

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Sorghum Festival turns 47; new parade route

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Every second and third weekend in October, the Blairsville Sorghum Festival draws thousands of people to town.

And that makes perfect sense, seeing as how the Blairsville Sorghum Festival, now in its 47th year, is the Official Sorghum Festival of Georgia.

But it's more than that. The festival is a strong source of local historical significance that each year stirs up a deep-welling mixture of sorghum syrup and longstanding community pride.

There's a real sense of history present when the festival gets rolling, and it's

a history that's alive and well in the traditions one finds year after year at the Blairsville Sorghum Festival.

Not to put too fine a point on it, Union County and the North Georgia Mountains are not bleed sorghum syrup, but the biscuits here sure do.

Kim Bridges, treasurer of the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club, understands well the connection between the festival and the local traditions of days gone by.

According to Bridges, the Sorghum Festival Games represent the various aspects of traditional mountain life.

For example, Stone Throwin' and Log Sawin', two of the many games enjoyed at the festival each year, are both symbolic of the farmer clearing

the field, and the Sorghum Festival Club will kick off each day of the festival with the making of sorghum syrup.

And while visitors to Meeks Park will not be bartering, per se, for food and souvenirs, they will be able to buy the most delicious dishes and authentic mountain arts and crafts during the festival, many of which were likely handmade and shared by their ancestors in long-ago times of gathering.

Around 100 vendors are expected to be in attendance during the Sorghum Festival, selling everything from handmade woodcrafts, sewing, candles and jewelry, to homemade soaps and canned goods.

Community groups, as See Sorghum, Page 2A



Cooking Sorghum at last year's Sorghum Festival

## Homecoming festivities fun for the whole Union County school family

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County High School senior Joanna Irvin was selected by her peers as the 2016-2017 UCHS Homecoming Queen during halftime of last Friday night's Region 7-AAA football game with the East Hall Vikings.

Irvin beat out 13 other girls on this year's Homecoming Court, including four other members of the senior class, along with four juniors, three sophomores, and two freshmen.

Fellow senior Bebe Walts was named First Runner-Up, while another senior, Braedyn Robbins, was Second Runner-Up.

Irvin was escorted by her father, Mark Irvin, and was crowned by the 2015-2016 UCHS Homecoming Queen Layne Colwell.



Mark Irvin, right, beams from ear to ear as his daughter, senior Joanna Irvin, is crowned the 2016-2017 Union County High School Homecoming Queen by last year's Queen Layne Colwell. Photo/Todd Forrest

Joanna Irvin joins School. Earlier in the day, the annual UCHS Homecoming Parade rolled through the

as the last five Homecoming Queens at Union County High School. Earlier in the day, the annual UCHS Homecoming Parade rolled through the

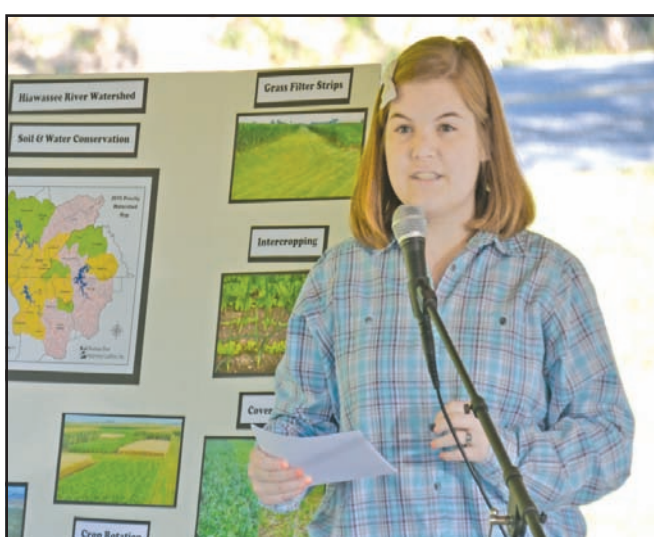
## Farmers Market first speech contest

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Public speaking was the name of the game at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, Oct. 1, as the market played host to students from Union and neighboring Towns County.

High school students from Union, Towns, Fannin, and Rabun counties were invited to participate in the market's first public speaking contest, held in the Market Pavilion.

While the market hosted the competition, a lot of area organizations pitched in to make the idea come to fruition, with the Blue Ridge Mountain



Caitlyn Murphy, a Union County High School senior, won the first ever Union County Farmers Market Speech Contest. Student speeches centered on the importance of soil and water conservation to local farmers. Photo/Lily Avery

See Speech, Page 2A

## Air Life Georgia lands at UGH

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union General Hospital is setting the bar high with its latest alliance with Air Life Georgia.

The medical flight team was officially welcomed to the community and the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, Sept. 29, at the helicopter pad at Union General.

Air Life Georgia is a contract air medical operating service provided by Air Methods, based in Englewood, Colorado, whose sole purpose is to bring critical care to the residents of Union County and the surrounding areas of Northeast Georgia.

The service consists of See Air Life, Page 6A



Shawna Key is a flight nurse with Air Life Georgia. According to Key, she sees 30 to 50 cases a month, most of which are heart attack or stroke patients. Photo/Lily Avery

## Get your 'Shine on with Granddaddy Mimm's Oct. 8



Granddaddy Mimm's owner Tommy Townsend with several of his family members. Left to right, all Townsends: daughter Maggie, wife Christy, Tommy himself, sister Debby, father Roy and mother Ida. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

When Blairsville native Tommy Townsend opened Granddaddy Mimm's Moonshine Distillery &

Museum earlier this summer, he brought an old family tradition back to life in the North Georgia mountains.

And this Saturday, Townsend will be bringing Shooter Jennings and a few

more of his best friends to town to celebrate the Official Grand Opening of the business he named for his grandfather, Jack "Mimm" McClure.

See Mimms, Page 8A

## UC Students REACH for academic excellence

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Five well-deserving Union County eighth-graders, from both Union County Middle School and Woody Gap School, committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Georgia REACH Scholarship at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Monday, Sept. 26.

"This step that Union County is taking is certainly one that I believe will be beneficial to this community as a whole," said Dr. Fred Rayfield, Union County Schools Superintendent. "In Union County, we all believe that it takes a village to raise a child, and we're all committed



L-R: front, Chloe Jump, Ivey Garret and Hannah Curry; back Russell Ponder and Braden Snow. Photo/Lily Avery

See REACH, Page 3A

## Patterson arrested for alleged embezzling

From Staff Reports  
North Georgia News

A 39-year-old Blairsville woman has been arrested for allegedly embezzling more than \$57,000 from her employer, MedMark Treatment Centers, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Chantel Spring Patterson has been charged with felony theft by taking and felony theft by conversion in connection with the alleged embezzling, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

"There was a report filed on Sept. 2, 2016, by the vice president of the company, Frank Baumann," said Lt. Osborn. "He basically stated that several



Chantel Spring Patterson

thousand dollars had been taken over a period of time since December of 2015 until August 2016.

See Embezzlement, Page 2A

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Blairsville Cruises  
Cruise In  
See page 7A

Union County Primary School Parent Meeting  
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Panthers Softball  
Wed Oct 5 Region Semi-Finals & Finals  
Union vs. East Hall 1 PM  
Football  
Fri Oct 7 @ Dawson Co. 7:30 PM