

North Georgia News

4 Sections 20 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Ring in 2023 with multiple area events

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

2022 is about to become a thing of the past as the holiday season transitions into a celebration of all things new. And fortunately, there's plenty to do locally when it comes to ushering in the New Year.

People from all walks of life are looking forward to coming ever closer to pushing past COVID-19 and enabling more time with family and friends in 2023. As such, many organizations and businesses between Union and Towns are helping to bring forth the new calendar in style.

From music and dancing to fireworks and drinks, there's a little bit of something for everyone if you know where to look.

Perhaps the biggest of those "somethings" is at the

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, where the Christmas lights will linger just a bit longer before ringing in 2023 with the annual New Year's Fireworks Show.

On Saturday, Dec. 31, at 5 p.m., the Fairgrounds will open to the public with craft vendor stands as well as a car show courtesy of the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club.

The fireworks will go off at about 8:45 p.m., and vendor stalls will close shortly before then to give everyone a chance to watch the night sky light up. In the meantime, guests can warm up at firepits and enjoy hot chocolate, hot dogs, and hot hogs in the form of barbecue.

As always, admission to the fireworks is free, with a rain date of Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023, in the event of inclement weather.

Paradise Hills Winery Resort and Spa will be hosting a private party at the Vine

Overlook, \$85 per person. Attendees will enjoy live music by Chris Carpenter along with "holiday swag" that includes traditional party goodies like noisemakers, sunglasses and hats on Saturday.

Similar to the Fairgrounds' celebration, the Winery will be holding its toast early at 6 p.m., considering the owner's Belgian background; 6 p.m. in North Georgia corresponds to midnight in Western Europe.

Granddaddy Mimm's Distillery of Blairsville will be dropping a barrel instead of a peach Dec. 31. Starting at 6 p.m. and running until 12:30 a.m., the "First Inaugural Blairsville Bash" will feature three bands, including distillery proprietor and country music artist Tommy Townsend himself.

Guests can dine on traditional New Year's foods

See *New Year 2023*, Page 2A



Brasstown Valley Resort will be hosting its ever-popular New Year's Eve Gala Saturday night. Photo by North Georgia News/2011

'Bomb cyclone' plunges temperatures nationwide

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

For more than half of the U.S. population, the arctic blast that swept across the nation over the weekend painfully brought to mind the Christmas classic, "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

Dubbed a "bomb cyclone," which is technically defined using barometric pressure readings, the cold air front that moved in from Canada caused dangerously frigid conditions from border to border, disrupting everything from flights to power for many Americans.

Closer to home, the millions of people who draw

See *Winter Weather*, Page 6A



Dagmar, a 19-month-old Blairsville native, happily chilling on the shoreline of a frozen portion of Lake Nottely the morning of Christmas Eve. Photo by Meghan Jarrard

BOE says goodbye to Potts, hears from public

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Board of Education bid farewell to one of its own on Tuesday, Dec. 13, with the last regular meeting of the semester being Board Member Keith Potts' last as an elected official.

Potts, who decided not to run for re-election earlier this year, will complete his second term at the end of this month.

"During the last eight years, Mr. Potts has served the Union County Board of Education faithfully," Superintendent John Hill said. "He has been very much of a constant sense of guidance to

See *Farewell Potts*, Page 2A



Outgoing Union County School Board Member Keith Potts received a special service award in the Dec. 13 BOE meeting, pictured here with his wife Casey, who is the Media Specialist at Primary School. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

District Attorney Langley talks shop with civic group

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

HIWASSEE – Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley stopped in the weekly breakfast meeting of the Mountain Movers & Shakers earlier this month to offer a rundown on the goings on of his office.

Langley ran unopposed in the 2022 General Election, meaning he will swear into his fourth four-year term in January, and Movers & Shakers Organizer William "Scotty" Scott congratulated Langley on another successful run for office that Friday, Dec. 2.

"I've been a prosecutor here in this Enotah Circuit ... for 24 years," Langley said. "I'm very honored that, if I don't get hit by a truck or a bus between now and Jan. 1, as of the first workday in 2023, I will



Jeff Langley
District Attorney

be the longest serving DA in the Enotah Circuit history."

Continuing, "Right now, I have a staff of about 27 people. I have 11 assistant

district attorneys who help me prosecute cases. Technically, we've got over 5,000 cases pending in my four counties.

See *Enotah DA Langley*, Page 3A

American Legion observes Wreaths Across America Day



Local Civil Air Patrol Cadets and Cub Scouts joined the stage together in observance of Wreaths Across America Day at the Fine Arts Center Dec. 17. Photo by Jeremy Foster

By Jeremy Foster
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Dec. 17 marked the annual national observance of Wreaths Across America Day,

and the American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 of Blairsville hosted an event highlighting the special occasion inside the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center Saturday.

"Each December ... our mission to Remember (fallen U.S. veterans), Honor (those who serve) and Teach (children the value of freedom) (children the value of freedom)"

See *Wreaths Across Day*, Page 6A



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BASKETBALL
BATTLE OF THE STATES
Dec 28-30 @ Towns Co.

Union County Gym RFP See page 5A
Atlanta Rhythm Section Tix On Sale See page 6A
Give the Gift of Food This Season See page 3A

New Year 2023...from Page 1A

like collard greens, black-eyed peas and cornbread, or they can sample some peach cobbler and ground-smoked barbecue from Jim's Smokin' Que.

A Groovy Bus will be shuttling folks from the Downtown Square to the distillery, and in addition to karaoke, celebrants can enjoy a caricature artist, professional photography, and a big screen TV to watch the Georgia Bulldogs take on the Ohio State Buckeyes starting at 8 p.m.

Everything except for food and drinks will be free, and food tickets can be purchased at the distillery or www.granddaddymimms.com while supplies last. Dinner will be available from 7-9 p.m. It's suggested to dress warmly, considering live music will be outside with the fireworks. The Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge will be busy

celebrating 2023 in two locations, including at The Oaks Lakeside Kitchen, where a Great Gatsby-themed gathering will see DJ Keenan Carter spinning tunes from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Guests can choose between two three-course Prix Five seating bookings, the first at 6:30 p.m. for \$65 per person to feature a quieter experience, and the second at 9:30 p.m. for \$95 per person with wine paired with each course.

And Marina Station is back with another themed New Year's Eve party. This time, guests are encouraged to dress in their best cowboy (or cowgirl) getup to come enjoy some music by the Gregg Erwin Band from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Food will be available until 10 p.m., and after that,

the fun goes on with all sorts of party favors before being capped off by a champagne toast at midnight.

There will also be a New Year's Day celebration at the Station, to include build-your-own bottomless mimosas from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Jan. 1. Those still recovering from the night before can partake in a brunch featuring specials like "The Big Boaters Breakfast," "The Angler Omelet" and "The Station Standard."

Finally, over at the Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris, the annual New Year's Eve Gala will offer an "exquisite" way to welcome 2023. Those 21-and up may walk into an "enchanted forest" in business formal attire and enjoy live music per the Atlanta Production Band. Brasstown Valley's Gala

begins at 7 p.m., with the bar opening at 7:30 p.m., along with a gourmet dinner buffet serving up seafood, salads, lambchops, and carved strip loin, plus dessert and other luxurious fare.

Dancing begins with more upbeat music at about 8 p.m., and folks can enjoy party favors like those offered at other events until the balloons drop at midnight. For the sports-inclined, the football game will be on in the room directly beside the gala so guests can move between partying and watching.

Unfortunately, all of the \$679 overnight rooms have been sold out, but guests can still purchase party-only couple's packages for \$325. To make a reservation, call 1-800-201-3205. Happy New Year!

Farewell Potts...from Page 1A

us and the administration side of this school district to do the right thing by kids."

The exiting member said his time on the School Board has been "a learning experience, and it's been a privilege for me to get to (serve the community), and I'm grateful for it."

Jason McCarter will be sworn into the seat being vacated by Potts to start his own four-year term in January.

The future of the annual overnight trip of Union County Middle School was broached by Principal Pat Donaldson and teacher Denise Driskell, who proposed that, rather than traveling to Washington, D.C. as in years past, the field trip should follow the example of 2022.

To align more closely with Georgia history studies, this year, the kids took a trip around the state to see important locations like Roosevelt's Little White House, the Okefenokee Swamp, and Tybee Island.

While it didn't include a deep dive in exploring the country's capital, it allowed students to learn more about their home state's geography, history and culture.

"One of the things that we came up with was that we felt like the Georgia Studies Trip was definitely a good fit for the eighth grade," explained Driskell, sharing the results of an after-action review.

"It fits with the curriculum, it's close, more affordable, and we felt like, too, that parents would be more willing to let their students go if it was that close," Driskell continued. "And it's a more laid-back trip."

Ultimately, the School Board agreed to accept the Georgia Studies Trip as an annual occurrence, and upcoming iterations will be able to include more students for a total of two buses, or about 80 to 90 eighth-graders.

Considering that the

Dec. 13 meeting was the last of 2022, the board also needed to vote on whether the usual schedule would be used in the new year. Rather than introducing a new time, frequency, or day of the week, it was decided to keep the previously settled timetable.

For reference, the Board of Education meets the third Tuesday of every month, with the work session beginning at 6 p.m. and the regular meeting beginning at 7 p.m. inside the Board Office.

Four members of the public voiced their opinions at the end of the meeting, the first being Lisa Nelson.

Nelson has an extensive history with Union County Schools, having been a bus driver for over two decades. Following criticism of the board and district in recent meetings, Nelson wanted to say "thank you" to school administrators.

"You know, there's so many people in our system that do so much that's not seen anywhere else," said Nelson, feeling the need to share her pride with the organization. "It's important that everyone is made aware of all the background things that go on in the system."

Second at the podium was Will Potts, a Union County graduate with a similar message. As it turns out, Potts studied music extensively and became a professional bluegrass performer. He credits his success to Band Director Will Stafford and Chorus Teacher Alicia Covington.

"I get to play bluegrass every day, which is awesome," Potts said. "It's the best thing ever for me, and they were really helpful to get me used to doing music and understanding what I need to do. It really prepared me for life in general as well as music."

Next, Vince Peterson, who has addressed the board

previously, returned to express his displeasure with school administration and meeting layouts, saying that the perceived lack of focus on academia, at least in board meeting communications, concerned him.

"At last month's meeting, I listened to the principals from the five schools present their update," he said. "They talked about sports teams, plays, musicals, Halloween festivities, Veterans Day celebrations, field trips, etc. It almost sounded like an advertisement for some summer camp."

"These kinds of things, when I went to school, were known as extracurricular activities. What seemed missing to me, in these reports, was the curricular activities – the academics. No reference at all."

Peterson suggested that the board "evaluate the effectiveness" of Superintendent John Hill as well as further test students' academic progress and share the knowledge with the public "in order to evaluate the job of the School Board."

Lastly, Edie Donaldson – daughter of UCMS Principal Pat Donaldson – also wanted to show her gratitude to Union County Schools.

As a 2021 Honor Graduate, Donaldson has moved on to study at the University of North Georgia. Additionally, she's a member of the ROTC Program there and believes that growing up in the local school system has greatly contributed to her success.

"Union County Schools helped prepare me for both college and the workforce," she said. "I have successfully held a job at LongHorn's here in Blairsville since they opened, and I was one of over 450 applicants. I think this is a testament of my employability skills I was taught throughout school."

16-Hour Incident Safety Officer Course

Union County Fire Department would like to congratulate Sergeant Jonathan Fortenberry and Firefighter Warren Cole on their completion of the 16-hour Incident Safety Officer course.

This 16-hour course examines the Safety Officer's role at emergency responses. A specific focus on operations within an Incident Command System (ICS) as a Safety Officer. Response to all-hazardous types of situations is emphasized.

"Fighting fire has never been known as a safe occupation. We are proud of Sergeant Jonathan Fortenberry and Firefighter Warren Cole for



Sergeant Jonathan Fortenberry



Firefighter Warren Cole

furthering their education and learning techniques to make our job as safe as possible," said Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

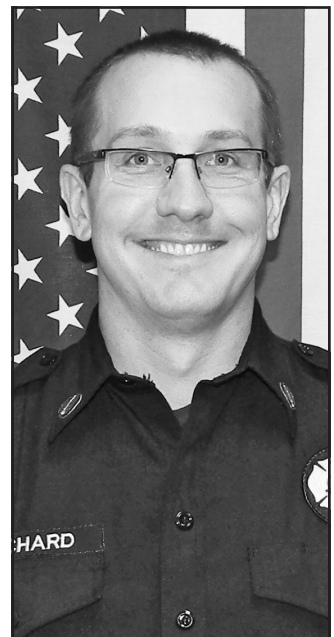
Fire Department Management Course

Union County Fire Department would like to congratulate Captain Justin Blanchard and Sergeant Patrick Schmidt on their completion of the 80-hour Fire Department Management course.

This course introduced the job requirements of a Company Officer for Fire and Emergency Services, which included governmental theory, human resource management, administrative functions, policy/procedures, fire prevention, risk management, information management, firefighter near-miss case studies, incident operations, and post-incident analysis.

With the competition of this course, Captain Justin Blanchard and Sergeant Patrick Schmidt have completed all requirements for their National ProBoard Certification for National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Fire Officer II.

"Leadership is essential in any organization. We are



Capt. Justin Blanchard



Sgt. Patrick Schmidt

fortunate to have dedicated firefighters and officers who are willing to take these classes in order to provide the needed leadership in our department,"

said Union County Fire Chief David Dyer.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Enotah DA Langley...from Page 1A

"I'd qualify that by saying about 1,400 of those are really somewhat dormant; these are people with outstanding bench warrants, they're on pre-trial diversion, their cases are on hold for some reason. But that still leaves us 4,300 cases or so that we're actively working."

Going into the financial aspect of running his office, Langley said he has funding to staff 11 assistant district attorneys. Unfortunately, finding people to fill these roles for the pay on offer can be difficult.

"I have hired two temporary lawyers that I only have temporary (federal) funding for," he said, noting that this funding is for catch-up from the COVID backlog. "And this week, one of my regular permanent attorneys came to me and said, 'It's just not enough money - I'm quitting.'"

"So, I've added two, lost one, and now I have 12 working in our office. And that's a challenge for us. I'll tell you, right now is a stressful time in prosecution. It is hard to find good people. Just like McDonald's can't find staff, I can't find qualified staff either for what we pay."

Elaborating on the caseload in the circuit, which spans Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin counties, Langley said each of his assistant district attorneys is actively working on over 300 cases, and the number has only grown since losing one of his staff members.

"That doesn't mean they work 300 cases a year," Langley said. "That means on their

active list, they have 300, and in the course of a year, more flow in and more flow out, so they really are working on 450 cases in a year.

"That's a challenge ... and it's putting them under tremendous pressure, and that's why I lost a young attorney this week; I'm asking of her things she just doesn't feel like she can do."

That being said, Langley described his current working situation as both "the best of times and the worst of times," because, while he is certainly facing staffing and caseload hardships, he also feels blessed to have "a great staff."

Turning to his guiding philosophy as a prosecutor, Langley said, "What I strive to do every day with my staff is to get substantial justice."

"We're not going to get 'perfect justice' on every case, and in some ways, not in any case," he said. "In this life, we're not going to get perfect justice - that's for the next life. But we strive to get as close to the right thing being done with every case that we can."

The district attorney touched on several other topics that morning, including his concerns about how the "national woke agenda is affecting law enforcement and criminal justice," specifically calling out ideas around "mass incarceration" and "systemic racism" in the legal system.

"We're not sending low-level offenders into the state prison system; that's just a myth," Langley said. "All this 'woke' stuff about mass incarceration - I've never mass

incarcerated anyone in my 25-year prosecution career. Every individual gets an individual case and an individual trial, and they each get their own attorney.

"We have to present the evidence. If they choose a jury trial, we have to get 12 out of 12 citizens of the county where they committed a crime to agree that it had been proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

Addressing alleged racial disparities in policing, Langley said that "the studies I've seen, (among) individuals shot and killed by law enforcement, African Americans are 26% of that; African Americans are 26% of all arrests. Where's the disparity? It's just not there."

He also criticized the idea that the state should work to reduce the prison population based on an arbitrary number of people imprisoned.

"We have 50,000 people in the state prison right now," Langley said. "That's a lot. But they drop that number like, somehow, that's the problem. I hear prosecutors say that, judges say that, law enforcement officials, governors, saying, 'We've got to reduce that number.'"

"But we don't decide how many people are in prison by the number's size - we do it by how many people have committed crimes that deserve to be in prison. It's like saying, 'Oh my goodness, we have too many speeding tickets in North Georgia.' Well, how many are speeding?"

"Here's what Georgia has done with criminal justice reform, they've said, 'Oh

my goodness, we have too many speeding tickets, so let's take radar away from law enforcement... oh my goodness, speeding dropped, how about that?' That's the thinking behind this woke agenda."

Langley fielded multiple questions, reviewing things like drug and mental health courts, office budgetary breakdown, jury duty, opioids, the process of notifying crime victims about case updates, and rough stats on the different kinds of cases his office has been handling this year.

"We have more than 300 DUI cases this year, and we have probably 700 drug cases," Langley said. "Right now, we've got technically 15 murder cases pending in the circuit. That kind of overstates it, though, because four of those (got convictions and) are on active appeal."

"(Several more are) drug overdose cases where we've charged murder based upon who we believed distributed the drugs ... then about four are more traditional murder cases."

Interestingly, Langley said that the number of "serious crimes" per 1,000 people in Union and Towns counties is remarkably low compared with other Georgia counties.

In Dougherty County in South Georgia, for example, the crime rate is 51 serious crimes per 1,000 people each year, compared with 36 in DeKalb County, 7.5 in Union and 5.6 Towns.

"You're much safer here than you are almost anywhere else in Georgia," Langley said, noting specifically that Towns County had the least amount of known gang activity in the state.

Continuing, "Ninety-eight percent of our crime here in North Georgia is among people in the drug community or among people with violence going on within their family. If no one in your family wants to kill you and you're not out doing drugs, you're incredibly safe here."

The Movers & Shakers typically meet every Friday at 8 a.m., usually welcoming a guest speaker of community import, though they are currently breaking for the holidays and will return Jan. 20 at the Sundance Grill with guest Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

Give the Gift of Food to a Senior this Holiday Season

Share the gift of a meal with home-bound senior citizens in Union County this holiday season through the Home Delivered Meal Holiday Gift Certificate Program. Donate money for the Union County Home Delivered Meal program and we will send a card from you to a senior in our program.

You can provide a meal for one day or meals for an entire week, month or year. The cost of one meals is \$4.50, one

week is \$22.50, one month is \$99.00, one year is \$1,188.00. All gifts are tax deductible.

Checks should be made payable to Union County Senior Center, Holiday Gift Certificate Program and mailed or delivered to: Union County Senior Center, 95 Senior Center Drive, Blairsville, GA, 30512.

From Thanksgiving until New Year's Day, meals will be delivered to senior citizens with a special certificate/card to wish Happy Holidays from the gift giver. Food is essential to good health for everyone, but especially for seniors who can-

not shop or cook for themselves. Our staff and volunteers deliver meals Monday through Friday and check on the seniors - sometimes we are the only people they see all day. We receive Federal, state and county funding, however, the meal cost goes up each year and there is always a large deficit we must make up through fund raisers and donations from churches, businesses, civic groups and community members like you. The food costs rises each year and the demand for meals has increased. Please assist us in preserving this vital program. Thank you for making a difference in your community! For more information call 706-439-6105.

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Winter Weather...from Page 1A

power from the Tennessee Valley Authority were subjected to multiple periods of planned rolling blackouts Dec. 23 and Dec. 24 to keep the electric grid from collapsing from the widespread and sustained "record-setting temperatures."

North Georgia Mountains residents didn't experience the coldest temps on record here, but the swing was wild, going from a high of 44.5 degrees on Friday to a low of 2.1 degrees as the winter weather took hold, with Saturday's low approaching zero at 0.3 degrees.

To manage increased home heating demands brought on by the prolonged, widespread cold – and to avoid a repeat of the massive electricity generation failure from a 2021 winter storm in Texas that resulted in nearly 250 deaths – TVA enacted an emergency plan it calls "Step 50."

TVA generates the electricity transmitted to the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation, and as the co-op explained Friday,

"TVA has implemented Step 50 of its Emergency Load Curtailment Plan, which requires temporary interruption of general firm load."

"This step is necessary due to an unforeseen generation supply challenge impacting the entire service area that is compromising TVA's ability to deliver firm load electricity to all consumers," the EMC said, calling on households and businesses to voluntarily reduce power usage.

In addition to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC customers, more than 10 million Americans receive power through TVA, which transmits electricity through a network of 153 local power providers in the Tennessee Valley region across 80,000 square miles in seven states.

On Dec. 23, the extreme demand required to offset the sudden subfreezing temps for homes and businesses across the region resulted in TVA supplying "more energy than at any other time in its history – 740 gigawatt-hours, or 740 million kilowatt-hours," the federally-owned corporation

said.

Unfortunately, this meant that Blue Ridge Mountain EMC had to comply with the emergency intermittent power interruptions, which were occurring on top of the multiple weather-related outages from high winds knocking down poles and trees.

Blackouts affected about 10% of EMC members on a rolling 15-minute interval while Step 50 remained active, with the interruptions being contained to Friday and Saturday.

Around noon on Christmas Eve, the EMC announced that TVA had been able to restore full grid stability, thereby canceling the need for continued Step 50 activation so that families could spend Christmas Day without planned power outages.

"Thank you all so much for your patience, endurance and, above all else, cooperation in this extraordinary circumstance," Blue Ridge Mountain EMC General Manager Allan Glidewell said. "We have all seen extreme temperatures in our lives,

but the extent of area these temperatures are impacting is certainly unusual.

"The impacts on the Eastern U.S. power grid have been extensive. Many of the major providers have had to initiate rolling intermittent outages to save the system from a collapse such as was seen last winter in Texas.

"TVA has been affected by the extreme load, loss of some generation (some of which was due to the rapidity of the temperature drop) and the loss of power available from neighboring utilities."

Aside from the rolling blackouts and some wind damage, no major weather-related issues were reported in Union County by press time, though it should be noted that the extreme cold does make first responder jobs more difficult.

In Towns County, firefighters handled a house fire caused by a wall heater and responded to several water alarms for frozen pipes as well as a propane leak, and no one was injured in any of the reported incidents.

The North Georgia Mountains received a dusting of snow overnight Saturday for about 0.2 inches of powdery precipitation, and high winds



Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus standing outside Blairsville City Hall in about 0.2 inches of snow that dusted the county early on Christmas Eve. The first day of Winter 2022 was Dec. 21.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

at times produced subzero windchills during the coldest times of the weekend, with max gusts reaching 25.7 mph on Friday.

Black ice on roadways was limited in scope, no doubt assisted by surface treatments before the front moved in last week, and it was cold enough over the weekend for sections

of both Lake Nottely and Lake Chatuge to experience surface freezing and "steam fog."

By press time, the National Weather Service forecast for the week was calling for subfreezing lows until Wednesday, with highs reaching the 50s by the end of the week.

Wreaths Across Day...from Page 1A



Wreaths Across America is a patriotic effort to honor departed veterans by placing a wreath "on each hero's grave," this year at Union Memory Gardens in Blairsville.

Photo by Jeremy Foster

is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 3,400 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad," according to <https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/>.

Union Memory Gardens on Ledford Road in Union County served as the locally coordinated location for Wreaths Across America Day 2022, and dedicated local volunteers traveled there on Sunday, Dec. 18, to lay wreaths on veteran graves.

In the Dec. 17 ceremony, retired U.S. Air Force Col. Kathy Merritt, who serves as Senior Vice Commander of AL Post 121, said, "This tribute is a symbol of our gratitude to all veterans and their families."

Merritt took the time to thank the multiple stakeholders who made the event possible, including the Union County High School Administration "for allowing us to use this beautiful venue," and for the Union County High School Band for providing music for the memorial.

She also expressed gratitude for the Future Farmers of America for making the wreaths, "and Antioch Baptist Church and Coosa Methodist for participating."

"(I also want to recognize) the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution for being pivotal in bringing the Wreaths Across America mobile educational display unit to Blairsville earlier this year, and to the wreath sponsors as well," she said.

Continuing, "This year, we have had approximately 600 wreaths sponsored by this community, and Union County is proud to have helped lay over 2 million wreaths across the globe," she said.

Post 121 Chaplain Richard Hoibraten offered the invocation with the North Georgia Honor Guard, and the 152nd Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol posted the colors while the National Anthem played, followed by Cub Scouts Pack 101 leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Keynote Speaker for the gathering was Post 121

Cmdr. and retired USAF Col. Mike Merritt.

"We are proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all Americans from many walks of life to remember and honor those who have served and their families that teach these values to our next generation," he said.

"Every individual made a commitment to serve when they raised their hand and swore an oath to our nation and continue to do so today through these veteran groups and organizations."

Wreaths displayed in the ceremony were in remembrance of the 1776 Flag to honor servicemen and women of the Revolutionary War, and those of the U.S. Army, Marine Corps., Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, and the soldiers who never came home, POW/MIA.

The ceremony closed with the playing of "Taps" and a prayer.

Wreaths are just \$15, and more information can be found at www.wreathscrossamerica.org or by emailing iwpost121@gmail.com.

Congressman Andrew Clyde and wife attend Union County Republican's Christmas Party



Union County Republican's 2022 Christmas Party

The Union County Republican Party held their annual Christmas party at the Union County Community Center on Saturday, December 17. Congressman Andrew Clyde and his wife, Dr. Jennifer Clyde were the featured guests. Dr. Jennifer Clyde presented a program of Christmas music with a string quartet that included three musicians that teach music in North Georgia.

Congressman Clyde discussed the importance of government accountability in light of our tax dollars going to Ukraine and the FTX scandal. He is excited about his involvement with the Oversight Committee and he has asked for a seat on the Appropriations Committee in the upcoming

year. Best of all, he hopes to get a seat on the Justice Subcommittee. This subcommittee has authority over the Justice Department, the FBI, the CIA, and the ATF.

The House is supposed to initiate all spending bills, and normally there are 12 appropriation bills that are supposed to go through the House individually, but under Democrat leadership, they have combined them all into a massive \$1.7 trillion spending bill which will be voted on this week, before the Republicans take over the House. He will be voting no to this bill. If this passes, it will take away the authority of the House for the next 9 months until October 1, 2023. It is called a "Pay Go" bill which can raise

taxes, but the Republicans have a "Cut Go" budget that means if they want something that is not funded, they have to cut somewhere else.

Congressman Clyde emphasized how important the Speaker of the House is to government accountability. He is concerned about Kevin McCarthy's commitment to accountability and hopes one of the many able conservatives will run for Speaker of the House.

The Republicans have a commitment to America that has four pillars: 1) An economy that is strong, 2) a nation that is secure, 3) a future based on freedom and 4) a government that is accountable to the people.