

North Georgia News

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Jenkins, Phillips and Logan sweep BRMEMC directors races

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com



Three historic figures in the 75-year history of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC - Chris Logan, Charles Jenkins and Steven Phillips. The trio are the first petition candidates elected to the BRMEMC Board.

Change.
That sums up the election of directors for Blue Ridge Mountain EMC in Union and Towns counties in Georgia, and Clay County in North Carolina.

Former House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, local radio personality Steven Phillips, and North Carolina Forester Chris Logan each have a seat on the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Jenkins outlasted Mike Patton and Incumbent Lenny Parks to take the Union County seat on the board of directors. Parks, of Suches, the incumbent, and vice chairman on the EMC board, could only

muster 17.6 percent of the 3,657 ballots cast in the election; 42.9 percent voted for Jenkins, of Blairsville, while 37.6 percent voted for Patton, also of Blairsville.

"This election means a lot," Jenkins said. "We have fought for what is right. I believe in doing what is right. There needs to be more transparency on the Board of Directors."

"The EMC is a non-profit cooperative, but you can argue that it's a regional monopoly. It's supposed to be about the members, but it hasn't been about the members in a long time," Jenkins said. "This is the first step to making it about the membership."

"And it's supposed to be about the membership," he

said. "I believe 3,600 members cast ballots and their voices were heard loud and clear."

Phillips bested Incumbent Julie Payne with 69.1 percent of the vote to Payne's 28.1 percent.

"This election meant everything to me," Phillips said. "I think it's time for change and obviously so did the membership. People are upset; they are boiling over about the Board of Directors voting to have the membership pay for a superior health insurance plan for themselves and the EMC attorney."

"That insurance plan needs to be gone, absolutely," Phillips said. "The membership is paying good money for

See EMC, 2A

Knight: 'the tax bills are in the mail'

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County Tax Commissioner Lee Knight said that his office has mailed out the 2014 tax bills.

Knight says the bills are being mailed out one month earlier this year thanks to the Union County Board of Education, the County Commissioner's Office and the Tax Assessor's Office.

"Your tax bill should be in your mail this week," Knight said. "I would like to thank all these departments for working closely together to get the bills out earlier this year. We have mailed out more than 21,000 tax bills for this year. That is almost one

tax bill per resident of Union County, which is above the state average.

The due date for tax bills will still be Dec. 20 as usual but by mailing the bills earlier it will give taxpayers more time to pay their taxes, Knight said.

"We are willing to accept partial payments," Knight said. "There is a 1 percent interest per month added after the 20th of December for late charges, and after a tax bill is 90 days delinquent a 10 percent penalty is also added."

The Tax Office can't accept payment on taxes until the bill has been finalized, Knight said.

This year the millage rate will be 17.781 mills and was 17.356 mills last year. The



Lee Knight

County millage rate increased while the Board of Education had a slight decrease this year resulting in a net .425 millage

rate increase.

On a \$200,000 property with a homestead exemption, the tax bill will increase \$33.15.

Union County's total tax digest will generate \$20.3 million this year and was \$19.7 million last year, Knight said.

"Your property taxes help pay for maintenance and operations for the County and Board of Education, and fund their annual budget," Knight said. "Your property taxes are their largest source of income."

Meanwhile, Knight is pleased to announce that his office has launched an innovative new website to help Union County taxpayers, and those who do business in

See Tax Bills, 2A

Motorcyclist dies during chase with GSP Trooper in Towns

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Young Harris - A 27-year-old Towns County man died after he t-boned a F-150 Ford pickup in Young Harris while being pursued by the Georgia State Patrol.

The high-speed chase began in the Hiwassee City Limits and traveled through Towns County into Young Harris and the Jacksonville Community, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said.

Michael A. Cinquemano, 27, of Hiwassee was pronounced dead at the scene, according to Georgia State Patrol reports.

He was the driver of a 2003 Suzuki motorcycle being chased by Trooper First Class Joshua Hedden, Patrol reports show.

Patrol reports indicate that



Cinquemano was driving the motorcycle in an erratic, negligent and reckless manner at the time the pursuit began.

Patrol officials say 40-year-old Derek Dwayne Taylor was the driver of the F-150 that pulled out from a private drive in front of Cinquemano's motorcycle near Gibby's Furniture Store.

Taylor was charged with driving under the influence.

See Crash, 2A

Flag pole raised in memory of 9/11 tragedy

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville's Woodmen of the World held its first 9/11 Honor and Remembrance Ceremony Thursday to commemorate the installment and dedication of a flagpole at the Union County Community Center.

Attending the ceremony were special guests Brad and Jenny Sherman. Brad Sherman retired as a lieutenant from the Fairfield Fire Department in Connecticut in 2009 after 32 years of service. Sherman was a first responder on that day that America will never forget.

"We were in Fairfield County, which Fairfield County borders New York, about 40 minutes from mid-



Brad Sherman, in dress blues, tells Union County residents what it was like to be a first responder during the Sept. 11, 2001 tragedy.

town Manhattan." Sherman lost an extremely close friend on Sept. 11, 2001, who had transferred

from his unit in Connecticut to the New York City Fire Department prior to the terrorist attacks. That friend had been

one of the first on the scene that day.

The Fairfield Fire Department spent many days assisting at ground zero, and when the FDNY and NYPD no longer needed assistance at the site, Sherman and his fellow firefighters continued to help in another capacity.

"There was basically almost a funeral every day," said Sherman. "So, we were just making our way to wherever the funerals were taking place, and we would just be there as a presence. Normally when you see a firefighter's funeral or a police funeral, you'll see hundreds and hundreds of men and women show up. And we did that because the FDNY was so stretched out with work at the

See Never Forget, 3A

DDA finds reasonably priced mitigation credits in Alabama

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville's Downtown Development Authority has found cheaper mitigation credits from the Coosa River Basin in Alabama.

"We have received a letter from them saying that they will sell us those 1,400 stream credits at a cost of \$18,000," said Chairman Paul Thompson.

The DDA has issued a letter of intent to purchase the credits, which effectively puts a hold on the credits until December.

The DDA held a called board of directors meeting Tuesday, Sept. 9th, to discuss the latest

update to the Haralson Development Project.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had previously given the DDA permission to look outside the state for mitigation credits, as none were available nearby.

In its last called meeting, the board passed a motion to approve a letter of commitment for up to \$40,000 to secure stream credits in the Oostanaula Creek Mitigation Bank in McMinn County, Tenn.

But the DDA has found cheaper credits from the Coosa River Basin in Alabama.

Wayne Fowler of H & H

See DDA, 2A

EMC Board, Akins get an earful from members at 75th Annual Meeting

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Hiwassee - Members gathered at the 75th Annual Meeting of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and called for the resignation of General Manager Matthew Akins and the 9-member Board of Directors at Anderson Music Hall.

EMC Member Barbara Heimanson, of Blairsville scolded the board of directors.

"At the beginning of this meeting we heard that God is good to us," she said. "Well, the EMC is not good to us. All we get from the EMC is excuses for rate increases, excuses about the customer charge, excuses why we don't get capital credits.

"The EMC is raking in over \$850,000 a month just from the customer charge," she said. "We would like to know where it all goes. Prob-



Karen Kelley explains what life has been like since her husband Chris Kelley was demoted after blowing the whistle on Terry Taylor.

ably to pay the interest for that mansion on the hill.

North Georgia News, we wouldn't know about Terry

See Meeting, 3A

Fire Station 2 opens its doors

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Firefighters at Union County Station 2 greeted almost 70 locals at their annual Open House.

Station 2 treated the folks to hamburgers, hot dogs and all the fixings, including cookies as they paid homage to the folks that help them year-in-year out.

"We like to let folks see what their donations provide for our station," said Firefighter Robert Burnette. "We also let the folks know what services the fire department offers our community."

"We promoted fire safety today by featuring the fire extinguisher classes, we try to get the community involved in our first aid classes," Burnette said. "We try to help the community learn to help their neighbor in an emergency."

The children enjoyed bounce houses, and Smokey



Small children were welcome at Saturday's Station 2 Open House at Jones Creek Road. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

The Bear, courtesy the U.S. Forest Service.

"Smokey was a big hit with the kids," Burnette said. Burnette said numbers

were down a bit from last year, but it was still a solid crowd on hand.

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