

Klan ... continued from page 1A

up our litter, we feel that is the obligation of GDOT and our county and its citizens to handle this chore.

"The negative publicity associated with this issue is unfortunate and certainly is not representative of the residents of Union County," he said.

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll said the couple is from Fannin County. They admitted that during the interview process after they applied for the two city permits, Chief Carroll said.

"They said they really liked Union County," Chief Carroll said. "That was their reason for seeking those permits here in the city."

Meanwhile, GDOT, after consulting with Gov. Nathan Deal denied the request by the IKK of The Realm of the Ku Klux Klan to adopt a stretch of highway beginning at Foster Road to Amy's Cove on Highway 515. The group's aim, according to Chambers, was to pick up trash and keep the stretch of roadway clean.

Chambers was upset that the application was denied.

"It sucks," she said.

She declined comment about the group's future actions concerning the GDOT permit denial.

"I can't talk about that, not right now," she said.

Chambers said neither she nor Hanson told the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, the news agency that broke the story about the KKK's Adopt-A-Highway permit application, that they were from Blairsville.

She could only assume that the inference that they were from Blairsville came from GDOT's application form given to the AJC, allegedly through an Open Records Request.

Jill Goldberg, GDOT's spokesperson for the Atlanta headquarters, said that "a source" told the AJC about the Klan's Adopt-A-Highway application. Given that GDOT was the only agency that knew about the application, it could be inferred that GDOT was the source of the information

for the AJC.

Chambers and Hanson listed their address as P.O. Box 253, Blairsville, GA on the application. That address is reserved for the State Office of the Ku Klux Klan, the North Georgia News has learned.

"They didn't ask where we were from," Chambers said. "That might not even be my real name, no one knows that for sure. I like Blairsville, it's a beautiful community. Where do I live? I can't say."

After repeated requests, Chambers would not verbally confirm where she or Hanson lives.

However, an investigation by the North Georgia News shows the couple lives in neighboring Fannin County. The newspaper, which visited the location, will not disclose the couple's address in an effort to avoid any harm coming to them.

In a press release about their denial of the KKK's permit request, GDOT was rather clear about the intent of the Adopt-A-Highway program.

"The Adopt-A-Highway program is designed to allow civic-minded organizations in good standing to provide the valuable public service of removing litter from designated roadways. Participation in the program should not detract from its worthwhile purpose.

Maintaining the safety of our roadways is this Department's foremost mission. Encountering signage and members of the KKK along a roadway would create a definite distraction to motorists.

Also, the section of roadway requested is ineligible for adoption due to its posted speed limit exceeding the program maximum of 55 mph.

Further, promoting an organization with a history of inciting civil disturbance and social unrest would present a grave concern to the Department.

This permit would have the potential to negatively impact the quality of life of Union County and Georgia."

Chamber ...continued from Page 1A



Bill, the status of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, along with short sale and foreclosure issues.

Mitch Griggs, executive director of the Union County Development Authority was the second speaker of the afternoon.

Griggs shared some of the latest projects and initiatives currently in progress in and around Union County.

He spoke about how the additional length to our airport runway and the creation of a direct highway infrastructure to Chattanooga, TN and Greenville, SC will be extremely advantageous for Union County.

Due to the county's low tax rate and pro-business environment, the Development Authority has been attracting new and expanding businesses to our community.

Most exciting of all is the Development Authority's participation in the North Georgia Network which is a new initiative providing a 260-mile regional fiber-optic ring that will deliver the fastest and most dependable broadband service to our area.

The 10-gigabyte speed of fiber optic cable along with the reliability and dual-route redundancy of the circuit will bring Union County decades ahead of the entire Eastern seaboard which in turn will stimulate economic growth and job creation which is a win win situation for all, according to Griggs.

Finally, Cindy Williams, president of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce wrapped up the program with the current state of the Chamber.

Overall the membership, Internet hits, and communication numbers are all on an uphill climb after taking a hit in 2010 along with the rest of the country.

The current trend the Chamber is noticing is an increase in tourism and interest in Union County.

The highlight of Williams' presentation was the unveiling of a brand new Buy Local campaign for Blairsville and Union County.

The crux of the program is to promote "Eat, Shop, Play & Stay Local in Blairsville-Union County."

The BEST of Blairsville-Union County is a campaign of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, the North Georgia News, and Community Partners.

Their entire mission is to support local businesses in Blairsville-Union County, to maintain the unique community character of our county, attract tourism, and build economic strength.

To become a member of this new campaign is simple, you must be a Chamber member and you must

take The Pledge.

The Pledge just states that you are committed to shopping and purchasing local products and services whenever practical. By taking The Pledge, you are showing your support for your friends, neighbors, and community.

For more details about the program please stop by the Chamber offices located in the Union County Community Center or call (706) 745-5789.

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Poetry reading at Folk School

On Thursday, June 28, 2012, John Campbell Folk School and North Carolina Writers Network West are sponsoring a reading of poetry. The reading is free of charge and open to the public. Poets Brenda Kay Leford and Linda Smith will be the featured readers.

A native of Clay County, NC, Brenda started writing poetry in 1996. Her first poem, "Patchwork Memories," won The Cameo Award and was published in "The Lyricist," at Campbell University. This year she won the 2012 Royce Ray Poetry Award from "Aries: A Journal of Art and Literature," at Southeastern Community College; Whiteville, NC.

Brenda was an honor graduate of Hayesville High School. She received a MA in Education from Western Carolina University. She studied Journalism at the University of Tennessee and Tri-County Community College.

Her poetry chapbooks, *Shew Bird Mountain* and *Sacred Fire*, were published by

Finishing Line Press. Brenda received the Paul Green Award from North Carolina Society of Historians for these poetry chapbooks. She also won the 2011 Paul Green Award for her book, *Simplicity*, co-authored with Blanche L. Leford.

Brenda is a member of North Carolina Writer's Network, North Carolina Poetry Society, Georgia Poetry Society, and listed with *A Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers*.

Linda Smith, poet and writer, from Hayesville, NC is a long time member of NCWN West. She writes poetry inspired by the mountains that surround this area and from memories of things past. She also writes essays and fiction. Linda is nearing completion of a mystery novel. Her poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies such as *Lights in the Mountains*, *Echoes Across the Blue Ridge*, *Mountain Time*, *Sand, Sea and Sail*, the *Freeing Jonah* series, *Night Whispers* and *Looking Back*. NT(djn20,A3)SH

Street

continued from page 1A

a formal request to rename School Street to Veterans Memorial Drive.

Mayor Conley said there are no streets in Blairsville dedicated to veterans and that the Blairsville City Council will give the road name change every consideration.

"We have to weigh how folks living on School Street will be affected," Mayor Conley said. "We'll give this proposal serious consideration and make a decision soon."

An early evaluation shows that no businesses would be affected by a name change.

"I think this is something that could very well happen," Mayor Conley said. "It's up to the Council, we'll just have to see how it goes."

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