

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

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## Paris honors Seabees, transfers surplus property

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

In his Feb. 17 regular meeting at the Union County Courthouse, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris welcomed four members from the local Navy Seabee Veterans of America Island X-3 of Georgia to celebrate the 80th birthday of the U.S. Naval Construction Battalions.

Having been formed on March 5, 1942, just three months after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Construction Battalions – abbreviated “CB,” hence the “Seabee” moniker – were crucial to the United States’ successes in World War II and beyond.

Paris presented a proclamation recognizing the March 5, 2022, 80th anniversary to Navy Seabee Veterans Greg Ryan, Ed Crenshaw, Keith Hunter and Richard Hoibraten.

“The Seabees have built bases, bulldozed and paved thousands of miles of roadway and airstrips, constructed camps, built and maintained supply causeways, erected hospitals, and aided in untold emergency recoveries,” Paris said. “The Seabees’ construction projects were all completed while fending off enemy forces alongside their Marine, Army and Navy colleagues.

“Their knowledge and skill were utilized in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam,

Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and countries throughout the world.”

Seabee Veteran Hoibraten spoke for the group, addressing those in attendance following a round of applause in recognition of their patriotic service.

“I am truly grateful that every one of us served in the United States Navy Seabees Construction Battalion,” Hoibraten said. “I’m a Vietnam Vet, Ed Crenshaw’s a Vietnam Vet, Keith was over in Afghanistan – and so many of us still serve today.

“We serve our country and God, and we’re grateful to be serving our nation, and we thank you for supporting us.”

To commemorate the See Seabees Birthday, Page 2A



L-R: Navy Seabee Veterans Greg Ryan, Ed Crenshaw, Keith Hunter and Richard Hoibraten joined Commissioner Paris for a proclamation signing on Feb. 17. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Driver runs stop sign, causes crash in Owtown

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

A major motor vehicle accident in Owtown on Tuesday, Feb. 15, resulted in two area residents requiring life flights as well as potential charges for the driver at fault.

Around 3:10 p.m. that day, a 20-year-old Newton County man in a Dodge Durango was driving west on Town Creek School Road when his vehicle ran the stop sign at US 129, hitting the driver side of a Lexus sedan heading south on Gainesville Highway, per the Georgia State Patrol.

The T-bone accident sent See Owtown Crash, Page 6A



Local first responders working to stabilize an accident victim for helicopter transport following the Feb. 15 crash at Town Creek School Road and Gainesville Highway. Photo/Facebook

## Gun Club inviting public to attend annual meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Gun Club is inviting the public to attend its annual membership meeting on Thursday, March 3, at 6 p.m. inside the Union County Recreation Sports Center at 519 Industrial Boulevard, next to the Health Department on the Glenn Gooch Bypass.

“We will bring the public and membership up to date as to the progress of acquiring our much-anticipated target range,” Gun Club President Paul Clark said.

This will be a return for the annual meeting, which did

not take place last year due to concerns over community spread of COVID-19.

Members will be voting on several changes to the Gun Club’s bylaws in the meeting. These changes can be found highlighted in red at <http://www.unioncountygunclub.com/>.

Currently, the club enjoys a membership of more than 260 people who have contributed their hard-earned money toward making the range a reality. Money has come by way of dues and donations to go toward the administration of the club and range when the time comes.

Charter members who have yet to pay their annual



dues this year will owe \$35 at the meeting, while new members can join for \$70, though meeting attendance is not necessary to join, as all dues can be paid online. Memberships confer voting privileges in the club.

The Gun Club formed in July 2017 with an enthusiastic group determined to establish a rifle/pistol range for residents. To date, their efforts have

See Gun Club, Page 2A

## City approves DDA members, hears new hangar proposal

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Blairsville City Council approved recommendations made by the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority for three new DDA board members on Tuesday, Feb. 8, at the regular monthly meeting at Blairsville City Hall.

“It was a hard decision – I have to say, it was difficult,” said DDA City Liaison and Councilwoman Rhonda Mahan, referring to the board having to choose three out of eight candidates.

Outgoing DDA Board Members Paul Thompson, W.C. Nelson and Rick Abercrombie will be replaced by local business owners/managers



Councilman Tony Dyer swearing into his new term during the Feb. 8 regular city meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

Megan Kimsey, Sarah Gazzara, DDA Program Manager Darren Harper said who is the daughter of W.C. Nelson. the Development Authority See City Council, Page 3A

## VA Clinic honors Veteran Patients with ‘National Salute’

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, Feb. 13-19, was observed at the Blairsville VA Clinic on Monday, Feb. 14, by a visit from Program Support Assistants Sadarious Hill and Tonia Smith of the Atlanta Center for Development and Civic Engagement.

“Since 1978, VA has used the week of Valentine’s Day to provide a weeklong commemoration of Veterans,” according to a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs press release.

The Center for Development and Civic Engagement is a national veteran’s outreach program of the VA’s Social Services Division.

Along with Hill, Smith and American Legion Post See Saluting Veterans, Page 6A



Retired U.S. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sgt. Larry Bryan accepted a gift from Blairsville VA Clinic Manager Iverson Miranda-wilson during the National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. Photo by Mark Smith

## Three Dog Night to bring ‘Joy to the Fairgrounds’ Feb. 26

By Janelle Marie  
North Georgia News  
Guest Contributor

H I A W A S S E E – Following what has been called a magical performance at the iconic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, Three Dog Night is headed to Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday, Feb. 26 – and fans are in for a real treat.

Three Dog Night will be releasing an album this year called “The Road Ahead” featuring new original music, and the legendary act will play at least one song from the new record in Hiwassee this weekend, an a cappella number that has received rave reviews in recent live shows.

Of course, the band will be performing many of its decades-spanning hits for which they are known and

loved the world around.

Three Dog Night rose to the top of the music scene with their first Top 10 song “One” in 1969. In 1971, “Mama Told Me Not to Come” took No. 1, and “Joy to the World” sustained the No. 1 Top Ten spot for six weeks. “Never Been to Spain” was also released in 1971, and in 1972, “Black and White” reached No. 1 followed in 1973 by “Shambala” hitting the airwaves.

With 21 consecutive Top 40 hits appearing on the pop, rock and country charts, Three Dog Night retains some of the most impressive music industry statistics to date.

Tens of millions of Three Dog Night records have been sold throughout the years, and new and existing fans can purchase their music – either digitally or in stores – throughout the world, including Japan, Holland, England,



Danny Hutton Three Dog Night

Canada, Germany, Spain and elsewhere.

Now in their fifth decade of performing, Three Dog Night has not only weathered COVID-

See Three Dog Night, Page 3A

## EMA gathers multiple agencies for disaster preparedness

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Oftentimes, when people think of an automobile accident, most hope no one is hurt, and they are glad it wasn’t their vehicle. And if caught in the traffic backup, people are anxious to move along and get to their destination.

Then there are the “looky-loos” who just can’t resist slowing down and gawking.

What many people fail to realize is the huge number of individuals who are pulled into an emergency event and the incredible amount of agency coordination involved in processing such incidents, especially if children or fatalities are involved.

No matter the details of an accident, it is always a priority to get the injured to a hospital, control traffic, and clear the scene.

In an effort to hone their skills and prepare for major emergencies, each year, the Union County Emergency Management Agency organizes and hosts exercises, workshops, seminars and the like, said Union County Fire Chief and EMA Director David Dyer.

“Disasters and major incidents require an entire community to resolve,” Dyer said. “Each event brings its own unique set of challenges which cannot be overcome without careful planning.

“In order for communities See Disaster Preparedness, Page 6A



David Dyer Fire Chief/EMA Director

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# Seabees Birthday...from Page 1A

80th anniversary, Seabee Island X-3 will be hosting its annual Military Ball at The Ridges Resort on Saturday, March 5,

beginning at 5 p.m. All military branches, veterans and first responders will be recognized that evening.

## IN OTHER BUSINESS

Moving on, Paris accepted an agreement addendum between the county and Combined Public Communications for inmate telecommunication services at the Union County Jail.

"There is no cost to Union County for this service, but commissions received are increasing from 50% to 55% of all prepaid ITS talk time usage," according to the meeting agenda.

Next, Paris adopted a resolution to transfer 0.51 acres of surplus property "located on the southern side of parcel No. 085 066 owned by Union County Government to the Union County Development Authority for the purpose of being sold."

"A public hearing was held on Feb. 10, 2022, at 5 p.m. in the Union County Courthouse," Paris said. "The purpose of this hearing was to provide the public with information and answer questions related to a 0.51-acre strip of property being declared

surplus property.

"The Union County Development Authority requested this small portion of land be declared surplus and transferred to them for the purpose of selling to a potential business.

"All questions were answered by Mitch Griggs, our Development Authority Director of the Union County Development Authority.

"All attendees at the public hearing were provided a survey plat, which we have included in your agenda tonight. Our office has not received any public feedback during this 10-day period of time as a problem with any of the items that were mentioned by the Development Authority."

As discussed in the public hearing, the surplus property is situated on a slope "with a little drainage ditch that the county can't do anything with otherwise," and the transfer will not affect the upcoming Youth Sports Complex in the works by the county.

But the business in question said it needed the sliver of land because, according to the site plan, the store's loading dock will extend about 10 feet beyond site boundaries. The business will be paying \$42,500 for the half acre, the proceeds of which will be remitted to the county.

The county and Development Authority have not revealed the identity of the business that will be opening at Farmers Market Way and Georgia 515 other than Griggs saying Feb. 10 it would be a "national brand retail grocery."

Much public speculation in recent weeks has pegged the new business as being ALDI, a German-based international grocery store, which has been confirmed by bid invitations on multiple websites seeking general contractors to build a new ALDI location in Blairsville.

Griggs said in the public hearing that, barring any major delays, the store might open as early as September 2022.

The owners of Creekside Cottages, a business directly off Farmers Market Way featuring four Airbnb-style nightly rental cabins, attended the meeting, remarking during public comments that Paris was incorrect in saying there had been no objections to the transfer.

Mark and Rochelle Miller own the cottages, and Mark said he had spoken with Griggs about multiple concerns regarding a grocery store being located at that intersection, including potential noise, lighting and other issues that could negatively impact their business.

"We're hoping that the county and ALDI will work to make both of our businesses successful," Miller said. "We took an existing eyesore in Blairsville and turned it into a great place that is admired by everybody in the county ... so I hope that the county works with us as much as they're working with bringing a new grocery store in."

Another attendee said she had emailed Paris with concerns about the land transfer during the 10-day comment period following the hearing but had not heard back from him. Her concerns dealt with the potential impacts to Creekside Cottages and "the detraction from the Farmers Market."

Paris said he knew he had a meeting with the Millers the following week but was unaware of their objections



Alexis Moore

prior to that evening's county meeting, and he also stated that he had not come across any emails objecting to the transfer but would investigate the matter.

## AGENDA SPEAKERS

Two Union County residents asked to appear on the agenda as featured speakers Feb. 17: Alexis Moore and Randy Boland.

In the past, speakers have always been invited to use the main podium in the courtroom meeting place to address the public. Starting in January, however, members of the public have not been allowed past the viewing gallery as a COVID precaution, Paris said after the meeting Thursday.

Using a podium and microphone set up in the viewing gallery, Moore addressed the topic of public involvement in local government.

Moore has been a vocal critic of Paris in recent county meetings and was even ejected in December following a brief argument with the commissioner. She intimated that she wanted to set the record straight about her interests in public meetings.

"I am Alexis Moore – I think I'm locally famous on accident," she said. "Due to the words of the commissioner and in the news, I have been spoken about a lot for my involvement here coming to the meetings."

"And there's been a lot of discussion about why I'm here and what I'm doing, but the thing is, I am just a regular person. We all are just regular people coming here to the meetings."

Moore implored people to join her in seeking greater involvement in local governance, "because when we come together, we have so much more intelligence."

"I want to have you think about what it would be like if all of Union County came together (face to face instead of on Facebook) with all of our combined interests and intelligences and passions and creative problem solving, what we could actually accomplish," she said.

Right before the start of her comments, Moore and a friend in the audience attempted to pass out fliers advertising an upcoming Town Hall meeting, but Paris said any literature distributed at county meetings needed to be approved by his office before it could be disseminated.

Billed as a "Union County Town Hall Meeting," Moore is inviting people to attend a March 3 public gathering at 6 p.m. at Compass Point located at 298 School Circle in Blairsville. The meeting will feature "citizens connecting with citizens sharing ideas to unite our community."

Additional comments from Moore, including details about herself and other like-minded individuals involved in the effort to promote more



Randy Boland

active participation in local affairs, may be found in a letter to the editor by her in the Opinions Section of this week's North Georgia News.

Also speaking that night was resident Randy Boland, who offered glowing remarks about the state of Union County under the direction of Commissioner Paris.

"There is much to be thankful for (here), and I'm going to tell you a few (things) that I'm thankful for," Boland said. "Thanks for Commissioner Paris; he's done a great job. Union County has the envy of many people, great facilities and low property taxes (compared with all Georgia counties)."

Boland listed many local facilities that benefit the community, including the Farmers Market, Canning Plant, Meeks Park, multiple historic buildings, Horse Arena, Health Department, Community Center, Senior Center, Butternut Creek Golf Course, Sports Center and more.

He also highlighted regularly updated equipment for local first responder agencies, which includes vehicles and other items paid for with SPLOST funds, saying that "these are things that we need when we need them."

"So, you should be proud to live in Union County – I am," Boland said. "There's no other rural county that compares to what we have done in the community with our SPLOST and property tax dollars. This is evident, and I just don't understand why some people can't see it."

Added Boland, "So, here's the bottom line: if you don't like it here, leave – quit complaining."

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Paris advised people to be careful when navigating local roadways, which appear to be experiencing a higher volume of bad traffic accidents of late.

The commissioner then opened the usual Public Comments period of the meeting, noting that time constraints led to his decision not to entertain public comments in the January meeting, and after a few questions from the public, the meeting officially ended.

"You don't have to wait a month every time to get the information you need from the county," Paris said in closing. "The purpose of the county meeting is for us to let you know what business the county is doing."

"You can call our office and you can try to set up an appointment. You can't always get me, but we can work toward that. Always call the office and we can get you any information that you need for questions that you have."

County commission meetings take place the third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. inside the Union County Courthouse.

# Gun Club...from Page 1A

resulted in the U.S. Forest Service leasing to the Union County Government a 14-acre piece of public land off SR 180 to build the range.

And given the latest news that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has agreed to increase passthrough federal Pittman-Robertson Act funding from 75% to 90%, the club's overarching goal appears to be

just on the horizon, with the project expected to be re-bid soon for construction likely this year.

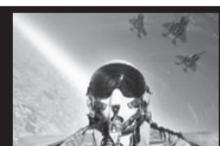
For the annual meeting, the Gun Club is hoping to display range designs for public viewing. Key features include independently operated rifle and pistol ranges, sound abatement, full-size bathrooms, climate-controlled meeting and

supply rooms, ample parking and more.

In addition to hours specifically designated for Gun Club members, the public will have access to the range, which will also be able to host charity shoots as well as state-mandated training for law enforcement officers as required by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council.

## Military Time History of the US NAVY Part 1 of 3

By: Whitey White



(Part 1) The history of the United States Navy divides into two major periods: the "Old Navy", a small but respected force of sailing ships that was notable for innovation in the use of ironclads during the American Civil War, and the "New Navy", the result of a modernization effort that began in the 1880s and made it the largest in the world by 1943.

The United States Navy claims October 13, 1775 as the date of its official establishment, when the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution creating the Con-

tinental Navy. With the end of the American Revolutionary War, the Continental Navy was disbanded. Under the second President, John Adams, American merchant shipping came under threat while in the Mediterranean by Barbary pirates from four North African Muslim States. This led to the Naval Act of 1794, which created a permanent standing U.S. Navy. The original six frigates were authorized as part of the Act. Over the next 20 years, the Navy fought the French Republic Navy in the Quasi-War (1798–99), Barbary states in the First and

Second Barbary Wars, and the British in the War of 1812. After the War of 1812, the U.S. Navy was at peace until the Mexican-American War in 1846, and served to combat piracy in the Mediterranean and Caribbean seas, as well as fighting the slave trade off the coast of West Africa. In 1845, the Naval Academy was founded at old Fort Severn at Annapolis, Maryland by the Chesapeake Bay. In 1861, the American Civil War began and the U.S. Navy fought the small Confederate States Navy with both sailing ships and new revolutionary ironclad ships while forming a blockade that shut down the Confederacy's civilian coastal shipping. After the Civil War, most of its ships were laid up in reserve, and by 1878, the Navy was just 6,000 men.

# Firewise Coalition educates public on fire prevention

By **Jeremy Foster**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Feb. 8, the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition hosted a public educational session on fire prevention, tips and tricks of the trade in Marion Hall of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church.

The meeting was rescheduled from the previous month due to icy road conditions in January.

Of the 124 Firewise Communities statewide, Towns County is home to 24, or nearly 20% of all Firewise Communities in Georgia, in one of the smallest counties in the state. And organizers are hopeful that residents in Union County will want to spread Firewise to their communities also.

So, why should people pay attention? Because fire is an eventuality up here in the heavily forested North Georgia Mountains. That's where Firewise comes in, to serve as a way for residents to take control of factors that can dramatically reduce their risk in the event of wildfire.

Firewise USA is a program of the National Fire Protection Association aimed at educating the public on important information regarding necessary precautions to take to maintain the prevention and reduction of wildfire risks.

Research has demonstrated that proper preparation of homes and landscaping plays a vital role in minimizing the potential for catastrophic harm caused by wildfires, which can transfer from ignited vegetation or an ignited home through radiation, convection and traveling embers.

Furthermore, experiments, models and post-fire studies have shown that homeowners would greatly benefit from conducting proper fire mitigation up to 200 feet from the foundations of their homes.

Firewise suggests that residents request a fire-risk overview by visiting their local Georgia Forestry Commission office or fire agency to learn more about the science-based guidelines that help residents prepare their homes and properties for wildfires.



**Michael Courey**  
Towns Firewise

Frank Riley is the executive director of the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D Council, the Georgia Firewise liaison, and the Appalachian RC&D Fire Adapted Communities Coalition Administrator. He outlined the purpose of their efforts in the meeting.

"Our dedication is solely to help our communities become safer from wildfires and provide guidance to make

a defensible space around your homes," Riley said.

Michael Courey is the lead volunteer coordinator of the Towns County Firewise Coalition managing and maintaining the activities, schedules, events and information sessions for the group.

"Fire mitigation is very realistic, and it works," Courey said. "The Firewise program is set out to decrease the risk of individual life, community life and property loss."

"Without taking appropriate precautions to keep our homes a little bit safer to wildfires, then we are subject to the whims of the possible tragedies that can occur. But with a little effort and common sense, the risk can be decreased dramatically."

Also discussed that evening was the SSTAR protocol. Many people are accustomed to burning leaves and other yard debris at the properties, and Firewise promotes the use of an acronym to remind people of the best way to maximize burning safety.

SSTAR stands for: Space, 25 feet between fire and woodlands; Space, 50 feet between fire and structures; Time, from sunrise to sunset; Attendance, stay on-site until a debris fire is extinguished; and Reasonable precautions, like having tools and other measures in place to prevent escaped fire.

Precautions include having a continuous pressurized water source; a man-made or natural barrier to contain fire; hand tools and fire-containing equipment; weather awareness;

and knowledge of fire danger designations of hazardous conditions like low relative humidity and high winds.

Other presenters were Judy Potter of Towns Firewise, Towns Fire Chief Harold Copeland, Union Fire Chief David Dyer, Towns Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Georgia Forestry Chief Ranger Blake Melton, and GFC Wildland Urban Interface Specialist Anthony English.

Nick Peters, who is the Assistant Fire Management Officer for the U.S. Forest Service Chattahoochee-Oconee

National Forest, was also in attendance, and Joe Boone helped to organize the meeting at the church that evening.

After the meeting, several Union County residents expressed an interest in starting Firewise Communities.

For more information on wildfire prevention, visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org). For guidance on how to apply for hazard mitigation grant programs or get a neighborhood Firewise Community established, call 813-486-8997 or email [michael@courey.net](mailto:michael@courey.net) or [townsfirewise@gmail.com](mailto:townsfirewise@gmail.com).

## Correction:

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason would like to clarify a statement he made in the Feb. 16, 2022, edition of the North Georgia News regarding the Melissa Henderson case from May 2020.

"We investigated the case and notified the district attorney, which we often do,"

Sheriff Mason said following publication. "He said we had enough probable cause to seek a warrant. Our investigator applied for an arrest warrant, and the Magistrate Court of Union County signed it. The Sheriff's Office then effected the arrest. The district attorney did not draw up the warrant or compel us to make the arrest."

## Three Dog Night...from Page 1A

19 but is determined to bring something new and exciting to their music chronicles, hence the upcoming album.

"It's so hard to follow the luck we had in our past," founder and frontman Danny Hutton said in a recent interview with the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald. "The songs really had to be good. It would be horrible to just throw out an album and have everyone disappointed, so we worked really hard."

The pandemic lockdown produced the longest touring break for the band since the early '80s, which, according to Hutton, "really made everybody appreciate being back on stage and entertaining ... with a chance to take a second look at what we do."

And it is a storied second look, as Three Dog Night formed about 54 years ago, in 1968, after Hutton pulled together talented and experienced artists such as Cory Wells, Chuck Negron, Joe Schermie, Floyd Sneed, Jimmy Greenspoon and Michael Allsup.

Regarding his own musical background, Hutton pointed to his Irish roots. The young Irishman moved with his family from Donegal, Ireland, to Boston around the age of 5. He was raised in a musical family with relatives who played multiple instruments.

"There were big nights every month where all the relatives would go to one or the other's houses," Hutton said. "You had to get up and play an instrument, sing a song, recite poetry or dance."

As a young child, Hutton said he hid under the table, too shy to partake in his family's melodious pastime, but the experience was akin to osmosis.

"I was like a sponge," he said. "To this day I know songs, and I don't know why I know them."

Hutton believes it was these early experiences that gave him a musical ear with the uncanny ability to meld his talents with other incredible musicians and composers.

Fittingly, Three Dog Night's success can be attributed to exceptional live performances while recording unique song interpretations from some of the best songwriters of all time.

The group has recorded music from songwriters – many undiscovered at the time – such as Harry Nilsson, Elton John, Randy Newman, Laura Nyro, Hoyt Axton, Paul Williams and many more.

Since the passing of cofounder and lead vocalist Cory Wells in 2015, Hutton has honed the Three Dog Night eclectic sound into harmonic history with frontman vocalist

David Morgan.

Morgan brought his own touring and recording experience to the band, having previously performed with music icons Ray Charles, Dolly Parton, Bruce Hornsby and George Martin.

Three Dog Night has always been comprised of skilled musicians and vocalists well vetted throughout the industry. Paul Kingery is lead guitarist when Michael Allsup is on break, and Danny's own son Tim Hutton of Sugar Ray fame plays bass guitar with the group, with Pat Bautz on drums and Howard Laravea on keyboards.

"The Road Ahead" is expected to be released by this summer with new music, and Hutton said the album art will feature a special wink to longtime fans.

"It's (a drawing of) Jeremiah the bullfrog with a hobo stick on his back," Hutton said, previewing the cover. "He's thin with bell bottoms, and he's looking at this road in the mountains that goes to this big temple – Shambala."

Three Dog Night tickets are still available at \$46 apiece for the single performance on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022, at 7 p.m. For more information or to purchase a ticket, visit <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/>.

## City Council...from Page 1A

"drives and directs policies and programs aimed at improving the economic development and vibrancy of the city using the four points of the Main Street Process: Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring and Promotions."

The Main Street Process is part of the mission of the overall Better Hometown revitalization effort in the City of Blairsville, Harper said.

In other news, City Attorney Marvin Harkins administered the Oath of Office to recently re-elected Councilman Tony Dyer for his 2022-2025 term of office. Dyer was unable to attend the January meeting so swore in this month.

The council held the second reading and subsequent adoption of Ordinance No. 2022-01, officially changing the regular city council meeting day to the second Tuesday of each month.

A final version of the Intergovernmental Agreement between Coosa Water and the City of Blairsville for sewer-only service to Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa was tabled again because of some confusion regarding the

language.

The purpose of the agreement with Coosa Water is to quash any possibility that the sewer service fees could not be collected by the city. As the city can't just turn off established sewer services in the event of nonpayment, it wants Coosa Water to be responsible for collecting both water and sewer bills.

To elaborate, with the city providing sewer-only service to Crossing Creeks, there is no recourse for the city to collect payment from a delinquent customer because Coosa Water would control the water service. Harkins will rewrite the IGA and submit it to Coosa Water for their approval.

Moving along, Cory Payne and Wayne Wolke, both pilots who park their aircraft at the Blairsville Airport, submitted a proposal to the city that they build, at their expense, a new 100-by-100 hanger on the north side of the airport in the vicinity of the long-term parking area.

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley mentioned that the estimated cost of the new hanger would be between \$700,000 and \$800,000.

Payne and Wolke are proposing that the city grant them a 20-year land lease at the airport with two five-year extensions for property on which to set the building and allow them to rent out unused space in the new hangar on an overnight or short-term basis.

The disposition of the hangar building after the 30-year lease terms expire is up for negotiation.

According to Airport Manager Aaron Mannheim, there is ongoing high demand for both long and short-term hangar space at the Blairsville Airport.

The council directed Harkins to review the proposal and determine how the city might go about pursuing the deal.

In other news, the council voted unanimously to authorize the mayor to apply for 70% state funding for the Wellborn Street Sidewalk Project through the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant program. The remainder would be paid for using SPLOST funds.

The project, which was started about two years ago, was halted at the beginning of the pandemic. The cost of the project has, over that two-year period, increased by over \$6,800 from about \$67,800 to \$74,695, Conley said.

In his Attorney's Report, Harkins said, in response to the question of an insurance benefit for Mayor Conley which was raised at the January meeting, that, yes, the benefit could be provided to the mayor since the city offers insurance benefits to employees.

However, "because it's Medicare, this involves the Medicare Secondary Payer Act, which then gets into federal (regulations)." The upshot is that Harkins will need more time to determine the best way to structure this benefit for Conley.

And finally, following an Executive Session, the council unanimously approved authorizing Conley to hire two new full-time officers for the city Police Department.



**Union County Lions Club**

**Trash To Treasure**

**March 5, 2022**

**Union County Civic Center**

**165 Welborn Street**

**Blairsville GA 30512**

**8 AM - 1 PM**

**Early Bird Entry**

**from 8 AM - 9 AM - \$1**

# Owltown Crash...from Page 1A



**AirLife Georgia responded to the scene of the Feb. 15 Owltown crash and shortly thereafter airlifted a second patient from Union General Hospital.**  
Photo/Facebook

both vehicles careening down the embankment on the west side of Gainesville Highway, and Union County Firefighters had to use hydraulic extraction tools to free the passenger of the Durango and the lone occupant of the sedan.

Driving the Lexus was a 32-year-old Dahlonega woman who sustained extensive internal injuries. She was airlifted from the scene to Northeast Georgia Medical Center, where she has undergone multiple surgeries but is in stable condition and expected to recover in time, according to authorities.

Neither of the Durango's occupants was wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash, and the driver was transported to Union General Hospital via ambulance for treatment of potential minor injuries, according to GSP.

The passenger in the Durango, a 42-year-old Blairsville man, experienced significant injuries and was taken to Union General by ambulance before being airlifted to a nearby trauma center. His condition was not known at press time.

GSP has listed the Newton County man as suspected of being at fault in the crash, though he stated at the time that "his brakes went out, so he attempted to put the vehicle in park to stop and was unable to do so."

"Charges are pending the conclusion of the Georgia State Patrol's Specialized Collision Reconstruction

Team's investigation," GSP said Friday.

A male witness to the accident told GSP he was driving behind the Lexus on Gainesville Highway and saw that the Durango "never slowed down" before running straight through the stop sign at Town Creek School Road.

The witness also reported that, prior to impact, the southbound Lexus had slowed "as if to turn onto Town Creek School Road."

A female witness traveling in the same car as the first witness said that they had to slow down "due to a vehicle turning onto Lower Owltown Road." This witness estimated that the Durango hit the Lexus "at a speed of at least 60 mph."

Results of drug and alcohol blood tests are pending for the driver who ran the stop sign, per the GSP Crash Report.

Agencies responding to the scene were Union County E-911, Union County Fire Department, Union County Sheriff's Office, Union General EMS, Georgia State Patrol and AirLife Georgia.

A local woman named Jennifer Stewart wrote about the crash last week in the "Blairsville, Ga" Facebook group, reporting that she had responded in the immediate aftermath.

"I was first on scene at a HORRIFIC crash at the intersection of Town Creek School Rd. and 129 this

afternoon," Stewart wrote on Feb. 15. "A woman was T-boned by an SUV that was going about 60 mph.

"I ran to this woman as fast as I possibly could. Couldn't open the doors as they were both smashed in. She had to be cut out. All I could do was hold her hand and tell her that help was on the way.

"She couldn't hardly breathe, and I just kept BEGGING her to breathe. I know she heard me, as every time I begged her to breathe, she would swallow and gasp for air. I honestly felt like I was holding the hand of a dying woman.

"I haven't been the same since that encounter, I am a complete wreck. She was airlifted out by helicopter in critical condition. I have no idea what her name was or if she had family. I am completely heartbroken and just feel such a sense of loss.

"I have heard of SO many horrible wrecks lately. I just don't understand, as this kind of thing never happened before. What is going on? I will never get the image of her out of my mind, and I just pray that I see some kind of article that lets me know she is still alive."

Following her Facebook post, many people who knew the injured woman reached out to Stewart to let her know that the woman had survived the crash. For that, Stewart said she is incredibly grateful.

"I'm so happy she's going to be OK," Stewart said.

# Saluting Veterans...from Page 1A

121 Auxiliary Treasurer Patti Cousins, Blairsville VA Clinic Manager Ivelisse Miranda-Wilson was there in the thick of things greeting veterans and offering them small gifts and Valentine's Day cards as they came into the clinic.

"We're celebrating our (veteran inpatients and outpatients this week), and that's going to be a national salute to the veterans on Valentine's Day," Miranda-Wilson said. "We're just showing our appreciation."

Hill echoed Miranda-Wilson's sentiments, saying that the goal of the week was to express gratitude for veterans by saying, "Thank you, thank you so much."

"So, we just want to come out, meet the veterans," Hill said. "And, as an expression of our gratitude, we have little snacks and things for them.

"It's a little token of appreciation that goes a long way and lets them know that, hey, we're here for them. So,

that's what we're doing today and the rest of the week."

There was, as is usual, a steady stream of veterans coming in and out of the clinic on Monday morning, so Miranda-Wilson, Hill, Smith and Cousins had their work cut out for them.

And joyous work it was, interacting with American military veterans who gave of themselves, each and every one.

Retired U.S. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sgt. Larry Bryan was one of those veterans who was visiting the clinic on Monday. Bryan retired about 20 years ago, having served his country for three decades dating back to Vietnam.

"I thought it was a marvelous gesture to try to recognize and appreciate veterans. It was quite a surprise, and I enjoyed it. I appreciated the opportunity to hear other veterans say how many years they'd been in service," said Bryan, referring to a question

Miranda-Wilson posed to veterans sitting in the clinic lobby that morning.

"Most of them, the vast majority were in just three or four years," he added. "But it doesn't make any difference how long you served; if you're a veteran of one of our wars or conflicts, then you're a brother."

Laraine Ayers, wife of the late Mike Ayers who passed away in January, also made an appearance on that Monday morning.

Veteran Mike Ayers, Specialist E-5 Armor Branch, U.S. Army, was instrumental in supporting veterans through Veterans Service Organizations for a great many years and will be sorely missed in the community.

The North Georgia News would also like to thank veterans, for their service, sacrifice and dedication to the people of the United States of America and the American way of life.



**L-R: Laraine Ayers, Atlanta Center for Development and Civic Engagement Program Support Assistant Sadarious Hill and Blairsville VA Clinic Manager Ivelisse Miranda-Wilson on Monday, Feb. 14.**  
Photo by Mark Smith

# Disaster Preparedness...from Page 1A



**EMA Director David Dyer went over disaster preparedness considerations with local first responder stakeholders in a Feb. 17 workshop at Fire Station No. 1.**  
Photo by Mark Smith

to be better prepared, communities plan and practice through workshops, tabletops, drills and exercises.

"Union County Emergency Management Agency has been hosting a series of workshops where community partners have been planning and preparing for a major incident."

And the current round of workshops features something new for 2022.

"(Officials with Union County Schools) came to us last year and said they would like to do something about the reuniting of students if we had an accident or a shooting or anything like that," Dyer said.

So, with plenty of planning and input from multiple first responder partners, Dyer and the local EMA have put together a training scenario that is "almost a full-scale exercise," to be implemented next month.

The scenario will be run as a "tabletop" exercise consisting of representatives from city, county and state agencies collaborating around a large conference table or in a large room to design and

streamline responses to a hypothetical local emergency event.

In preparation for this event, Union County EMA hosted a recent Exercise Planning Seminar that was followed by a series of three Discovery Workshops in which representatives from all involved agencies participated over the first few weeks of 2022.

The EMA just completed the third and final Discovery Workshop on Thursday, Feb. 17, and is set to run the tabletop hypothetical exercise on Thursday, March 24, at the Emergency Operations Center inside Union County Fire Station No. 1.

For the hypothetical event, first responders will be roleplaying a Friday afternoon automobile accident involving a car and a school bus with fatalities on US 129 North/Murphy Highway.

This scenario was picked because it would be a "perfect storm" emergency, given the location, day of the week, time of day, and type of accident in the Union County area.

"One goal of the

workshops (and exercises like this) is to discover previously unseen challenges that the participants must overcome," Dyer said. "Each new workshop builds on the previous workshops in order to develop an overall plan.

"The participants are finding the workshops very helpful in testing current plans and developing new plans to address the unforeseen issues that were discovered. They also find it helpful to understand what other community partners will be doing at certain times during the incident."

All participants will be put to task in this exercise: Union County EMA, Union County Schools and School Police, Union General Hospital and EMS, Union County Fire, Union County Coroner, E911 Dispatch, Georgia State Patrol, Union County Sheriff's Office and Blairsville Police Department.

There have been many real automobile accidents on US 129 over the years that have always been a challenge because that state and federal highway, a major artery between Blairsville and Murphy, North Carolina, is a two-lane road, so an accident usually requires total road closure.

For additional information on the local EMA, visit <http://www.unioncountyyga.gov/departments/emergency-management-agency/>.

## Correction:

In last week's article highlighting student achievement during the 2022 Evening with the STARS Banquet, the North Georgia

News mistakenly reported that Logan Disser of Woody Gap School was enrolled at North Georgia Tech. In fact, she is a student at the University of North Georgia.

Union County American Cancer Society  
Presents

## DAFFODIL DAYS 2022

### FLOWER OF HOPE PROJECT

Surprise a friend, family member, or "adopt" a group with a Beautiful bouquet of 10 fresh cut daffodils for a \$5 donation to the

**AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY**

**Pre-orders must be in by February 28<sup>th</sup>**

Contact : PHONE : Mia Crowe @706-897-4519  
or EMAIL : [crowes@windstream.net](mailto:crowes@windstream.net)

**Flowers will be ready for pick up 11:00-3:00 Monday: March 14, 2022**

Allegheny Lodge #114 F&AM on Rogers St.  
Downtown Blairsville  
Behind Cabin Coffee

\*\*\*\*\*Look for signs and balloons\*\*\*\*\*

**Proceeds support cancer research, education, patient services and advocacy programs of the American Cancer Society and the UNION COUNTY RELAY FOR LIFE .**