

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Langley: criminal justice system not a political tool

By Charles Duncan
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Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley says he won't allow the circuit's criminal justice system to be used as a political tool.

Langley was responding to urging by Mack Mason, a Republican candidate for Union County sheriff, to indict the current Union County sheriff, Scott Stephens, for charges that included insurance fraud, false statements and violation of oath of office.

"I am a prosecutor, I take my responsibility to prosecute criminals in our county very seriously," said Langley, who

is over prosecutions in Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin counties. "My office focuses every day on prosecuting the thieves, child molesters, drug dealers, DUI drivers and other criminals that endanger our community.

"I also happen to be an elected Republican, however, I hold the power of the criminal justice system as trust given to me by the state through the people," Langley said. "This is a power that can right wrongs and bring justice, but can also destroy lives and reputations. I will never allow the criminal justice system to be a political tool."

Two Union County Grand Juries have heard about a December 2010 incident involving a Union County Sher-



Mack Mason

iff's Office boat that Mason believes should lead to an indictment of Sheriff Stephens, Langley said.

"If eight of the 23 grand jurors vote in favor of indictment, we indict," Langley



Jeff Langley

said. "That hasn't happened among two separate grand juries, both of which have heard the evidence regarding the boat incident."

Mason recently presented the North Georgia



Scott Stephens

News with details about a boat owned by the Union County Sheriff's Office that was damaged during a cold snap in December 2010. He presented the newspaper with documents obtained through

an open records request to Langley, which was granted.

This news report is a direct result of a conversation with the district attorney following receipt of those documents by the newspaper.

A report about the damaged boat was filed Dec. 20, 2010 by Union County sheriff's Lt. Tim Wood for insurance purposes, was included among those documents.

The narrative of the report indicated that the boat was in a facility used by Animal Control and for storage. The report details that on Dec. 13, 2010, a hard freeze had caused water pipes to freeze and the power to go off at the facility.

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Commissioner Paris to lower millage

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County's millage rate will drop.

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said the announcement last week during the September Commission Meeting.

Paris will shave the millage rate from 5.419 to 5.410 for the upcoming year.

The rate will be set Oct. 11 at 3 p.m. at the Union County Courthouse.

According to Paris, the details will be hammered out before the next Commission Meeting.

"We are basing our millage rate on what the budget will be, but we won't adopt our budget until the end of the year," Commissioner Paris said. "It's not a lot, but it's significant that we're not having to go up."

Paris said that the county continues to look for ways to cut spending while keeping taxes down.

"Our tax rate will be slightly lower, it won't be much, but it'll be lower," he said. "We're hoping our bud-



Ron Westfall talks with Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris about Let's Move Day, the battle against obesity, during last week's commission meeting. Photo/Todd Forrest

get will be at or slightly lower than what it was this year. We'll continue to not hire new employees, we'll continue to work the guys we've got harder and our county employees continue to outperform and do a great job for the citizens of the county."

"I think we're getting more done in this county than

any county around and we're doing it for a lot less money," he said.

In other business, Paris awarded the contract to complete an addition at Fire Station 1 to local contractor Winkler & Winkler Construction, Inc.

"Our firemen have been living in sub-standard condi-

tions for well over a couple of years," Paris said. "They are always out there helping the public and they do a great job. They've been forced to sleep in a FEMA trailer and that's all about to change."

Paris the final numbers will be complete once the county completes negotiations.

"At the next Commission Meeting we'll be able to announce the final price," he said. "Winkler & Winkler is a local company and every single contractor that they will be using are from right here in Union County."

Paris also proclaimed Sept. 23rd as Let's Move Day. Statistics show that one of every three children is overweight or obese, increasing their risk of asthma, diabetes, and other health problems. Blairsville Seventh Day Adventist Church and Better Living Center will participate in the Seventh Day Adventist's National Let's Move Day.

Paris also proclaimed September as National Recovery Month.

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BOE to keep school millage rate the same

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Board of Education voted unanimously to keep the current millage rate of 11.798 for the upcoming Fiscal year, instead of increasing the rate to 11.858.

The next board meeting will take place on Thursday, Oct. 11 at 8 a.m.

"If a person didn't know any better they would think that we are taxing them more with less coming in," the Board of Education's Tony Hunter said. "Even if we went to 11.858, would we still be one of the lowest in the state," he asked.

"Yes, we are one of the lowest," Superintendent Gary Stepp replied.

"I think a lot of locals will balk if they think we are raising their taxes," Hunter added.



Gary Stepp

At a 95 percent collection rate, keeping the millage rate at 11.798 would result in \$20,000 less in the budget.

"That's if we get another 95 percent collection rate," Stepp said. "It's frustrating. We work really hard on our budget in good shape. It seems like every time we take one step forward, we get cuts from somewhere, and it's two steps back. I was hoping we could do away with one of the furlough days but it doesn't

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KKK sues state, county

By Charles Duncan
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The International Ku Klux Klan have filed suit in Fulton County Superior Court seeking damages for not being allowed to be a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation's Adopt-A-Highway program, Fulton County Superior Court records show.

Among the defendants included in the suit is Union County government and Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Fulton court records show.

Commissioner Paris declined comment regarding the suit due to litigation concerns. He acknowledged receipt of the suit by Union County government.

"We're looking at it and we'll respond within the 30 days as required by the suit," he said.



Lamar Paris

The North Georgia News last week obtained a copy of the Klan's suit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The suit alleges that the terms for the state's Adopt-A-Highway program are unconstitutionally overbroad in violation of free speech and freedom of association granted by the Georgia Constitution.

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Fourth Fly-In provides excitement

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Experimental aircraft from all over the Southeast were at Blairsville Municipal Airport for the weekend to take part in the Experimental Aircraft Association's Chapter 1211 Fourth Annual Fall Fly-In.

Chapter 1211, based here in Blairsville, is led by President Steve Thompson.

The Chapter sponsors two fly-ins every year at Blairsville Municipal Airport. The other is a Young Eagles Fly-In that is held every spring, when local pilots take kids out for their first flight.



The skies were filled with experimental aircraft on Saturday. There were a lot on the ground too.

No date has been set, but according to Thompson, they are aiming for the end of April or early May.

During the Fall Fly-In, pilots are invited to bring their aircraft to Blairsville where a chili cook-off was being held

in one of the empty hangars. "We've got a whole bunch of different varieties

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Investigation yields three arrests

By Charles Duncan
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A two-month investigation by Union County sheriff's detectives has led to the arrest of three local men, said Investigator C.J. Worden, public information officer for the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff's investigators have charged the three in connection with a series of thefts and a break in, Investigator Worden said.

Union County sheriff's investigators Lt. Mark Cecci and Sgt. Lamar Dyer made the arrests in connection with a residential theft at 8988 Highway 129, and a burglary



Zachary Ramsey

at 1593 Blue Ridge Highway, Investigator Worden said.

Detectives arrested Zachary Ryan Ramsey, 21, and Jesse Dean Hollingsworth, 20, both of Blairsville in connection with thefts at



Jesse Hollingsworth

8988 Highway 129, Union County Jail records show.

Items stolen from that residence included an Echo trim saw, a Makita trim saw,

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Bryant, Marchman head to D.C.

By Charles Duncan
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Jim Marchman, a long-time Operating Partner of FATZ® in Blairsville, has taken the meaning of giving back to the next level.

Marchman has become a local volunteer guardian with Honor Flight Network, part of a national non-profit organization dedicated to giving war veterans the chance to visit Washington D.C. to see their respective war memorials.

Marchman and Blairsville World War II veteran Al Bryant left Blairsville



Fatz' Jim Marchman was a guardian angel in Washington, D.C.

on Monday. They stayed at a hotel in Atlanta Monday night, and then left by police escort from Hartsfield-Jackson Tuesday morning. They took a 4:30 a.m. flight to Washington. They arrived and were

greeted by the USO, which also prepared lunch for all 26 Georgia veterans and their guardians visiting D.C. veteran memorials on Tuesday.

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Saturday Sept. 29

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Fall Cleanup

Saturday Sept. 29

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host Washington-Wilkes

Lady Panthers Softball
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host Semi-Finals of Region 8-AA Tournament

UCMS Football
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INDIAN SUMMER FESTIVAL & Run Above the Clouds

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