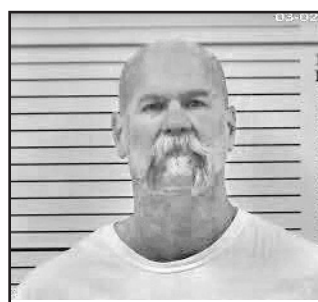


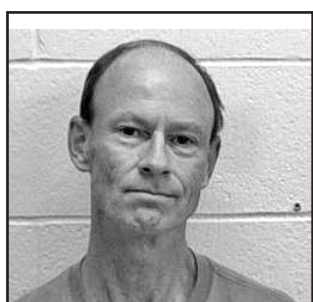
# Documents...from Page 1A



**Michael Gowder**



**James Heaton**



**David Gowder**

a controlled substance and one count of conspiracy; Dr. Heaton was also arrested and charged with 41 counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances, and one count of conspiracy.

Also charged in Union County, Mike Gowder's brother Dr. David Gowder, on 36 counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, seven counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances; Mike Gowder's wife Gail Gowder on two counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance; his niece, Jamie Harkins, on two counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, one count of conspiracy; his sister, Virginia Lou Harkins, on two counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, and one count of conspiracy.

Mike Gowder and Dr. Heaton were indicted by a Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five counts of trafficking in opium or heroin, and five counts of obtaining a controlled substance by forgery, according to Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff Derrick Palmer.

Gowder and Dr. Heaton were arrested Wednesday, March 2, Sheriff Palmer said.

Gowder is free on \$500,000 bond; Dr. Heaton's bond was set at \$500,000 also, Sheriff Palmer said.

Both are required to appear at an April 4 hearing in Cherokee County, NC, Superior Court, Sheriff Palmer said.

Both now are no longer associated with Union General Hospital in any capacity.

The board hired Lewis Kelley as the CEO of both Union General Hospital and Chatuge Regional Hospital, said Board Chair Patsy Efrid.

Likewise, Dr. David Gowder no longer has any association with Union General Hospital, according to Efrid.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said that the investigation remains ongoing, and that he's proud of being able to partner with so many agencies during the course of this continuing investigation.

The nine-month investigation began after Dr. David Gowder was arrested on April 1 in Blue Ridge by the Zell Miller Mountain Drug Task Force for attempting to fill fraudulent prescriptions for oxycodone 50 mg, and oxycodone 60 mg at an Ingles Pharmacy in Fannin County.

Dr. David Gowder admitted to authorities that he had written fraudulent prescriptions for pain medicine, also admitting that he suffered from a back injury a year prior and eventually became addicted to oxycodone, according to the affidavits.

That arrest led to an in-depth investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff's Office.

A significant part of that investigation included using search warrants at Blairsville Rite Aid, CVS, Ingles Pharmacy, Walmart Pharmacy, and Brasstown Professional Pharmacy, according to the affidavits.

The return from the search of pharmacy records led to the discovery of numerous

bogus prescriptions being passed at all of the pharmacies, the affidavits show. The investigation also revealed that Mike Gowder had been getting prescriptions filled. Those prescriptions were for large doses of pain killers.

The affidavits show that Dr. David Gowder wrote prescriptions for a fictitious Albanian missionary named Cathy Bebout. The prescription was for 200 hydrocodone 10 mg pills, and was filled at Brasstown Pharmacy. Dr. David Gowder's sister, Lou Harkins, picked up the prescription, the affidavits show.

The address used for Bebout was 1902 Meeks Road, and investigators learned that that address belonged to Dr. David Gowder.

According to the affidavits, Harkins admitted picking up the prescription. She said she had been asked to pick up the prescription by her brother Dr. David Gowder. She paid \$139.98 for the prescription.

On Aug. 8, 2015, following his Blairsville arrest — his second arrest for passing bogus prescriptions — Dr. David Gowder voluntarily surrendered his DEA registration form, which allowed him to write prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

On Sept. 1, 2015, DEA investigators, Union County Sheriff's Capt. Chad Deyton, and Georgia Composite Medical Board officials interviewed Dr. Heaton regarding the large amount of prescriptions he'd been writing for Mike Gowder, according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton acknowledged that most of the prescriptions he wrote for Mike Gowder were not recorded in Mike Gowder's patient file. Dr. Heaton also prescribed pain medication for Mike Gowder's wife Gail, and his son Blake, according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton told investigators that he knew it looked bad that he didn't have the appropriate required records of prescribing to Mike Gowder, but added that he prescribed to all his other patients "by the book," according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton explained that Mike Gowder suffered from back pain that warranted the prescriptions he issued, and that Mike Gowder often came by his clinic after it was closed to get prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton explained to the investigators that Mike Gowder was the CEO of Union General Hospital, and that he had known him for 25 years, so he didn't think it was necessary to document Mike Gowder's visits and prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

Investigators say that from Aug. 14, 2014, to June 18, 2015, Dr. Heaton wrote 20 prescriptions for 150 oxycodone tablets per prescription, and one prescription for 40 oxycodone tablets, for a total of 3,040 doses, or pills. That's an average of 304 doses a month — later to be discovered as 319 doses per month, according to the affidavits.

DEA Diversion Agents attempted to interview Mike Gowder at Union General Hospital on Sept. 1, 2015, regarding numerous oxycodone

prescriptions filled in his name that were prescribed by Dr. Heaton. Mike Gowder declined to speak with investigators without speaking to his attorney, according to the affidavits.

DEA Diversion Investigator Jason Allen gave Mike Gowder his card and told him to contact him when he was ready to talk. On Sept. 2, 2015, Allen received an e-mail from Mike Gowder requesting that Allen call him at a number provided. Allen called Mike Gowder and spoke with him for approximately 15 minutes, according to the affidavits.

Mike Gowder told Allen that all of the prescriptions were for a legitimate medical purpose, and that none of the pills had been diverted, meaning sold or given away. He told Allen that he knew that that was a lot of pills, but that he needed all of them for back pain, and that he had never given any to anyone, according to the affidavits.

Allen pointed out that in October 2014, Mike Gowder had filled three prescriptions for what amounted to 490 doses. Mike Gowder admitted filling those prescriptions, but insisted they were legitimate, according to the affidavits.

Allen pointed out that Mike Gowder frequently filled prescriptions in three different states. Mike Gowder told Allen that he frequently travels to Murphy, NC, and Nashville, Tenn., according to the affidavits.

Mike Gowder then told Allen that he had stopped taking opioids; he told Allen he stopped "cold turkey," adding that he had withdrawal symptoms for about a week, and that he was able to stop without taking time off from work, according to the affidavits.

From December 2011 to June 2015, Heaton prescribed 15,170 doses of opioids to Mike Gowder, the affidavits show.

Investigators say Dr. Heaton prescribed multiple prescriptions for the same or similar drugs several times a month. Investigators add that there was a pattern of Mike Gowder filling three prescriptions in three different states on a monthly basis.

Investigators say that Mike Gowder frequently had numerous lethal and toxic amount of opioids.

Investigators say they learned that Dr. Heaton received monthly checks from Union General Hospital for unknown reasons. The checks for Dr. Heaton were either hand delivered by Mike Gowder or Mike's wife, Gail Gowder.

Investigators believe Mike Gowder used Union General Hospital funds to compensate Dr. Heaton for providing illegitimate prescriptions for controlled substances, according to affidavits.

They also believe that Mike Gowder and Dr. David Gowder conspired to use their positions and authority as administrators and board members of Union General Hospital to prescribe and obtain controlled substances outside the normal course of practice, and without a legitimate medical purpose prescribed and obtained controlled substances using fraudulent prescriptions, according to affidavits.

## Union County Republican Party sponsoring Future Leaders Scholarship Public Speaking Contest

Attention all Union County high school students, "Future Leaders" in Union County! Once again, the Union County Republican Party (UCGOP) is sponsoring the Future Leaders Public Speaking Contest for high school students in 9th through 12th grades in Union County. All students who live in or are educated in Union County are invited to participate.

"Our goal is to provide an opportunity for students to develop speaking skills, learn more about our government structure/political process, and encourage the youth of our county to be actively involved in the political affairs of our county/country," said Dale Allison, UCGOP Chairperson. "Our high school students enjoyed/benefited from the contest so much last year, we decided to sponsor it again!"

Preliminary rounds are scheduled for Tues., Mar. 29 and Thurs., Mar. 31 with the finals slated for Sat., Apr. 2 at North Georgia Technical College in Blairsville. Scholar-

ships will be awarded to contest winners in the amounts of: 1st Place: \$1000; 2nd Place: \$600; 3rd Place: \$400. Each student will receive a \$25 stipend for participating whether he/she wins or not. Applications are available in the front offices of Union County High School and Woody Gap School. For those students not attending these schools, applications may be picked up at the UCGOP office at 103 Blue Ridge Street in Blairsville. Speeches must be five to eight minutes long about one of the topics found below.

This year's judges are well known in the community, have a passion for the welfare of the county's youth, and possess experience in the nuances of debating/public speaking. So far: Patrick Malone, Mitch Griggs, Lee Knight, Larry Culpepper, Jeff Langley have agreed to be judges.

Topics students may select from:

1. Compare the merits of capitalism vs. socialism.
2. Should there be term

limits for Senators, Members of Congress and state legislators?

3. Are there any amendments to the Constitution that should be eliminated?

4. Is the United States a Christian nation? Why or why not.

5. Should there be term limits for federal judges rather than lifetime appointments?

6. Do we have an honest free press today?

7. Should Georgia pass the Preservation of Religious Freedom Act?

8. Should Georgia pass legislation that prohibits the use of Sharia law in the state court system?

9. Is there a need for a major third political party?

10. How should the United States handle the immigration problem?

11. What is the greatest threat to the security of America today?

12. Why did the founders choose to make America a republic rather than a democracy?

## YHC Concert Band and Young Harris Community Band presents a "Collage of Classics" Concert

The Young Harris College Concert Band and the Young Harris Community Band will present a "Collage of Classics" on Tuesday, March 29, at 7 p.m. in Glenn Auditorium of the Clegg Fine Arts Building on the YHC campus. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for students and children 12 and under.

Directed by Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Bands Mary Land, Ed.D., the YHC Concert Band will present a concert featuring the true "warhorses" of wind band repertoire including the famous Franz von Suppe's "Light Calvary Overture" and David Gorham's "Jubiloso." The Young Harris Community Band will perform several selections under the direction of YHC Adjunct Instructor of Music Alan Denmon including David Holsinger's "Havendance" and the famous Spanish march "Amarito Roca" by Jamie Texidor.

The concert will close with "Espirit De Corps," a piece commissioned by the United States Marine Band. Based on "The Marines'



The Young Harris College Concert Band and the Young Harris Community Band

Hymn," the song is a tribute to the United States Marine Band and their conductor Colonel John Bourgeois.

Many YHC students will be featured as soloists during the concert. In addition to the featured student performers, the YHC Concert Band is comprised of junior education major Katie Rittenhouse, horn; freshman music education major Levi Jones, trombone; freshman music education major Donovan Anguelo, euphonium; post-

baccalaureate education major James Rhodes, tuba; freshman music education major Julien Fleming, tuba; freshman business and public policy major Kyle Wilkins, percussion, all of Blairsville, GA; freshman music education major Corbin Allen, percussion, of Hiawassee, GA; and junior music education major Nathaniel Arnold, percussion, of Young Harris, GA.

For more information call YHC's Division of Fine Arts at (706) 379-5182

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## Rollins Planetarium presents two special shows April 1

Young Harris College's O. Wayne Rollins Planetarium will present two special shows on Friday, April 1, beginning with "Magic Tree House: Space Mission" at 7 p.m., followed by "Skies Over Georgia" at 8 p.m. Planetarium admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and free with YHC ID. Tickets are available for advance purchase online at yhc.edu/planetarium or at the door 30 minutes prior to each show.

Travel to space with Jack and Annie in their Magic Tree House as they answer questions left in a mysterious note. The brother-sister duo is taken on an adventurous journey of learning with special friends. This exciting voyage will carry visitors to the planets and far out into the Universe where Jack and Annie nearly get... Well, we don't want to

give it away. The adventure is just beginning!

After returning from your space mission with Jack and Annie, bring it back home with "Skies Over Georgia," which features a live presenter and uses the planetarium's digital and optical star projectors to their fullest. This traditional star show allows audiences to explore the heavens as they appear above the mountains of North Georgia. Learn how to identify the planets and stars currently visible in the night sky, take a guided tour of the constellations and hear some of their fascinating stories.

O. Wayne Rollins Planetarium features a state-of-the-art GOTO Chronos Space Simulator star projector with a full-dome digital projection system, the Sky-Skan Definiti, in a 40-foot dome theater

with 5.1 surround sound. With comfortable seating for 104, Rollins Planetarium offers public shows and educational opportunities for school groups throughout the year. Rollins Planetarium is located in the Maxwell Center on the YHC campus.

If skies are clear, the YHC Observatory is open immediately after planetarium shows. The observatory features a Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope and is located around 1.5 miles from campus at Brasstown Valley Resort. Maps are available at the planetarium. Observing sessions last up to one hour and include a guided tour of the constellations.

For more information about planetarium and observatory events, call (706) 379-5195 or visit yhc.edu/planetarium.