

North Georgia News

2 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, February 21, 2024

GBI investigates officer-involved shooting

News Special
North Georgia News

At the request of the Union County Sheriff's Office, Region 8 GBI agents are investigating an officer-involved shooting in Union County.

Wendall Cross, 85, of Blairsville, was shot and killed. No officers were injured. Preliminary information indicates on Feb. 18, 2024, at 3:20 p.m., Union County 911 received a domestic dispute with a gun call.

Union County deputies were dispatched to a home on Wesley Mountain Road.

Deputies responded to the home and attempted to negotiate with Cross, who was armed.

Cross fired his gun in the direction of the deputies while they were giving him commands to put down his gun.

Deputies returned fire and shot Cross.

Deputies rendered aid to Cross, and he was taken to a local hospital by Union County EMS. Cross died as a result of his injuries.

The GBI will conduct an independent investigation. Once complete, the file will be given to the Union County District Attorney's Office for review.

According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation website, this is the ninth officer-involved shooting of 2024 in the state of Georgia, and the second fatal one.



The Union County Sheriff's Office with a GBI agent at the scene of the officer-involved shooting Feb. 18. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Council postpones decision on new speed tables

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

In their Feb. 13 regular meeting, Blairsville City Council members decided to table a decision to install two new speed tables on Blue Ridge Street near the square until a future meeting.

Additional speed tables were initially brought up in the November meeting at the request of local attorney Kenya Patton, whose law office is located just off the square next to Blairsville City Hall.

The parking spots at Patton's office are very close to the roadway, sometimes requiring people to back onto the sidewalk and into the street

to leave.

Patton was scheduled to speak about traffic concerns in the November meeting but was unable to attend, so Mayor Jim Conley broached the subject. The council decided to table the discussion that evening to give Conley a chance to consult with an engineer for a recommendation.

Carter Engineering returned a proposal on Jan. 24 to install two speed tables to slow traffic down in that area of Blue Ridge Street, one at City Hall in front of the flower bed closest to the square, and the other down the street just past the Police Department.

Councilman Tony Dyer expressed concern that

installing the speed tables would "create more traffic up on Hunt-Martin (Street)" as people voluntarily re-routed their commutes around that area.

Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter shared his opinion that new speed tables were unnecessary, saying he had recently monitored traffic and speeds near the proposed installation sites and determined there were not enough speeders to justify new speed tables.

"I tell you, I disagree with this," Baxter said of adding speed tables to the 25 mph stretch of the roadway that is often too congested to allow people to gather too

much speed.

Baxter invited council members to join him to observe traffic patterns there, espousing confidence that he could get them to agree with him on the matter.

Regarding the chief monitoring traffic and not seeing many speeding motorists, Councilman Robert "Buddy" Moore suggested that people are likely slowing down because they see a patrol car "and everybody and their brother knows it."

After reviewing the engineering proposal and receiving input from Chief Baxter, the council decided to table the matter once more.

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Blairsville City Council Members Tony Dyer and Mary Ruth Cook in their Feb. 13 regular meeting at City Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Dr. Donn Smith turns 95 with family, friends



Dr. Donn Smith, second from left, shared his love of barbershop harmonies during his birthday party last week, giving a moving performance with other past members of the High Country Harmonizers, the singing group he founded. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The family and friends of Blairsville's first chiropractor Dr. Donn Smith wished him

a very Happy Birthday on Feb. 16.

Several dozen people gathered in the Fellowship Hall of Mountain Presbyterian Church around 2 p.m. that Friday to celebrate his 95th

birthday with him.

Making the occasion all the more special was a multi-song performance by about 15 past members of the High Country Harmonizers. See Dr. Donn Smith, Page 6A

Legatt brings home wrestling gold at State

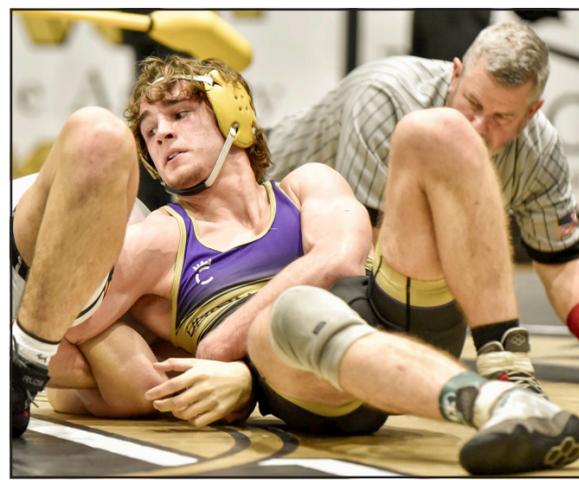
By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Sports Editor

MACON - Union County High School junior wrestler Payton Legatt is the Class AA 157-pound State Champion - the first state title in the program's history.

Legatt's title punctuated a 2023-24 season that saw the junior compile a 52-2 record with an Area 8 Championship and a First-Place showing at Sectionals.

He defeated Berrien County's Matthew Lopez in the State finals via a 6-0 decision just one week removed from his Sectionals win over Lopez.

His performance at Sectionals earned Legatt a first-round bye at last weekend's Class AA State Championships. He pinned Haralson County's Zach



As a newly minted State Champion, UCHS junior Payton Legatt is in a wrestling class all his own. Photo by Todd Forrest Sanders in the quarterfinals and semifinals. Additionally, Union Jeanarion Kanga 9-0 in the See State Champ, Page 6A

Early voting kicked off Monday, runs thru March 8

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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In-person early voting for the Presidential Preference Primary began Monday to select political party candidates for the office of President of the United States.

Election Day for the upcoming primary is Tuesday, March 12. There will be three weeks of early voting for this election running weekdays be-

tween Monday, Feb. 19, and Friday, March 8.

Early voting will also include two weekend voting opportunities on Saturday, Feb. 24, and Saturday, March 2.

All in-person early voting takes place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. inside the new Union County Voting Center at 33 Roscoe Collins Drive, located across from Union County

See Early Voting, Page 7A



Man arrested in alleged axe attack, beating

By Shawn Jarrard
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A Blairsville man is behind bars after allegedly beating a woman and attacking her with a small axe, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Jacob Darrell Shook, 37, of Crump Creek Road, has been charged with two counts of aggravated battery, aggravated assault, kidnapping, false imprisonment and

possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Around 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 13, Union General Hospital Emergency Room staff called 911 to report that a woman had shown up with two broken arms, multiple cuts from an axe and other wounds consistent with a severe beating, UCSCO Maj. Shawn Dyer said.

Patrol deputies responded to the hospital to take the

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Jacob Darrell Shook



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Axe Attack...from Page 1A

initial report, followed by two investigators with the UCSO Criminal Investigation Division.

The woman told investigators that the beating started after she agreed to hang out with Shook, who was an acquaintance; he picked her up from her residence around dusk the previous evening and drove them to his house, Dyer said.

Once there, the woman reportedly said something that angered Shook, who then began beating her with a blunt object. When the object broke, Shook switched to striking her with a small axe, which caused multiple lacerations to her body, Dyer said.

While attempting to defend herself, the woman held her arms in front of her face, resulting in both forearms being broken, Dyer said.

Shook was intoxicated during the incident, having consumed both drugs and alcohol, according to Dyer, who added that the woman was not under the influence at any point.

The entire encounter took place over about 18 hours, and Shook did not allow the woman to leave the premises for hours after the beating occurred.

Finally, around lunchtime on Feb. 13, Shook brought the woman back to her residence and told her not to call the police. She had a friend take her to the ER, where she received medical treatment and was interviewed

by deputies, Dyer said.

Investigators made quick work of drawing up warrants for Shook's arrest, though he fled his residence just before deputies arrived.

Dyer said they found physical evidence at the house that tied Shook to the crime as well as still-smoldering evidence he had burned on his property and signs of a clean-up attempt in bloody areas of the home.

UCSO swiftly developed multiple leads as to where Shook might have headed, reaching out to the Towns County Sheriff's Office and Clay County, North Carolina, Sheriff's Office for assistance in tracking him down in their respective communities.

Dyer said one of the leads took investigators to the residence of another known felon in Hayesville, North Carolina, and the Clay County Sheriff's Office surveilled the property for about two hours while waiting on a search warrant.

Clay County perceived an elevated risk of violent resistance in searching this property so requested the Cherokee County, North Carolina, SWAT Team and UCSO deputies and investigators to assist, Dyer said.

Upon obtaining the search warrant, these agencies entered the Hayesville property, located Shook hiding behind some insulation in an upstairs area, and placed him in custody without incident around 8:20 p.m.

It took roughly seven hours from the time the Union County Sheriff's Office learned of the crime to the moment law enforcement officers arrested Shook in another state.

Maj. Dyer gives credit for the quick conclusion of the search to terrific cooperation with surrounding agencies "from the sheriffs down."

"All the agencies worked flawlessly together without any issues whatsoever," Dyer said. "That's the reason he was in custody so fast."

Added Dyer, "That's one thing about these small towns; four different county sheriffs working together is invaluable."

Of course, Dyer also commends the hard-working men and women of the Union County Sheriff's Office.

"I'm really proud of our deputies and our agency," Dyer said. "Once this started, they worked as fast as they could to get the warrants granted and everything that we needed to make this a successful case and apprehension. That speaks volumes of the experience that we have here."

Shook was initially transported to the Clay County Jail. After signing extradition paperwork, he was transferred to the Union County Jail on Wednesday, Feb. 14, where bond was denied. He has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

New Dementia Caregiver Support Group to meet third Monday of every month

alzheimer's association

Starting February 19, the Alzheimer's Association will be hosting an in-person support group in Blairsville, taking place the third Monday of every month.

There are more than 334,000 Georgians caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia. The support group allows family caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's and dementia to develop a support system, exchange practical information on challenges and possible solutions as well as take through issues and ways of coping. In Union County, 10 percent of the population over age 65 is living with Alzheimer's disease.

"So many of our constituents rely on our programs and services which are often called a life line," added Linda Davidson, Executive Director, Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Chapter.

"Having a good support network like a support group helps those caregiving for someone with Alzheimer's and dementia to feel socially connected and get the encouragement to move on through their own personal journey," Davidson added.

The new Blairsville/Union County will meet in the Parish Hall at St. Clare's Episcopal Church in Blairsville (777 Ledford Road). The group will meet from 1:30-2:30 PM and is led by trained facilitator, Harriet Hoke.

To register for the Blairsville/Union County Caregiver Support Group, contact Harriet Hoke at: hhoke1234@gmail.com or call 800-272-3900.

The Association also continues to offer some online support groups across Georgia for caregivers, individuals living with Alzheimer's and others dealing with the disease. Trained individuals facilitate all support groups.

The Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Chapter offers a number of education

programs that can help those going through Alzheimer's and their families understand what to expect so they can be prepared to meet the changes ahead and live well for as long as possible. The Association offers in person and virtual education programs that allow the audience to ask questions and engage with others going through the journey online.

To register for this support group or education program, call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-272-3900 or go online to alz.org/crf.

More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease – a leading cause of death in the United States. Additionally, more than 11 million family members and friends provide care to people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

In Georgia alone, there are more than 150,000 people over age 65 living with the disease and 334,000 caregivers.

Majority Leader Steve Gooch named one of 2024's '100 most influential Georgians'

Recently, Georgia State Senate Majority Leader, Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), was honored as one of Georgia Trend Magazine's "100 Most Influential Georgians."

Leader Gooch is receiving this recognition for his extensive legislative service to our state, in areas such as rural broadband expansion and Georgia's transportation sector. This is his eighth consecutive year as an honoree of this award.

Expressing his gratitude, Leader Gooch stated, "I am deeply honored to be recognized among such a distinguished group of Georgia leaders. My commitment remains unwavering to pass legislation that addresses key priorities which include tax relief, tort reform, school choice, workforce development and public safety. I am proud to have the privilege of serving the 51st Senate District, and appreciate this recognition from Georgia Trend Magazine."

Georgia Trend Maga-



Majority Leader Steve Gooch named one of 2024's '100 most influential Georgians'

zine designates individuals included in the "100 Most Influential Georgians" list as ex-

ceptional leaders who actively contribute to and uplift our state's communities.

2024-2025 Pre-K & Kindergarten Registration Open February 12 to March 29, 2024

Pre-K and Kindergarten School Registration for the 2024-2025 school year:

Monday-Friday, February 12th to March 29th, 2024 from 8:30 AM - 2 PM at the Union County Primary School. Pre-K seats are filled on a first come first serve basis.

Please call 706-835-4321 or email registrar@uc-schools.org for information and to place your child's name on the waiting list.

Your child must be four (4) years old for Pre-K or five (5) years old for Kindergarten on or before September 1, 2024. You must be a Union County resident for your child

to be enrolled in Kindergarten, and a Georgia resident to be enrolled in Pre-K.

NOTE- Students who are currently enrolled in the Union County Schools Pre-K program at Union County Primary School will NOT need to register for Kindergarten.

Below is a list of 6 (six) required documents for new enrollment. Please bring these items with you to ensure your child's registration is complete.

1. Birth Certificate
2. Social Security Card
3. Georgia Immunization Certificate (DPH Form 3231)

4. Certificate of Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening (DPH Form 3300) (Completed by the health department or a physician)

5. Two Proof of Residency documents with physical address and name (Examples include: rental agreement, utility bill, homeowner's or renter's insurance bill, property tax notice, mortgage payment document, etc.)

6. Complete the online registration forms at this link: <https://www.ucschools.org/parents/student-registration>

Failure to supply all the required documents will delay your registration.

City Council...from Page 1A

Only three of five council members were in attendance on Feb. 13 – Dyer, Moore and Mary Ruth Cook – and a full council discussion will likely need to take place before a decision is made.

If greenlit, the new speed tables would augment the city’s attempts to slow motorists driving through downtown. Last year, the city installed a speed bump at the intersection of the square and Wellborn Street next to Akins & Davenport Law Offices.

Also in the meeting, the mayor and council held a first reading of the ordinance to establish a volunteer Airport Advisory Board to assist the council in making more informed decisions regarding the airport, such as any issues that may arise, strategies for hangar leases, etc.

A second reading and subsequent adoption of the Airport Advisory Board Ordinance are expected in the March regular meeting.

In other business, a vote on a resolution to authorize sales of alcohol for on-premises consumption on Sunday, July 28, failed 2-1, with Cook voting against.

State law allows municipalities without Sunday consumption sales to enact a single Sunday each year for such sales, which was requested by local businesses for Sunday, July 28, to coincide with the annual Mountain Music & Moonshine Festival, as has been granted in past years.

And while the resolution failed last week, it may be brought again before the festival date for consideration by the full council to potentially get the vote over the required three-vote threshold to carry.

If approved, all restaurants that serve alcohol for on-premises consumption inside city limits would be able to sell on that date, and Downtown Development Authority Director Kristen Bentley said other establishments that serve alcohol were on board with the proposed date.

Councilwoman Cook said after the meeting she voted no because she’s against alcohol sales on Sundays.

“I just don’t feel like it’s necessary,” Cook said. “I know other communities do it,



Last week, Blairsville City Councilman Robert “Buddy” Moore and other council members expressed concern over the speed of traffic moving through the downtown area.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

but that doesn’t mean we have to. It’s just my Christian belief. I’m obviously not opposed to alcohol sales period, but I just don’t want them on Sunday.”

Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer announced that the department had applied for and received a Georgia Office of Highway Safety Technology Grant to replace the aging computers inside the city’s patrol cars.

Worth \$19,398.52, the grant will fund 11 computers – enough to replace all the computers in the fleet – and two printers. Computers have become a necessary tool for law enforcement, enabling quick look-up and cross-referencing of information for officers.

Blairsville PD plans to donate its old computers, which the department purchased nearly four years ago, to augment the Union County Sheriff’s Office.

The Police Department also received council approval on two new vehicle acquisitions through King Ford, which offered the best deals: one 2024 F-150 for \$34,560 after an \$8,000 trade-in on a 2017 Ford Explorer, and another 2024 F-150 for \$2,000 and a trade-in on a 2023 F-150.

City Attorney Marvin Harkins discussed the infrastructure being built by Crossing Creeks RV Park to connect to the city’s sewer system. Once completed, Crossing Creeks will turn over the infrastructure – sewer lines

and a lift station costing \$1.4 million to build – to the city.

In a past meeting, the council entered an agreement with Coosa Water Authority to provide sewer only to Crossing Creeks out on Old Blue Ridge Highway. Usually, the city only provides sewer access to locations where it also provides water.

Crossing Creeks agreed to build the sewer infrastructure on its own dime, but before the city accepts it as municipal property, council members want to make sure that the city is financially covered should any repairs become necessary soon after taking ownership.

That’s why they acted on the city engineer’s recommendation that the council ask Crossing Creeks to provide a maintenance bond “or other surety,” and they approved the recommendation that evening to cover 25% of project costs for 12 months.

The council also agreed to hold a called work session on Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 6 p.m., to discuss airport issues with Airport Manager Aaron Mannheim, who expressed in the January regular city meeting that he has multiple items at the airport he wishes to bring to the council’s attention.

This work session will pave the way for similar sessions, called upon request by department heads, to better inform the council of the needs of the various departments in the city for policymaking purposes.

Dr. Donn Smith...from Page 1A

including Smith, who founded the area singing group in 2000 as a continuation of his lifelong passion for barbershop music.

The group sang “Heart of My Heart,” “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” “Swing Down Chariot,” “My Wild Irish Rose,” “Irish Blessing” and, of course, “Happy Birthday” to Smith, during which everyone in the room joined in.

Based on the seemingly well-rehearsed performance and rave reviews from the audience, one could be forgiven for not knowing the High Country Harmonizers have been inactive since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, though Smith announced he would like to see them re-group.

In addition to past High Country Harmonizers, Smith was pleased to welcome to the gathering multiple generations of his family, many friends he has made since his retirement 25 years ago, and more than a few former patients whom he helped as a chiropractor.

Overall, Smith is in excellent health for a nonagenarian. His eyesight has deteriorated due to macular degeneration, but otherwise, he appears to be fit as a fiddle and considers himself blessed to be celebrating his 95th birthday.

“Donn is a very upbeat person,” said friend Andy Monger, who met Smith nearly 30 years ago, adopted him as “Dad,” and eventually joined his singing group. “He walks erect – he doesn’t walk like he’s 95 years old – and he doesn’t think like he’s 95 years old.

“I admire him for his spirit. He’s somebody that you would want to be like. He’s just very kind in many ways and has taken care of many people in the past.”

Dr. Smith spent much of his life in pursuit of healthful outcomes for the many patients who benefited from his care, and he practiced what he preached by remaining healthy and active himself, which has no doubt contributed to his long lifespan.

He first came to Blairsville in the mid-1970s after visiting on the suggestion of a patient at his practice down in Florida. He fell in love with the area and bought a house, eventually retiring here after practicing chiropractic care in



Dr. Donn Smith turned 95 on Friday, receiving this nice hat as a birthday present from his eldest daughter Jennifer Barbash.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Ft. Lauderdale for 28 years.

In 1980, he opened a part-time practice specializing in chiropractic, physiotherapy and nutrition to become the first chiropractor in Blairsville. Before long, Dr. Smith found himself working full-time and loving every minute of getting to know and assist the people of Union County.

He saw countless patients over his 19 years serving this community, and his treatments led to people realizing the value in chiropractic care, paving the way for other successful local chiropractors, including his own grandson Shane Heatley, who has followed in his footsteps.

To this day, people stop Dr. Smith in public to thank him for the care they received in his practice, bolstering the claim put forward on one of the cards he received declaring him “The Man, The Myth, The Legend.”

Smith has many talents in addition to helping people with their ailments and singing in barbershop groups. He has been

a stone sculptor, songwriter, author of poetry and books, cartoonist, organic farmer, and enjoys sports, having played tennis, baseball and softball.

These aspects and others of Smith’s life were celebrated by guests of his birthday party last week, with a memory table set up to showcase old photographs, news clippings, and even a record player of harmony singers.

People swapped favorite stories of Dr. Smith, such as the time he applied treatments to someone’s cow shortly after opening his local practice, earning him the title of “cowpractor.”

Smith made sure to thank his girlfriend Lynn Gates for organizing the party, who said she thought 95 was a milestone to be celebrated, and all present agreed.

Cake was served alongside pizza, muffins and drinks as each guest spent time with Dr. Smith, and he in turn enjoyed himself amid the warmth of such a friendly occasion in his honor.

State Champ...from Page 1A

County departed Macon with three State Runner-Up performances courtesy of freshmen Eli Flowers (106 pounds), Paxon Legatt (144 pounds) and senior Anderson Clouse (138 pounds).

Junior Asa Smith-Foot placed third at 175 pounds, and senior David Heredia (190) came in fourth. Junior Beau Webster competed at 285

pounds, reaching the second round of the consolation bracket.

With 123 points for the tournament, the Panthers finished second in the team standings behind Rockmart.

For more coverage of the State Tournament, check out the Sports Section in this edition of the North Georgia News.

Remembering Reece: Finding inspiration in ‘Chips and Shards’

It has already been a long winter, and as our thoughts turn toward an early springtime, we remember the beloved native poet and farmer of the lovely North Georgia mountains, Byron Herbert Reece. Many from the North Georgia area have learned to appreciate the genius writer who lived among us in the mid-20th century. Many others are learning of him from the legacy he has left for us in his beloved homeland.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society is pleased to have The Reverend Mr. Bill Strickland as a guest writer this week as he explains how he became familiar with Reece as a “Farmer First and a Writer Second.”

Bill begins his journey of discovering “Reece” with the following brief introduction:

I first heard about Byron Herbert Reece when I came to Young Harris College as a student back in 1966, but as a young person in a hurry to get to “not sure where,” I read a

poem or two and dismissed him as a mountain poet. Only in the last year have I rediscovered his poetry and become a member of his fan club. Perhaps, fan club member is a bit trite, but I have become a member of the Byron Herbert Reece Society, an organized group of folks who want to make sure his legacy is appreciated and remembered long after our voices are no longer being heard around these parts. As an aspiring writer whose fan club is mostly family and whose work as a wordsmith is not to be compared with this mountain farmer and poet, I have taken to a few lines of a poem which read:

“From chips and shards in idle times,

I made these stories, shaped these rhymes;

May they engage some friendly tongue

When I am past the reach of song.”

These words of Reece which reflect his legacy have inspired many a writer to stay

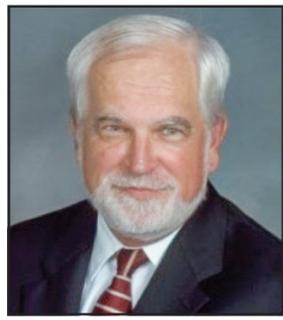
on page with the task of writing. For those who might find poetry a bit hard to read; yet, who would still like to become acquainted with the writings of this local legend and literary giant, a good option would be a CD entitled “The Service of Song,” which contains a collection of Reece’s poetry and ballads put to music by Jim Clark. Clark is well known by Byron Herbert Reece Society members as a Reece scholar, an excellent musician, and a frequent speaker at Reece Society events. In the booklet found with the CD, Jim Clark wrote, “Byron Herbert Reece is unquestionably the bard of the North Georgia Mountains, but his scope and appeal are much wider. Though Reece was a product of and participant in his tiny community of Choestoe, his solitary nature as a writer, exacerbated by his tuberculosis, and his wider experience of the world afforded him a larger and more objective view of his community. His poems

and novels together comprise a richly detailed narrative of an Appalachian farming community confronting the world as seen through the eyes of an intimate stranger.”

In a world where so many of us feel like we are racing to “know not where,” the writings of Reece invite us and call us to look at the “chips and shards” being left by us that tell our story. Listening to this mountain poet who grew up not far from where we are might set our heart and feet on a different road. The musical rendering of Reece’s work can be purchased at the Union County Historical Society inside the Old Courthouse on the square, or at the Reece Heritage Farm on Highway

129 when it re-opens in April. If slowing down for a good read is an option, his four books of poetry and his two novels are available. May the “Chips and Shards” written by Byron Herbert Reece encourage us to make our own story worth remembering.

Bill hails from South Georgia, where he has been a preacher for over 40 years, a noted author of “Journey Notes” since 2008 and has recently published his novel, “The Last Supper.” For over a decade and a half, he has been a farmer and can identify with Reece’s love of the land and his passion for writing. The Byron Herbert Reece society appreciates Bill for his sincere interest in helping



Bill Strickland

to further the legacy of our beloved Georgia poet. The purpose of the Byron Herbert Reece Society is to preserve, perpetuate and promote the literary and cultural legacy of the Georgia mountain author. Jerri Gill, Chairman

Early Voting...from Page 1A

High School off the Glenn Gooch Bypass.

Presidential Preference Primary voters who decide to wait until Election Day to cast their ballots will need to head to their predetermined voting precincts between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on March 12.

Union County has 11 voting precincts: Blairsville, Jones Creek, Choestoe, Owl-town, Coosa, Pat Colwell, Dooley, Suches, Gum Log, Trackrock and Ivy Log.

For people voting absentee-by-mail, ballots may be requested at the Voter Registration Office inside the Voting Center now through Friday, March 1. Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, as an email attachment, or in person at the Voting Center.

Voters returning absentee ballots can use the official drop box inside the Voting Center during early voting hours; mail them back in plenty of time to be counted after polls close on Election Day; or drop them off in person at the Voting Center through 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Monday, Feb. 12, was the registration deadline to vote in this election.



People can vote early now at the Union County Voting Center, located just across from Union County High School on the Glenn Gooch Bypass.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

The 2024 election cycle will be a busy one, with federal, state and local elections up for voting this year.

Candidates for local elections will qualify the week of March 4 for the May 21 General Primary/Nonpartisan Election, with a runoff date of June 18 if necessary.

The big General Election is slated for Tuesday, Nov. 5, with a runoff date set for Dec. 3.

April 22 is the voter

registration deadline to participate in the May 21 General Primary/Nonpartisan Election, and Oct. 7 is the deadline to register for the Nov. 5 General Election.

Residents may visit <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov/s/> for voter registration status, mail-in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county, sample ballots for upcoming elections, provisional ballot status and more.