

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Mahan, Easter and Cook retain seats in Nov. 5 City Council elections

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Incumbents Rhonda Mahan, Betty Easter and Mary Ruth Cook won re-election to their Blairsville City Council positions on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

In the new year, each of the three women will begin new terms in office to run from Jan. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2023.

With only three seats up for grabs in a race decided by plurality vote, fourth candidate Frank Pack lost his bid for a seat on the council.

Out of 41 ballots cast, Mahan earned 31 votes, Easter received 36 votes, Cook won 35 votes and Pack got 7 votes.

Only 266 of approximately 650 residents living within Blairsville City

Limits are registered voters, and of those 266 voters, only 41 cast ballots on Tuesday for a 15% voter turnout.

As of Dec. 31, 2019, Mahan will have served five full terms on the Blairsville City Council, spanning 20 years.

Also by the end of the year, Easter will have served two full terms, though she previously served from September 1994 to December 1995 to fill a vacated council seat.

Cook will begin her first full term in office after winning a special election in 2017 to fill the last two years of her sister Martha Cone's term following her passing.

After the election last week, Mahan expressed

appreciation for the support of everyone who voted for her.

"We have a council and mayor that work well together, along with a good group of employees in every Blairsville city department," Mahan said. "My goal is and always has been to do what is in the best interest of our city."

"We couldn't run this city if the council fought amongst themselves or if we didn't have good employees in all the departments and good department heads. It would just be chaos all the time, and it's not like that."

"We might not always agree with each other on everything, but in the end, we all have the best interests of the city at heart. There's no one on this council that has a private

agenda." Easter indicated a desire to see Blairsville continue to grow and remain clean and appealing.

"Let's get Popeyes open and settle with Arby's," Easter said. "That's what I want. When I came here, there was nothing. You can't imagine what this looked like in 1963 - nothing paved except around the square."

"It's come a long way since I came here. I'm proud of it. I think we've done well." Cook was at City Hall with Mahan, Easter and her young nephew for the final count on Election Night, after which she expressed concern for the low voter turnout.

"I would like to thank See City Council, Page 2A



Rhonda Mahan, Betty Easter and Mary Ruth Cook were all smiles following their successful Blairsville City Council re-election bids on Nov. 5. Photo by Mark Smith

DDA Board rejects \$93,000 price reduction proposal by Arby's developer

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Board has rejected a proposal by real estate developer GLM Development to reduce by \$93,230 the selling price of the Haralson Property land the company has been eyeing for a future Arby's Restaurant.

Board members met for a called meeting at City Hall to decide the matter on Wednesday, Nov. 6, where they discussed the developer's request to have the DDA share certain site preparation costs by reducing the price.

"If you look at the considerations we've had, we gave them another tenth of an acre at a value of roughly \$80,000," DDA Board Chair Paul Thompson said, adding that the board had also offered a \$25,000 price reduction for site work, making the total in concessions so far about \$105,000.

Full Board member Robert Rogers said that, while the board very much wanted Arby's to come to the area, the proposal seemed excessive to him as well.

One instance of the developer's proposal showed an estimated cost of about See Arby's, Page 2A



Blairsville DDA Board Chair Paul Thompson discussing ongoing negotiations with the Arby's developer on Nov. 6. Photo by Mark Smith

Carlton Colwell recognized as 'Pioneer in Education' for time in office



Carlton Colwell, front left, receiving his Pioneer in Education Award on Nov. 1. Also pictured: Paula Davenport, John Hill and David Murphy of Union County Schools, along with Justin By of Pioneer RESA.

By Shawn Jarrard
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In honor of a lifetime of devotion to education, former State Rep. Carlton H. Colwell received the Pioneer in Education Award on Friday, Nov. 1, inside the

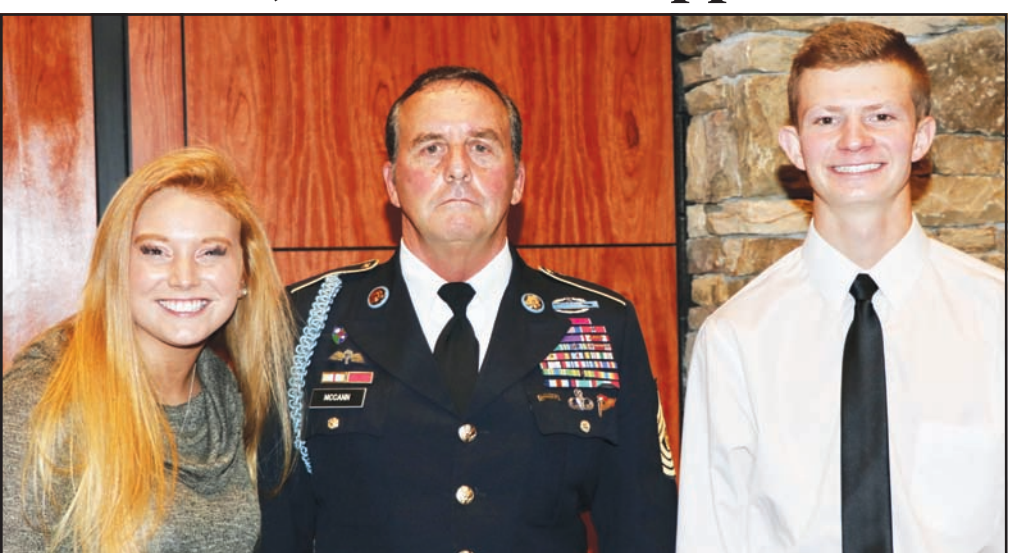
Babyland General Ballroom in Cleveland.

To be a Pioneer in Education, one must not strive "to be the best IN the world," but strive "to be what is best FOR the world," according to the Pioneer RESA, which hosted the award ceremony.

Colwell, 93, easily met this criterion, having served 31 highly productive years in the Georgia General Assembly, all while working across the aisle to improve the quality of life for the people - and students - of Union County and beyond.

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School district honors veterans with breakfast, student-led appreciation



L-R: Union County High School senior Hannah von Hof, Administrative Assistant Art McCann and senior Gaige Shumaker. Von Hof and Shumaker helped lead the Nov. 8 Veterans Day Program.

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Students, staff and leadership of Union County Schools honored all U.S. military veterans with a breakfast and formal program on Friday, Nov. 8.

2019 marks the 75th anniversary of D-Day, and the June 6, 1944, Battle of Normandy was the theme of Friday's program.

The ceremony took place inside the Fine Arts Center rather than Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium due to cold weather, but that didn't detract from the excitement of the event.

A packed high school cafeteria served as the scene of a veterans appreciation breakfast before the start of the program, and several school employees commented that this seventh annual event was attended by more veterans than

ever before.

"I think it's a wonderful thing to be recognized, especially for someone like me that was a Vietnam-era veteran," said local vet Dan Wickersham at the breakfast. "For many, many years, there was nobody that recognized anything the veterans had done at that time. This is touching."

The program, led by seniors of Union County High,

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Eubanks of Blairsville appears on 'Wheel of Fortune' for Veterans Week

By Mark Smith
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Staff Writer

When Women's Army Corps Veteran Faye Eubanks appeared on the nationally televised "Wheel of Fortune" gameshow last Friday during a special Veterans Week taping, it was a dream come true.

"My husband (James) and I used to watch the show every evening we were home, and I would sit on the couch and solve puzzles," Eubanks said of Wheel of Fortune, which has aired since 1975. "And he always said, 'You should get on that show.'"

"He passed away on New Year's Eve 2012. So, a couple



Veteran Faye Eubanks of Blairsville appeared on "Wheel of Fortune" for Veterans Weeks on Nov. 8. Photo/Wheel of Fortune

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GSP says Young Harris man at fault in Fire Department crash

By Shawn Jarrard
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A Towns County man has received two misdemeanor citations following a head-on collision with a Union County Fire Department vehicle on Nov. 1, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Joey Bruce, 50, of Young Harris, has been charged with failure to maintain lane and failure to yield right of way to an emergency vehicle, according to GSP.

The accident occurred on Murphy Highway/US 129/Georgia 11 between Rogers Road and Nottely Marina at

about 5:15 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 1, according to GSP.

Two local firefighters were in the process of responding to an emergency medical call as they made their way north in the Fire Department's 2018 Ford Expedition known as FR-1, with lights and sirens activated, according to GSP.

Bruce was traveling south at the time in his 2006 Chevy Impala when he quickly braked and swerved around another southbound vehicle that was pulling over to allow FR-1 safe passage, according to GSP.

The Impala crossed into the northbound lane of Murphy

Highway heading directly for FR-1, which in turn slowed down and attempted to exit the right shoulder to avoid the collision, according to GSP.

A guardrail prevented FR-1 from moving off the road, and the two vehicles crashed into one another right at the white line in the northbound lane, resulting in an accident that was "unavoidable" by FR-1, according to GSP.

Both vehicles were totaled, and GSP said following too closely coupled with suspected distraction or inattention to the roadway on Bruce's behalf likely contributed to the accident.

The firefighters were taken to Union General Hospital for treatment and were released later that evening, though they had not been medically cleared to return to work by press time Monday.

Bruce was transported via medical helicopter to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was still being treated for multiple broken bones at press time.

His wife Dawn reported shortly after the accident that her husband was "lucky to be alive," and that, fortunately, Bruce had not suffered brain damage or internal injuries.

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Joey Bruce at Erlanger Hospital after crashing into a Union County Fire Department emergency response vehicle on Nov. 1. Photo/Facebook

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