

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Burn ban strengthened as wildfires rage in Southeast

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Dozens of wildfires are burning around the region, having consumed tens of thousands of acres in the Southeastern United States.

Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, Virginia and Alabama have all been experiencing wildfire in recent weeks.

Drought has been a major factor in these wildfires, in effect creating tinderbox conditions for fires to take hold.

Most of the counties of North Georgia, including Union County, have been moved to the U.S. Drought Monitor's worst drought classification level of "Exceptional."

Making matters worse, trees in the heavily forested southern Appalachians are in

the middle of dropping their leaves, adding potential fuel to the ground, some of which has already complicated established wildfire control lines.

Hundreds of firefighting personnel with the Southern Area Coordination Center – one of 10 geographic areas in the U.S. established to collaboratively manage wildland fire and other natural disasters – have been hard at work fighting to put out and contain the dozens of wildfires in the Southeast.

Locally, the Union County government has been doing its part to prevent the outbreak of wildfire here.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, with Union County Fire Chief David Dyer, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and the Union County Sheriff's Office, issued

a Burn Proclamation on Friday, Nov. 4, declaring a total burn ban countywide on outdoor open flames.

The chief's recommendation, added weight to the proclamation by amending a portion of the civil emergencies section of the Code of Union County in a special called meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 9.

This amendment created a new section within Chapter 22, Article II, of the Code of Union County:

"The Union County commissioner, in conjunction with the fire chief of Union County, shall be authorized to ban all open burning of all types, including campfires, bonfires and any other open burning, when atmospheric, environmental, drought or other dangerous conditions

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On Thursday, Nov. 10, the Union County Fire Department responded to a small wildfire that broke out on Tate Road, just before the North Carolina state line in Union County. Firefighters were able to put out the fire.

Union County Veterans receive recognition in community gathering

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

First United Methodist Church played host to Union County's Veterans Day festivities during the 11th hour, on the 11th day, of the 11th month.

Since 1919, Nov. 11, or "Armistice Day," has been celebrated in the United States, beginning on the one-year anniversary of the end of World War I.

In 1926, Congress passed a resolution for an annual observance, then in 1938, Veterans Day became a national holiday.

The program at FUMC began at 11 a.m. on Friday with retired U.S. Army veteran Chuck Honaker serving as moderator.

The program featured guest speaker Barbara Honaker, as well as a Missing Man Table



Veterans from every branch of the United States Armed Forces attended the Veterans Day ceremony at First United Methodist Church of Union County on Nov. 11.

and Honors Ceremony by the North Georgia Honor Guard, performances by the Union County High School Chorus, a Commanders Award and

Recipient Speaker, and a lunch catered by Jim's Smokin' Que and Ingles.

The program opened See *Veterans*, Page 6A

Union County Students pay their respects to local veterans

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Every year, the students of Union County Schools salute veterans of the community with their Nov. 10 Veterans Day Ceremony.

And this year, Union County students loved on dozens of veterans from every branch of the military and their spouses.

Each aspect of the ceremony is conducted by students – the UCHS Band, Beta Club, Metals Class and FFA all helped with the setup and takedown of the event and in Mike Colwell stadium last Thursday.

Cadets from the North Georgia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol posted and retired the colors, Union County High School seniors exceed the event, the band and chorus jointly provided the musical accompaniment for the morning ceremony, and Kelly Helton's Middle School Sign Language Class signed along with each song.

UCHS senior Reagan Davis introduced the ceremony's sole Quilt of Valor recipient, Union County Schools' own

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The North Georgia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol posted and retired the colors at the schools' Veterans Day Ceremony. Pictured here: Sgt. Nicholas Sherman, Lt. Kevin Potts, Maj. Leilani Schroeder and Airman Alex Bailey.

C. T. Hussion named Georgia Assistant Principal of the Year

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In a small gathering the morning of Friday, Nov. 4, Union County High School Assistant Principal C.T. Hussion broke bread – specifically donuts – with his family, friends and colleagues.

The occasion? He had just been named statewide 2017 Assistant Principal of the Year by the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals.

"We have one of the greatest schools in the state of Georgia, and it really stems from our faculty and our staff, our district support, the kids, everything – it all comes

together," said Hussion to those attending the reception. "It was very easy to go down there and answer questions about this great school. Those people were extremely impressed with what we do here."

The GASSP held its Fall Conference on Oct. 29 through Oct. 31 in Savannah, which Hussion attended as a nominee for APOTY. While he was there, he sat for interviews with GASSP board members who asked him all about his work at Union County High School.

Now that he has the honorific, Hussion will be traveling the state in 2017 as an ambassador to the GASSP, See *Hussion*, Page 2A



Union County High School Assistant Principal C.T. Hussion addresses attendees in a recent breakfast gathering held to recognize his selection as Georgia Assistant Principal of the Year.

Gowder, Heaton cases see movement in Cherokee County, North Carolina

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

MURPHY, NC – Former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Blairsville physician Dr. James Heaton had some movement in their Cherokee County, North Carolina, criminal drug cases on Monday, Nov. 7.

Gowder received a continuance in his case through Feb. 27, 2017, while Dr. Heaton will appear before a judge on Jan. 3, 2017, so that his attorney can have motions heard, according to documents obtained from the Cherokee County (NC) Clerk of Courts Office.



Dr. James Heaton

Gowder and Heaton were arrested in North Carolina on Wednesday, March 2, following indictment by a



Mike Gowder

Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five counts of

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Sheriff's Give-A-Gift getting ready



The Union County Sheriff's Office gears up once again for its annual Give-A-Gift program. Here, Sheriff Mack Mason accepts donations from Joy Scaffa.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When it comes to Christmas morning, everyone knows that it's all about the happiness of children.

Which is why it's important to Union County Sheriff Mack Mason that the long-running Sheriff's Give-A-Gift Program continue as it has since 2001.

"People that have been well blessed, it's an opportunity for them to give back to people that might not have gotten the breaks they had, or might have had hardships during the course of the year," said Sheriff Mason.

Sickness and/or lost jobs are common hardships experienced this time of year, both of which lead to financial troubles for families, especially when parents may not have

that extra money to spend on Christmas presents.

"It's the kids that suffer," said Sheriff Mason. "This is a way that people who can afford to and have the desire, they can come up here and pitch in, and help make a kid have a better Christmas."

The Give-A-Gift Program provides for children ages 1 to 12, and the sheriff's

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