

Leadership Union kicks off 2019 class with activities at Camp Jabez

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Doug Smith and Cherie Wasit, both leadership coaches and trainers, headed up the Leadership Union 2019 kick-off event at Camp Jabez on Jan. 15.

So, what is Leadership Union? This 11-week course develops leaders for Union County to reach a higher level of community life, said Leadership Union Chairman Daniel Liberatore.

Participants identify and enhance their individual leadership styles through training sessions, discussion panels, field trips and a community service project. They also explore various aspects of the community including government, economic development, nonprofits and more.

"We help identify leaders within our community and provide them with tools and resources to strengthen their leadership," said Chamber Tourism Director Dawn Saraney.

Smith, who has facilitated six Leadership Union classes, concurred.

"It's a great opportunity for business leaders to come together and to learn from each other, learn about the area, the community, the different opportunities that we have here within our area," said Smith. "And in doing that, it makes

all of our businesses better in the sense that they are more understood.

"There's a clearer vision for what's happening in the area. There's a greater opportunity for networking."

With the help of Wasit and Smith, the 2019 class has identified three core values for the program: leading self through honesty, leading others through diversity, and leading in the community through resources.

"The students that are participating applied through the Chamber of Commerce," said Saraney, adding that the program used to take place every other year but is now offered annually.

Continued Saraney, "After Leadership Union 2018, a committee of alumni was formed from the program, and we worked together to streamline it, to create a core packed with heavy leadership content, development content.

"So, as well as learning about themselves and about each other, they're also going to learn about our community. They're going to have a question and answer panel with (Commissioner) Lamar Paris, (Sheriff) Mack Mason, Mayor (Jim) Conley, and the new Chief of Police, Michael Baxter.

"They'll also be doing a tour of the county, going to a lot of the manufacturing facilities, the hospital, a tour

of the educational opportunities here. Basically, it gives them a behind-the-scenes snapshot of economic development here — where we've come from and where we're headed in the future.

"The thing is, a lot of these folks have been in this area for a long time, but they're not aware of all of the many aspects of the community."

Saraney, who went through the program last year, said she didn't realize how much industry exists in Union County.

"I had been out to the industrial park, but I didn't really know what was housed there, so it gave me a deeper appreciation, being able to go in these buildings and take a tour of Advanced Digital Cable or of Corrugated Replacements," she said.

Through the program, Saraney was able to hear directly from the leaders of those organizations about what they provide in terms of economic growth for Union County.

"We're also going to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, and we're going to do a tour there and learn a little bit more, a broader scale of economic development," said Saraney.

Each new Leadership Union class comes up with a community service project.

For example, a past Leadership Union project culminated in the We Are Still



Folks with Leadership Union practicing some team-building exercises at Camp Jabez on Jan. 15.

Photo by Mark Smith

Here Tri-State Native American Initiative that welcomed several Native American nations and culminated with the unveiling of a beautiful bronze statue at Meeks Park.

Leadership Union applicants must apply through the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Many applicants are sponsored by their workplaces.

The Leadership Union Mission/Purpose Statement is: "In an effort to enhance the quality of life in our community, we seek to develop leadership qualities

in individuals who have the potential to effect great, positive change in Union County through their particular economic, civic and social responsibilities and interactions with current and future contributing members of our community."

The 2019 Leadership Union class consists of the following individuals: Holly Brothers of Chick-fil-A; Lesa Byrd of Bank OZK; Derek Carter of Nelson Tractor; Wes Cook of Chick-fil-A; Jeff Davis of State Farm; Josh Davis of Union County Schools; Crystal Dockery of

Mortgage Financial Group; Michael Gay of Union General Hospital; Al Haywood of Servpro; Rhonda Hood of Keller Williams Realty - The Mountain Life Team; Scotty Jarrard of Harmony Grove Baptist;

Shawn Knight of Sawmill Place; Jaime Levins of Young Harris College; Oleg Malyshev of Edward Jones; Kitty Mauzy of United Community Bank Inc.; Jeremy Nelms of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC; Margie Porter of Amazing Grace Catering; and Shawna Rich of Nelson's Tractor.



Another Leadership Union team-building exercise on Jan. 15.

Photo by Mark Smith

Hess...from Page 1A

Osborn. He is wanted in connection with a Feb. 21, 2017, home invasion that has already seen one person put behind bars, according to the Sheriff's Office.

That person is Deborah Hill, 41, of China Grove, North Carolina, who pleaded guilty in November 2017 to charges of false imprisonment, four counts of cruelty to children in the third degree, and four counts of making a false statement, according to court records.

As previously reported, the home invasion occurred following a visit from Hill with her two juvenile children to the home of her father on Feb. 21,

2017, said Osborn. Two hours later, 911 Dispatch received a call from the victim's residence in Union County, said Osborn.

When authorities arrived, they found that the home's resident, an elderly man in a state of dementia, had been secured to a chair with duct tape, hooded and taped around the throat, and severely beaten, said Osborn.

The home invasion was an attempt to extort money from the man, said Osborn.

In the course of investigation, it was determined that Hill had been in the area about a month prior to the home invasion and had managed to

secure thousands of dollars from her father's bank account, said Osborn.

Hess and Hill were arrested shortly after the crime and indicted together in April of 2017, though only Hill has received a disposition in the case.

As part of her plea deal, Hill received a sentence of 20 years to serve five, which means that she will serve five years in prison and the remainder of her sentence on probation, according to court documents.

Anyone with information as to the whereabouts of Alan Shane Hess should call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

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