

# North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, January 18, 2023

## UCHS to celebrate Basketball Homecoming Friday

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer



Eli Underwood. Representing the junior class are Ryan Barnett, Eli Decker, Lane Lance, Kendra Mason, Zander Rotko and Morgan Warren.

The sophomores are Katelyn Brown, Jude Ellis, Houston Henry and Ariel McCarter.

Freshman representatives are Marques Gatewood, Lila Holland, Kaitlyn Jones and Holden Payne.

Union County reintroduced a winter Homecoming in 2022 following an absence of more than 20 years. Seniors Emily Byers and Caleb John were crowned during last year's festivities.

The Homecoming Ceremony will take place before the varsity games at 6 p.m., with the Lady Panthers set to tip off afterward at 7 p.m.



The 2023 Union County High School Basketball Homecoming Court

## Blairsville man mourned after Young Harris crash

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Facebook lit up with prayers over the weekend for the family of Orlando Lara Noyola, a 27-year-old Blairsville man who died in a single-vehicle crash in Young Harris early Sunday morning.

Noyola graduated Class of 2014 at Union County High School, where he wrestled and played in the Panther Band. His friends described him on social media as "a beautiful, kind soul who lived for his family and faith" and "a reliable, honest and great friend."

He worked at Georgia Mountains Health of Blue Ridge, which also called for prayers Sunday, remarking that his "work family is grieving at the loss of a caring, loving, compassionate co-worker" who



Orlando Lara

will be missed "by all who he touched, and he touched many."

Georgia Mountains Health honored Noyola as

"Employee of the Year" in December, about a week after his birthday.

The fatal accident occurred the morning of Jan. 15 as Noyola was heading westbound along an area of US 76 that is well known for wrecks, according to the Towns County Coroner's Office, in a part of the county historically known as "Jacksonville."

"The young man was traveling toward Blairsville from the Hiwassee direction where he lost control in the curve at Gibby's Furniture. Speed was a factor," said Deputy Coroner Sarah McClure, who responded to the scene.

Towns County Coroner Tamela Cooper said her office has worked several fatal accidents in that exact spot over the years, including one of her very first coroner cases

See Orlando Lara Crash, Page 2A

## No injuries in dramatic 'total loss' house fire



Union County Fire spent several hours putting out this raging conflagration on Friday morning. Thankfully, no one was hurt in the blaze.

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

An unoccupied vacation rental on the northwest end of the county burned to the ground in an early morning fire on Friday, Jan. 13.

The home was in the

process of being remodeled and repaired after water damage sustained in the deep freeze over Christmas weekend. The cause is still being investigated but no foul play is suspected.

Firefighters responded to the home on East Chicory Drive inside the Laurel Brooke

subdivision around 7 a.m. Friday after neighbors called to report that the house was ablaze.

Seeing that the building was engulfed to the point of not allowing entry, the career and volunteer firemen of Stations 1,

See House Fire, Page 8A

## Historical Society seeking donations for sound system



Mickey Cummings, Judy Carpenter and Presley Rich of the Union County Historical Society in the soon-to-be upgraded Historic Courtroom of the Old Courthouse last week.

Photo by Jeremy Foster

By Jeremy Foster  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Historical Society is asking members of the public to donate toward the installation of a state-of-the-art sound system inside the Old Courthouse to enhance the experiences of guests who attend community events for years to come.

"We have to raise about \$15,000 because we are getting

a new sound and recording system that we've already ordered," Historical Society President Mickey Cummings said, adding that some of the money has already been put down prior to installation that will occur at a later date.

"When we have an event in here like a lecture or a concert, the system will of course amplify everything and visually record so we can play it back on things like Facebook

and on our website, giving us the ability to save and archive events for the future for anyone to view.

"I know coming to the concerts this year - and we have some really good artists and performers that come - our sound system didn't work properly all the time, and either people couldn't hear or were tripping over cables or something, and we had a lot of

See Historical Society, Page 2A

## Dr. Nuelle will be missed at Union General Hospital

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

To friends and family, colleagues and patients alike, Dr. Douglas Gregory Nuelle was an extraordinary man. Big of heart and gentle in nature, he dedicated his livelihood to helping those in need, whether serving as an orthopedic surgeon or a friend. In many cases, he was both.

Tragically, on Dec. 18, 2022, the good doctor passed away in Chattanooga, Tennessee, following a head injury that he sustained in a falling accident. The 75-year-old surgeon was a prominent doctor based out of Union General Hospital at the time of his death.

Nuelle's storied career began when he graduated from the University of Missouri in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, finishing summa cum laude. He continued his



Dr. Doug Nuelle thoroughly enjoyed cooking for his coworkers at Union General Hospital. He passed away unexpectedly last month.

education at the Washington University School of Medicine and was awarded his Doctor of Medicine degree in '73.

After an internship at

Barnes Hospital, he became a lieutenant in the Medical Corps, serving in the United States Navy from 1974 to

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**BASKETBALL**  
1/20 vs. Providence 7PM  
**HOMECOMING 2023**

Pages 4A, 5A, 4C and 5C were printed incorrectly in the January 11 edition of the newspaper. The corrected pages can be found in this week's edition as 4A, 5A and 2C, 3C. We apologize for the mistake. Thank you for your understanding.



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# Institute for Continuing Learning Donation to YHC

The Institute for Continuing Learning (ICL) at Young Harris College (YHC) held its annual general membership and course previews meeting on January 7 in the Rollins Campus Center on the YHC campus.

ICL President Maria Britt-Downs opened the meeting by welcoming YHC President Dr. Drew VanHorn, who provided an update on the college, including current challenges and achievements.

Ms. Britt-Downs presented Dr. VanHorn with a \$2,000 donation from ICL to be used for funding student scholarships. ICL also presented YHC with an in-kind donation valued at \$4,000. The donation reflected the purchase of an 83-inch OLED TV which has been installed in the ICL classroom and will be available for use by both ICL and YHC students. Dr. VanHorn expressed his appreciation to ICL and noted that over the course of the past 30 years ICL has donated more than \$150,000 to YHC's general scholarship fund. ICL is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization.

The ICL is an adult education center affiliated with Young Harris College in North Georgia. The curriculum is structured to appeal to a diverse population from the physically active to the seriously studious or to those simply seeking a little socializing and a learning experience. A sample of courses might include aerobics, computers, bridge, gardening, genealogy, investing, music, natural history, painting, languages and writing.

Dr. VanHorn's presentation was followed by the election of ICL Board members for 2023 and a preview of courses for ICL's upcoming winter session. The ICL is offering the following courses in the winter term, some of which start on January 17:

Fundamentals of Blacksmithing by Ray Anderson. Strength and Struggle Lessons in Character from the Stories of our Prophets by Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger. Identify Theft by Jim Dollens. Introduction to Flyfishing by Trey Wall. Safe Handgun Handling: Classroom & Range by George Gaines. Spanish made Easy by



ICL President Maria Downs presents Donation to YHC President Dr. Van Horn

Cary Derflinger. Capturing Water Effects in Watercolor by Virginia Tinsley. Florida Outdoors with Sunshine State Hiking & Winter Hiking in the Southern Appalachians by George Owen. Empathy: A First Step to Kindness by Scotty Hargrove. Breath-Based Meditation and Stress Relief – Term One by Mark Anderson. Basic Watercolor Art with Frills by Billie Shelburn Needle Turn Applique by Shirley Deasy. Beginning Mah-Jongg -by Ann Powell.

Women Unwound: A Survey of Feminist Literature-Zoom Only by Mikala Jones. Getting to know your CAMERA by Stephan Banakas Delicious Whole Grain Baking by Ann Marie Stanczyk. Let's Make a Pillow by Shirley Deasy Breath-Based Meditation and Stress Relief – Term Two by Mark Anderson.

For more information please visit [www.iclyhc.org](http://www.iclyhc.org) for registration and detailed course information or send an email to [icl@yhc.edu](mailto:icl@yhc.edu).

## Historical Society ...from Page 1A

complaints. "So, one of the things we wanted to do was get an up-to-date sound system; this one now has been here 20 years or longer. With this new system, we can operate it off of an iPad, so it's going to be pretty technologically advanced, plus all the microphones are wireless, so it all just increases efficiency.

"It will also be more entertaining for the audience because they won't be straining

to hear or getting blasted out or getting breaks in the sound where it will go dead and then kick back on. Those are some of the problems we've had, and it will just make the entire experience here more pleasurable to those that come."

Historical Society Volunteer Judy Carpenter pointed out that the maximum capacity of the concert/lecture area in the Historic Courthouse upstairs is 208, "and we are

hoping that this new addition will keep people coming to full capacity or more."

"We want it to be great for our locals and our travelers, too," she said.

The sound system fundraiser will remain ongoing until the volunteer group is able to generate the amount of money needed to offset the cost of installation.

"People that donate \$500 will be recognized on a gold plaque put up in (the

courthouse), \$250 will be on a silver one, and \$100 will be on bronze," Cummings said. "We are trying to work it up to where we are going to have two fundraising concerts coming by April or May."

For more information on donating and volunteering to assist in preserving and promoting the history of Union County, follow the Historical Society's Facebook page and/or contact the office at 706-745-5493.

## Orlando Lara Crash...from Page 1A

involving a motorcycle death in 2013.

"And there have been numerous serious accidents in that location as well," Cooper

said. "The curve between Gibby's Furniture and the old fire house is part of the project that the Georgia Department of Transportation will be straightening and widening, and we believe that will make a hard-to-navigate stretch safer.

"We will be in prayer for the family of this young man over the coming weeks. Life

is fragile and precious, and my heart aches for a mother who lost her son and his extended family.

"As always, all departments who worked the scene were incredibly helpful, kind and compassionate. That's one thing that never fails; our community has men and women with the biggest hearts

helping individuals on every call.

"From the dispatchers who take that initial call for help, the deputies, state patrol, fire and rescue and the wrecker service gentlemen – everyone's hearts are a little heavier when a life is lost in tragedy."

Funeral arrangements for Noyola, who went by Orlando Lara, are available in his obituary on page 6C of this week's newspaper.

## Peacock Performing Arts Center Presents Lies and Pies January 28



As the first performance of the Scribes on Stage 2023 series the Peacock Performing Arts Center in Hayesville, NC, presents LIES and PIES at 7:30 PM on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

The event with stories and music is a revival of community and family fun that was a Labor Day tradition in Clay County from 1999 to 2006. LIES and PIES was a weekend festival in Clay County and was the brain child of the Clay County Community Revitalization Association (CCCRA) to raise money for local projects that included at the time the renovation of the exterior of the historic Clay County courthouse and helping build the hiking and biking trails at Jack Rabbit Recreation Area. In 1999 the CCCRA was a new civic-driven organization of like-minded folks coming together and working to make their mountain community a better place to live and work.

The liar's contest was the center of a Clay County, NC Labor Day festival. Other activities included a competition for the tastiest pie in a baking contest. The festival also included Clay County neighborhoods competing to take home the coveted Pride of Clay County award and a variety of ribbon-winning contests as best yodeler, best yo-yo tricks, best clogger(s), funniest hat, most unusual pet, ugliest dog, funniest laugh, fast runner in the 5K run and more.

The festival was topped off as Bob and Judy Grove auctioned off the winning pies to the highest bidder. Rob Ti-

ger's band, Irons in the Fire, and others performed at the gazebo. The evenings ended with music and street dancing on the square around the courthouse in historic downtown Hayesville.

The January 28 performance will feature Clay Logan, Brenda Kay Ledford, Rob Tiger and Tim Ryan. Newcomers are Sandy Benson, Melanie Knauff, Mike Whitney and Denise Mount. Storyteller Kanute Rarey will host the evening at the Peacock as

the audience tries to sort out the truth from the outrageous. There will be a pie-baking contest with judges lead by Hayesville's bakery, Jo Jo's Dessert and Bake Shop owner, Jody Atkins, followed by an auction of the award winning pies led by five time liar's contest winner, Tim Ryan.

Tickets and information are available at the Peacock box office, 301 Church St. Hayesville, NC 28904 or 828-389-2787 or [www.thepeacocknc.org](http://www.thepeacocknc.org).



The Humane Society Mountain Shelter will hold its Annual 2023 Meeting on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 4 PM at the Union County Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center located at 129 Union County Recreation Road, Blairsville, GA 30512. The public is welcome to the Annual Meeting.

# House Fire...from Page 1A

2, 3 and 4 began what is known as a “defensive attack.”

“That means we surround it, apply a lot of water – water supply is a big concern – and try to keep it contained to that building,” Dyer said, noting that the firefighters used tankers and hooked up to a nearby fire hydrant.

A contractor trailer did receive minor damage, but fortunately, as the rental was not too close to other properties, the fire posed little danger of jumping structures. That’s not always the case.

“Exposures are a huge concern,” Dyer said of fires that rage like the one at East

Chicory Drive. “If you have a building beside it or a home beside it that could catch on fire from the radiant heat, we really are concerned about that right off the bat.

“If you have a fire like that and the house is already fully involved, that’s a loss, but we want to protect the exposures around it – vehicles, buildings, anything that may be damaged from that fire.”

Sometimes, when fires haven’t gotten as strong a hold on buildings by the time first responders arrive, firefighters get a chance to save buildings and, importantly, lives.

“If we were to go

‘offensive’ on a fire, that means it’s a one or two, maybe a three-room involvement, and we’re going to actively attack that fire inside the house,” Dyer said. “That’s why we’ve got to put on the (self-contained breathing apparatus) and turnout gear, and we’ll search for victims.

“But when you come up on something like this, there’s no way we can do that.”

Dyer commends the neighbors for calling 911 to report the fire, and he said it’s very easy to be proud of his Fire Department personnel for their response “because everybody, career and volunteer, do an awesome job.”

“When you’re handed a bad situation like this, everybody still performs great and takes care of business,” he said.

In the future, the primary responder for fires in that area will be the career-staffed Fire Station 13, which is currently being built up Murphy Highway, with a hopeful completion date of Fall 2023, Dyer said.

And effective Jan. 9, the Fire Department increased the number of full-time career firefighters working per shift from five to six, meaning the county is even better protected against fires and other emergency situations, which strike no matter the time of year.

“We had six structure fires in four days during the (recent)

cold spell,” Dyer said. “One was a pretty significant home fire that we stayed there almost all day Christmas fighting, and we had several others, but they weren’t huge fires.”

Dyer suspects the Christmas Day fire started from a crack in the chimney, and he advises people to inspect and clean their chimneys on a routine basis.

# Dr. Doug Nuelle...from Page 1A



In addition to being a local surgeon, Dr. Nuelle was a talented multi-instrumentalist, pictured here as a banjo player in the Whistle Stop Blue Grass Band.

1976. He completed his residency at the William C. Campbell Clinic in 1979, then began working in private practices, most notably in Florida, North Carolina and Georgia, where he came to Blairsville after operating in Blue Ridge.

And everywhere he went, his intellect and larger-than-life personality left a mark. Nuelle’s best friend, Charlie de Francesco, can remember when they initially met 20 years ago.

“I met Doug through Tonya, his wife, because she was doing platelet-rich plasma, and she asked me ... ‘Will you be interested in doing the PRP with me?’” de Francesco explained, saying that because of the work involved in the treatments, he had to move to the operating room.

This was where he met Nuelle, a surgeon.

“The thing that really started our relationship up was that he was looking for somebody that could talk to him about the things that he would like to talk about, and those (were) things that we both had in common,” de Francesco recalled, noting Nuelle’s transition from a niche conversational partner to a friend.

“There’s so many grateful people out there; (Nuelle) removed pain from their life,” he added. “(He) gave them hope. You know, you can’t buy a box of that in the grocery store – you can’t buy hope, you can’t. But you can give it.”

De Francesco would know – both of his hips were replaced by Nuelle, so the friends really did “know each other inside out.”

Indeed, Nuelle made a point of putting his patients first and was known for his excellent bedside manner and dedication. According to his colleagues, “the ability of a patient to pay was the last thing on his mind” when it came to treating painful disorders like advanced arthritis.

To this end, Nuelle was the first in the world to perform arthroscopic surgery of the Temporal Mandibular Joint.

Despite its association with the dental and orthodontic field, Nuelle created patents to help those suffering with TMJ disorders, like specialized mouth guards.

But he didn’t stop there.

When it comes to knee surgery, soft tissue tension is an important factor in going forward with treatment – whether it comes to replacement, lifestyle changes, or other options.

Nuelle developed a device to assist surgeons “in quantifying the soft tissue tension during total knee arthroscopy,” meaning doctors could find and calculate results to help their patients before exploratory surgery was even over.

Patients in critical condition were a special challenge that many doctors may have hesitated to take on due to high risk factors, but Nuelle advocated for those most in need and braved those challenges in order to provide comfort, restore mobility, and ultimately improve lives.

Retired dairy farmer Barbara Butt is thankful that when she saw Nuelle, her condition wasn’t quite so severe as to require a knee replacement. She entered his office fearing the worst but found that her arthritis could be treated without surgical intervention.

“He was just a very nice, very friendly doctor. He said, ‘You have plenty of knee,’” Butt recollected.

Years ago, she had seen her mother-in-law receive shots for pain management in the knee, and Butt was concerned that the treatment would be just as bad as the arthritis itself. Nuelle made sure that wasn’t the case.

There was another instance when Butt returned with a broken arm. Nuelle comforted her fears by “prescribing” ice cream to restore calcium and help the bone heal.

“I went in, and I said, ‘Well, I have a problem. I’m getting addicted to my medication,’” Butt chuckled. “‘Your medication?’ ‘Yep, I’m

addicted to my ice cream.’ He laughed and laughed.”

After that, Nuelle became a customer of Butts’ Dairy, visiting the farm to pick up fresh milk.

The line between friend and patient was often blurred for Nuelle, who had a profound respect for everyone he came across, and the same could be said of his relationships with colleagues at Union General Hospital.

Mountain Community Healthcare Foundation Director Leslie Daniel can remember Nuelle going to the hospital’s cafeteria to prepare meals for his coworkers in annual holiday celebrations, putting to use his skills in the culinary arts to craft chicory coffee and beignets.

“He’d get in there and cook and he’d just laugh – he thought that was the greatest thing, to do that for the staff,” Union General Chief Nursing Officer Julia Barnett also described with a smile and a heavy heart.

Barnett and Nuelle worked together for about 25 years, but things had changed recently when “he had just stepped back this past year from his private practice and had joined (Union General’s) orthopedic group officially.”

Following Nuelle’s unexpected passing, the hospital is slowly finding ways to adapt. Pain and emergencies never sleep, and so neither must the care required to treat them. Nuelle believed that “it’s the people that count,” and Union General is honoring his memory by following his creed.

“He would want us to take care of our patients,” Barnett said. “He was very proud of our orthopedic department and the care we provide here. I think we all know that he would want us to press on, but it is difficult. It leaves a hole, and his personality was so big.

“Being absent (from) that is a challenge. You (have) to get used to (the fact that) you’re never going to hear him laugh anymore or see him coming down the hall or have him come sit in the office with you for a little while.”

Dr. Nuelle will undoubtedly be remembered for many reasons. His kindness, brilliant mind, and myriad talents – from being in a bluegrass band and knowing how to play multiple instruments to his love of sailing and building model ships – paint a picture of a man with a colorful, full life.

Nuelle himself once said, “People have asked about the diplomas on the wall, and they say, ‘Man, you must be smart.’ And I say, ‘No, I’ve just lived long enough.’ I’ve done a lot of things through the years.”

Now that he’s gone, his legacy carries on, through his children and grandchildren, and also through the shining, indelible mark he left on all who knew him. In the words of de Francesco, “You look up at the night sky, you look up at the stars, and he’s one of those stars.”

Those who feel so inclined may donate to the Doug Nuelle Scholarship Fund to support the continuing education of Fannin County High School students interested in music or other performative arts.



Firefighters working to extinguish the last remnants of the fire that claimed this East Chicory Drive vacation rental on Jan. 13.

## January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month: Do you need to be screened?



January is observed as Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Cervical cancer was once the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. Widely available vaccines and cervical cancer screenings have made it one of the most preventable cancers.

According to Brooke Smith, Women’s Health Coordinator with District 2 Public Health, “Routine cervical cancer screenings are the best way to detect early changes in a woman’s body that may lead to cervical cancer.”

More than 90% of cervical cancer cases are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a vaccine-preventable virus that is passed from skin-to-skin contact, usu-

ally through sexual contact. Often, there are no symptoms of HPV; however, if left undetected, it could lead to cervical cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination for girls and boys ages 11 to 12. Teenagers and some adults are also eligible for vaccination.

The most important things you can do to help prevent cervical cancer are to get vaccinated against HPV, have routine PAP screening tests beginning at age 21 years, and go back to the doctor if your screening test results are not normal.

District 2 Public Health departments offer cervical cancer screenings through the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Program to those who qualify. HPV vaccines are available at all 13 health departments. To learn more about cervical cancer visit [www.cdc.gov/cancer](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer)