

North Georgia News

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Blairsville Scottish Festival and Highland Games this weekend

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games.

its Ceilidh-in-the-Courthouse evening of Scottish music and entertainment from 6:30 p.m. until 8:15 p.m.

Laddies don your kilts and lassies your earasids, as this weekend the Meeks Park will host the 13th Annual

Festivities begin on Friday, June 10, when the Friday Night Concert Series at the Historic Union County Courthouse will celebrate the Scottish weekend with

Entry into the Festival & Games on Saturday and Sunday, June 11 and June 12, at Meeks Park will be \$10 for a single day pass, or guests can purchase a two-day pass for \$15, while kids 12 and under get in free.

Both Saturday and Sunday events run from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., with a special concert scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Saturday for a \$5 admission price.

The concert will feature none other than Celtic Rock band Seven Nations, along with Blarney Girls and comedian Robert Valentine.

Over the course of the weekend, the Scottish festival offers area residents and beyond an opportunity to get a glimpse



Bagpipers amass on the main field during the 2015 Opening Ceremony for the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games. The Parade of Tartans also takes place during each year's opening ceremony

into true Scottish heritage. An individual Scottish clan has been honored every

year since the very first year of 2004, and Clan Hay will be the featured clan at this

year's festival, offering special insight into Scottish genealogy. See Scottish, Page 12A



Kimberly Miller and Debbie McGregor go over this year's festival during a meeting of the festival planning committee on June 1

Biggest yet season opener at farmers market

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Fresh veggies and bright flowers were among the more popular items at the biggest Farmers Market opening day ever on Saturday, June 4

The Union County Farmers Market kicked off the 2016 summer season with record crowds at the June 4 grand opening celebration.

Residents from around the region turned onto Old Smokey Road and into the market starting early that Saturday morning.

Local vendors and artisans provided plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, and a variety of goods to go with pottery, paintings and more. And with crowds all morning long, it was no surprise when some of the vendors began to run out of goods due to the demand for homemade and homegrown goods.

"We had the largest grand opening that we've ever had, based on the number of people in attendance," said Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "Many of the vendors sold out and we had a lot of good reports, so everything went really well."

Every Saturday, the Farmers Market will have something special in store until the final weekend in late

October. This weekend, the market will host an Ornamental Plant Exhibit, followed by its Local Band Contest on June 18.

The month of June wraps up with the American Cancer Society Dessert Contest, and July opens with the Union County Canning Plant Open House.

"We've got a few new

twists that we've added," Cummings said. "We're holding a dessert contest later this month, our Market Cafe is now run by Bill Ray, and Larry Flegle is coordinating the entertainment. This has the beginnings of a great year, and I hope we can keep up what we have going right now."

In the fall, the Farmers See Market, Page 12A

Reece Society celebrates 13 years and counting

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Dr. Jim Clark and help people become aware of him. That's this society's

Byron Herbert Reece is a local literary icon, having won multiple awards throughout his career as well as having been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and his legacy is passed on today by the local society that bears his name.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society gathered at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center to hold its 13th Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 4.

"The society is important because Reece is important," said Society Chairman Keith Jones. "Byron Herbert Reece is one of the most underappreciated writers from North Georgia."

"He's a wonderful poet, he's an underappreciated

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After five years, Steppe to retire at end of the month

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe greets an enthusiastic young man at the opposite end of the education spectrum during his Retirement Reception on Tuesday, May 31

Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe spent the afternoon of May 31 surrounded by family, friends, colleagues and members of the community, as the Union County Board of Education Office hosted a Retirement Reception in his honor.

Dozens of people from around the region paid Steppe a visit that Tuesday, wishing him well in retirement and saying goodbye to a cherished educator.

Among the myriad faculty and staff, past board members, old friends from this youth, a couple of former coaching staff at Robbinsville High School, and several area superintendents who have seen Steppe as a mentor over the years.

"My working relationship with Gary Steppe started when

I became superintendent in Towns County, he was one of the first people that I met," said Melissa Williams, superintendent of Rabun County Schools. "Coming from South Georgia to North Georgia, it never dawned on me that I'd have to deal with snow and ice."

See Steppe, Page 11A

"So rather than freak out and not know how to handle it, I always picked up the phone, and I'd call Mr. Steppe and I'd say, 'Gary, what do I need to do?' It didn't matter if it was 4 o'clock in the morning or 11 o'clock at night. And he really guided me through how to deal

with the former classmates, many of whom brought spouses, took the time to break bread together and to remember days gone by, paying special tribute to the 24 members of the Class of 1956 met at Steve's Steakhouse on Saturday, June 4, to celebrate their 60th year since graduating from Union County High.

During the reunion,

Panthers still gather after 60 years



UCHS Class of '56 takes a class photo during their reunion, which takes place every five years. Twenty-four of the 59 graduates have passed away, and the majority of those remaining still meet. Also pictured, Clyde and Sue Collins in front. Clyde is the last remaining teacher of the Class of 1956.

By Shawn Jarrard
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Demonstrating the remarkable staying power of friendship, 24 members of the Class of 1956 met at Steve's Steakhouse on Saturday, June 4, to celebrate their 60th year since graduating from Union County High.

The class is rather small by today's standard, having graduated just 59 in 1956 compared to Union County High School's Class of 2016,

which boasts 167 graduates. But the size of the class helps to underscore the feeling of closeness between the graduates - everybody knows everybody, and most of them still live in Union County.

After a few opening remarks from '56 graduate Bud Akins, the classmates held a collective singing of the Alma Mater - which remains

See Panthers, Page 3A

Alleged scam gone awry for out-of-town brothers

By Shawn Jarrard
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Harry Harrison

Jack Harrison

Two brothers found out the hard way that crime doesn't pay in Union County when they were arrested just outside of the Union County Sheriff's Office on Friday, May 27.

The incident started when Harry Harrison, 41, of an Acworth address, and Jack

Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe greets an enthusiastic young man at the opposite end of the education spectrum during his Retirement Reception on Tuesday, May 31

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See BB, Page 2A

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During the reunion,

Sheriff, deputies, jailors break bread at Meeks

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



A rainy day could not stop Mack Mason, his deputies, jail staff and their families from enjoying the Annual Sheriff's Summer Picnic at Meeks Park on Thursday, June 2.

Before the meal - and the rain - began, many tried their best at a friendly game of beanbag cornhole, seeing who had the best aim and throw. Others gathered around the grills or under the pavilion, enjoying a day of fellowship and comradery.

"It gives us a chance to get away from the job for a few

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason addresses the many families present, of employees from both the jail and the sheriff's office, with words of thanks during the Annual Summer Picnic

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