

North Georgia News

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Sheriff's Narcotics Division takes down two marijuana grow houses

By Charles Duncan
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Three people are behind bars following the culmination of a seven-month narcotics investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division.

Sheriff's detectives and Appalachian Drug Task Force agents seized approximately 162 marijuana plants and 42 pounds of processed marijuana from two grow house operations, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

The street value of the marijuana was approximately \$245,000, Sheriff Mason said.

Darryl Vincent Hall, 51, Uriah Wade Hall, 37, and Cassie Lynn Hall, 31, were arrested last week in a bust of the two grow houses for marijuana, Sheriff Mason said.

The Appalachian



These 86 marijuana plants were being grown in the basement of a home at 346 Crescent Road in Union County. Also, 40 pounds of processed pot was also found here, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Drug Task Force assisted in the investigation because of multiple jurisdictions, Sheriff Mason said.

Detectives recovered 76 plants and 2 pounds of processed marijuana from the grow house located

in Plott Town Overlook in Union County Sheriff's Lt. Chad Deyton said.

Approximately 86 plants and 40 pounds of processed marijuana was recovered from the grow

house in Union County ON Crescent Road, Lt. Deyton said.

Darryl Hall was on probation for drug-related charges, according to the Georgia Department of Corrections. His criminal history includes a conviction for murder in South Georgia, Sheriff Mason said.

Union County Chief Deputy John George said that an 8-year-old child was living in the home in Union County. She is now in the custody of Department of Family and Children Services, Chief Deputy George said.

The investigation that led to the grow house busts began following the arrest of Darryl Hall's wife, Teresa Renee Hall in late May on charges of distribution of a Schedule II narcotic, Roxycodone, Lt. Deyton said.

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2013: A Year in Review

By Charles Duncan
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2013 was a busy year in Union County.

This week, the North Georgia News will take a look back at the stories that made 2013 interesting.

For the first time in 64 years, Union County had a Republican sheriff as Mack Mason took the reins of the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Also, Lee Knight became as far as we know, the first Republican Tax Commissioner in Union County history.

What men would play an important part in shaping Union County in 2013.

Sheriff Mason overhauled the Sheriff's Office, making significant changes in the way the department runs, and who wears a badge.

Yes, there was turnover, but, for the most part, the community came to know and appreciate their local law enforcement.

For what is believed to be the first time, Sheriff Mason deputized the entire Blairsville Police Department, including Police Chief Johnny Carroll.

Now every member of the City of Blairsville's police force experiences jurisdiction extended beyond city limits.

According to Union County Sheriff Mack Mason, this was a promise he made to voters last year and another way to make Union County safer for each of its residents.

"It's just the right thing to do," Sheriff Mason said. "It's a campaign promise that I made to ensure that all of our government agencies work together. This enables the officers of the City of Blairsville to go outside of the city if need be, to help one of our officers,



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason deputizes Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll as a Union County Sheriff's deputy. Photo/Todd Forrest

or the citizens of our county if a deputy is not readily available."

The Blairsville Police Department can go outside the city limits and conduct interviews, make an arrest if they have to, or, if they see a drunk driver out of their typical jurisdiction, they can take action and pull that individual over based on their authority through the sheriff.

According to Sheriff Mason, the City officers will remain deputies of the county until at least 2016.

"State of Georgia law requires that deputies be sworn in every county at each new term. They were deputized to assist us if need be. They're not going to be working the county, this just gives them the right to go outside the city if need be.

"This also removes some of the liability from them if

they do go outside of the city," Sheriff Mason said. "This will allow us to work in Union and better serve the citizens of the county and city."

As for Commissioner Knight and his staff, they have collected more than \$2 million in delinquent taxes since Jan. 2, 2013.

Knight and his staff worked diligently on delinquent tax collections of \$712,031 since late April.

Three of the main sources of property tax are real property, which is land and structures, mobile home and Recreational Vehicles, either on someone else's property or their own property, and personal property, such as airplanes, boats, store merchandise inventory and equipment, grading equipment or machinery used in a

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Blairsville City Council meets Thursday

By Charles Duncan
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The Blairsville City Council will gather at City Hall on Thursday at 6 p.m. for their first meeting of the new year.

The City Council has moved its regular monthly meeting to the first Thursday of each month.

On the agenda for Thursday, the swearing in

of Mayor Jim Conley, and Councilman Tony Dyer, and Councilman Buddy Moore, who were reelected to four-year terms in November.

Dyer and Moore were opposed on the ballot, and Mayor Conley defeated challenger Tom Payton to return to office.

In other business, the Council will discuss the City Charter, appoint the City Attorney and City Clerk for 2014, and designate Council

members as liaisons for each city department.

Also on the agenda, the Council will make a decision on an intergovernmental agreement between the City and the Downtown Development Authority on the Hotel/Motel Tax Distribution.

The Council also will make a decision on the occupational tax certificate application for Solidity Fitness, Nikki Sparks, owner, 103 Blue Ridge Street.

Heroics top stories of 2013

By Charles Duncan
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Dustin Lee, Tony Schmidt and Brandon Passmore all have something in common: the three men are lifesavers.

Lee, Schmidt and Passmore went above and beyond the call of duty to save lives.

On May 29, 2013, Schmidt and Passmore dove into the cold, murky waters of the Nottely River to save 29-year-old Nicholas Adam Yebba of Morganton after his 2002 PT Cruiser plunged into the river, just missing the bridge on Georgia 515.

On Dec. 3, Lee, an off-duty firefighter with the Union County Fire Department, went into a burning home at Ivy Log Estates to save the lives of Lavonne and Larry Bennett.

Schmidt and Passmore saved the life of Yebba after his black PT Cruiser traveled across four lanes of Georgia 515, including the median, left the highway's north shoulder, went airborne and plunged into Nottely River.

Schmidt and Passmore, strangers to each other before



Union County Firefighter Dustin Lee, center, saved an elderly couple from this burning home on Dec. 3. Photo/Charles Duncan

Yebba's life became in peril in the river, are now forever linked as lifesavers.

Both Schmidt and Passmore say they don't feel like heroes. Both say that if put in the same situation as Yebba,

they just hope that there is someone out there that cares enough about human life to save them.

The two acted in tandem

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The Rev. Wofford Kelley dies at 83

By Charles Duncan
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Union County mourns the loss of the Rev. Wofford Kelley, 83, a Union County native and lifelong resident.

The Rev. Kelley passed away Friday evening, Dec. 27, at his home.

Funeral services were held Monday in the Chapel of Cochran Funeral Home of Blairsville, with Dr. Don Pruitt, the Rev. Larry Nix, the Rev. Dolly Rogers, and the Rev. Jan Devereaux officiating.

Rev. Kelly was born Oct. 27, 1930, in Blairsville, a son of the late William Edge Kelley and the late Myrtle Mae Walker Kelley. He was a U.S. Army veteran.

After graduation from Union County High School, Wofford attended North Georgia Technical School.

After completing his studies, he opened his own TV and Radio Sales and Repair Shop, which he operated for more than five years.

The Rev. Kelley also worked for Colwell Construction Company as comptroller, as well as his many other duties for more than 20 years.

It was during this time that Rev. Kelley was called to preach the Gospel, as he became an ordained minister and one of the cofounders of the Blairsville Christian Center.

Rev. Kelley also assisted the Rev. Franklin Walden in his evangelistic ministry for 11

years, and in the late 1970s, he became the senior pastor of the Blairsville Christian Center until his passing.

The Rev. Kelley had a heart for missions and went on many missionary journeys to Mexico, Ukraine, England, and Wales.

After his retirement from Colwell Construction Company, Rev. Kelley opened another business, Kelley Computer Services. The business expanded to include payroll services, tax preparation, and bookkeeping for small companies. He also served his community for 40 years as an election official for Union County.

Rev. Kelley was a many-faceted individual, having interests and hobbies that spanned things from gold mining to beekeeping and much more.

A year to remember in 2013

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Four murders, three people died in tragic vehicle crashes, a plane crash, a hiker died on the Appalachian Trail, and the Blairsville Police Department busted its second rolling meth lab since 2009.

A busy year indeed. But, it wasn't all bad news.

Union County Fire Station 1 was rededicated after extensive upgrades that made it a real fire station - on par with any in North Georgia.

And the plane crash in August, both passengers survived.

As for the four murders, one suspect, Anthony Payne,



Blairsville Police Department was chosen Law Enforcement Agency of the year in 2013. Photo/Joe Collins

accused of killing his father and step mother April 2, claimed his own life the next morning. Frank

Miller, 80, of Miller Cove Road,

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

2014

From the staff of

North Georgia News and

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