Photo/Lily Avery

15th Annual Heritage Festival offers look into the past

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Appalachian history and traditional practices came to life on Labor Day Weekend for the 15th Annual Mountain Heritage Festival, held at the Mountain Life Museum, one block away from the Historic Union County Courthouse.

The event was one for the books, featuring life the way it used to be in simpler days, with farm animals, blacksmithing, old-timey butter churning, quilting, craft exhibitions, Civil War reenactments and other

See Heritage, Page 8A



Gold panning was just one of the many family-friendly activities available at the 2016 Mountain Heritage Festival, located at the Mountain Life Museum just up from the Historic Union County Courthouse

Dreams come true for local students

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

After months of fundraising and hard work, nine Union County Special Olympic Athletes received the opportunity to have the experience of a lifetime in Farmington, Connecticut, for the Dream Ride Experience on Aug. 26 through Aug. 28.

The Dream Ride Experience is an event sponsored by the Hometown Foundation Inc., a nonprofit organization that specializes in supporting those with disabilities, especially Special Olympians.

Dream Ride, specifically, is a motorcycle ride from Palm Beach, Florida, all the way to Farmington, Connecticut, where the event and celebration begins.

See Dream, Page 3A



Ben Taylor, center, and his friends traveled to Farmington, Connecticut, the last weekend in August for the Dream Ride Experience.

Blairsville man wanted for rape arrested in NC

From Staff Reports
North Georgia News

CLAY COUNTY, NC – A fugitive from Blairsville is in custody after a three-day manhunt that ended across state lines, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Franklin Regeious Shook "Reggie" Shook, 50, was arrested Saturday in Clay County, North Carolina, after being wanted in Union County since Thursday of last week, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

Leading up to his arrest, Shook was wanted on two felony counts of rape, though he fled Union County before investigators could detain him, according to Lt. Osborn.

Once in custody Shook confessed to the crimes,



Franklin Regeious Shook according to Lt. Osborn.

A native of Towns County, Shook has been living

See Rape, Page 7A

Vol. 107 No. 35
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Sunny Hi 89 Lo 63
Fri: Sunny Hi 88 Lo 63
Sat: Sunny Hi 86 Lo 63

Arrests 6A
Church 3C
Classified 2D
Opinion 4A
Legals 4D
Obits 5C
Sports 2B

8 4875 119314 2

Patriot Day & NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
September 11

Vogel's Mountain Music & Craft Festival
See page 6A

UCH Auxiliary Fundraiser Collective Goods
See page 5B

PANTHERS Softball
Tues. Sept 6 @ Rabun Co. 5 PM
Thurs. Sept 8 vs. N. Hall 6 PM
Football
Fri. Sept 9 @ Andrews, NC 7:30 PM