

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Trackrock Campground & Cabins celebrates 50 years

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

When asked to describe Trackrock, the man

who opened Trackrock Campground with his wife Martha in 1966, family and friends invariably default to one in particular –

visionary.

Tommie, a Union County native, passed away in 2008, but his legacy continues through the campground, cabins and Trackrock Stables, which are owned and operated by his immediate family.

Union and Towns counties owe much of their success as progressive, growth-forward mountain communities to Trackrock Campground & Cabins. In order to illustrate this point, it is important to follow the Alexanders' story leading up to and through the opening of the campgrounds.

Tommie joined the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in Germany during and after World War II. He went to Austria following the war, where he saw Europeans traveling from war-torn cities to visit the idyllic

mountains in order to relax, and this planted the seed that would eventually grow into Trackrock Campground.

He met and married Martha while serving in Germany, and he came back with Martha to the U.S. and Union County following his discharge in 1952.

When he and Martha arrived from Germany there wasn't much industry in the area, so in January of 1953, and with a loan from the Federal Housing Administration, the two bought 250 acres of land and started a farm atop the same land that would become Trackrock Campground.

The couple raised their four children – Mary, Linda, Frank and Sonya – on this

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L-R: Sonya Alexander, Frank Alexander and Christie Parker; front row: Martha Alexander and Linda Maddox. Sonya, Frank and Linda are the children of Martha and Tommie Alexander, and Christie is the daughter of Sonya and the granddaughter of Martha and Tommie.



Pictured right to left, Yasha and Mary Manzourollah with Mary's mother, Martha Alexander, at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Trackrock Campground.

Vietnam Veterans honored at courthouse

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

To the Vietnam Veterans of the Union County, this past year has been one of remembering.

From the visit of the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall to the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, these retired servicemen have finally been able to experience the "Welcome Home" they were never given.

Veterans have received another honor in the form of a shadowbox display, unveiled at the Union County Courthouse on Saturday, July 23.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Vietnam Veterans of America Blairsville Chapter President Mike Priven worked together to bring this project to fruition.

"Mike Priven comes over to the courthouse with a shadowbox that held the flag and the plaque," said

Commissioner Paris, talking about the origins of the new courthouse display. "He wanted to have it hung in the courthouse. Well, it sat there for a little while, and I kept thinking about where it was going to put it.

"I started thinking about all the pictures that were taken at The Wall, and how we could incorporate those pictures with the shadowbox. So, I got together with Mike, and he gathered all the pictures from The Wall so we could have one of every day.

"I started trying to figure out where we were going to put it. Well, of all the people who come through the courthouse, 90 percent of them come through this way, so it seemed like the right place to put it."

Walk through the front doors of the courthouse, turn left, and there hangs the display – a memento to the men and women who so bravely endured the trials and tribulations of war to keep this



A Vietnam Veteran studies the recently installed display honoring veterans like himself with the flag that flew over the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall Memorial when it visited Blairsville in October of last year. The shadowbox is surrounded by images taken with the Moving Wall Memorial.

great country safe.

Brainstorm Creative Productions printed the photographs from The Moving Wall visitation on canvas, wrapping the fabric around

the frame to create the final presentation.

"It's an excellent representation of what happened while The Wall was

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Republican Primary Runoff Tuesday, July 26

see www.nganews.com for details

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Election Day voting for the Republic Primary Runoff will take place Tuesday, July 26, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. at one of the 11 predetermined polling places.

The runoff race in question is for the office of 8th District State Representative in the Georgia General Assembly, and voters will be deciding between Matt Gurtler and Kent Woerner.

It should be noted that those who voted the Democratic ticket in the May 24 election

will not be able to vote in the Republican Primary runoff.

However, voters who did not vote in the May 24 Primary can still vote in this runoff, though they must have been registered in time to have voted in the May 24 Primary in order to vote in the July 26 Runoff.

Also, those who voted Non-Partisan in the May 24 Primary can vote in this runoff as well.

The election occurred after press time this week, so for election results check out the newspaper's website at www.nganews.com.

BOE stays busy during summer vacation

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A County Extension personnel contract, a Memorandum of Understanding, Ninth District Head Start contracts, and federal funding of the Union County Learning Enrichment Center headlined the Tuesday, July 19, meeting of the Union County Board of Education.

The University of Georgia's Union County Extension Coordinator Timothy Jennings received unanimous board approval for a part-time employee that will be 85 percent funded by the AmeriCorps Grant. The county would be obligated to fund no more than \$2,100 per year of the salary of

an employee that would work approximately 1,700 hours.

"The AmeriCorps program is similar to the Peace Corps program," Jennings explained. "We receive funding from the federal government that's overseen through the Georgia 4-H office in Athens. Basically, it will allow extra personnel to work with 4-H in the schools and after school programs."

Jennings also requested, and received, unanimous approval for a minor update on the Memorandum of Understanding, a document that explains what the extension office will provide to the county.

"Other than removing a few signatures, it's the same

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New Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield, right, sit in on the Tuesday, July 19, meeting of the Union County Board of Education

No petition candidates ahead of EMC elections

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Unlike the elections held at the last two annual meetings of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, the meeting this September will feature not a single petition candidate for the EMC's board of directors, according to EMC Board Chair Steven Phillips.

But that's because petitions are no longer necessary.

"When somebody contacted the Nominating Committee this year, they were nominated," said Phillips, who was elected two years ago as a petition candidate. "Over the years past, they had a little bit of trouble out of that being nominated – that's why I went in by petition, and most of the people on the board went in by petition up until now.

"But now, if the Nominating Committee was



Steven Phillips

notified that somebody wanted to run, they were nominated. We had nobody go in by petition this year, everybody went in by nominations as far as running for the board."

There will be six names from which to choose during the

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PDC, Griggs use garden to feed, teach

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Carlton H. Colwell Probation Detention Center (PDC) continues to be at the forefront of the Georgia Department of Corrections when it comes to finding innovative rehabilitation techniques while keeping more money in the pockets of Georgia taxpayers.

The PDC is in the process of saving taxpayers more than \$5,000 this year with its garden program that is at the same time allowing its state probation detainees the opportunity to learn gardening techniques.

Approximately 2.5 acres of land next to the PDC have been designated for garden use, which provides a wide

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Dr. Meg Gring-Whitley, Richard Keen and Jordan Keen of General Supply, PDC Detail Sergeant Richard Griggs, PDC Superintendent Diane Hassett, Jessie Davis of Basket Barn, PDC Food Service Manager Tammy Bracken and Experiment Station Superintendent Ray Covington. Group pictured with fruits of labor inside Colwell Probation Detention Center.

School bus mechanic arrested for selling meth

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A 39-year-old Union County Schools bus mechanic was arrested on Tuesday, July 19, for selling methamphetamine, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

James Robert Gooch has been charged with possession of controlled substance with intent to distribute, five counts of distribution of controlled substance, and possession of controlled substance, according to the sheriff's office.

"It's been about a two-month long investigation, which led to the arrest of four people," said UCSO Capt. Chad



James Robert Gooch

Deyton. "Executed a search warrant at 116 Strawberry Rd., Blairsville, Georgia, where we located quantities

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