

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Vaccinations proceed amid declining COVID numbers

Kemp expands eligibility to teachers, others

By Shawn Jarrard
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COVID-19 vaccinations continued apace last week, with supply remaining limited but local shipments finally resuming following weather-related delays the week before.

In Union County, the Commissioner's Office, Emergency Management Agency and Health Department teamed up Friday to administer second-dose vaccines to people who attended their Jan. 22 clinic at the Sports Center.

The Feb. 26 mass vaccination had to be rescheduled from Feb. 19 due to winter weather conditions across the country disrupting shipments. Importantly, the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention say people should be OK to go an extra week before receiving their second dose.

Right around 1,100 Union and Towns county residents received second doses for full vaccination there, with people continuing to be impressed with the streamlined effort that was conducted in partnership with many volunteers, the Fire Department and the Recreation Department.

The biggest change between the Jan. 22 and Feb. 26 clinics was a faster pace of vaccinations, undertaken in just eight hours instead of 12. Other than a few minor tweaks, the clinics were virtually the same, existing now as an efficiently reproducible effort.

"We have people on call, we have lists of people that

want to work, want to help, and we have the process for them," EMA Director David Dyer said. "So, the only thing that actually changes anything that we do is if we have vaccines or not."

Due to ongoing supply issues, it's unclear at this time when Union County will be able to host another mass clinic, but Dyer said that, when the time comes, everyone involved can be ready at a moment's notice.

In neighboring Towns County, Synergy Health of Hiawassee and its volunteer COVID-19 Vaccine Team held another clinic at the Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park on Feb. 26. There, more than 250 mostly Towns residents

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Nancy Clanton was grateful to receive her second COVID shot in the Feb. 26 mass clinic, administered by University of North Georgia nursing student Kylie Karasopoulos. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Heatley realizes dream of being hometown chiropractor

By Shawn Jarrard
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As the newest practitioner at Schroter Chiropractic Center, Dr. Shane Heatley saw his very first patient two weeks ago, becoming in the process Blairsville's first homegrown chiropractor.

It's been a long road and a dream come true for the Union County native, who spent about eight years acquiring his knowledge of chiropractic at Life University in Marietta between 2011 and graduation in June 2019.

COVID-19 delayed his board certification until October of last year, but Heatley is up and running now, and he wants people to know that he's excited to be serving members of the community and is currently taking new patients.

"This has just been amazing," Heatley said of his first couple weeks. "It's kind of surreal, to be honest with you,



Dr. Robert Schroter, right, is excited to welcome Dr. Shane Heatley to Schroter Chiropractic Center. Heatley is currently accepting new patients. Photo/Submitted

more than I had imagined and very much not like a job.

"It's a lot of responsibility, and I'm enjoying that and helping folks already, letting them know a little bit about myself and learning about them

and their lives and how I can help them out."

At Schroter Chiropractic, Heatley said they follow a holistic approach to managing patients by listening to

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HayeCo uses 'SIPs' to build affordable homes



L-R: UCDA Director Mitch Griggs helped brothers Jordan and Isaac Hayes of HayeCo Custom Homes find a facility in Blairsville to build their structural insulated panel homes. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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Brothers Isaac and Jordan Hayes of HayeCo Custom Homes have just celebrated the one-year anniversary of their

business, and they are looking forward to continuing to grow their base of operations in Blairsville for years to come.

Formed Feb. 3, 2020, HayeCo specializes in residential building using

structural insulated panels, or SIPs. The company's SIPs system is a pre-insulated framing product that forms the exterior walls and roofs of the homes they build.

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Experiment Station strives to save 'endangered' heritage apples



County Agents mostly from the North Georgia area and a professor from the University of Georgia's Franklin College of Arts and Sciences participated in a heritage apple grafting class at the Experiment Station last week. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

University of Georgia Extension Agents gathered at the Georgia Mountain Research

and Education Center Monday, Feb. 22, to receive a briefing on heirloom apples and to partake in a grafting class in the orchard.

As superintendent, Ray Covington oversees the Research

and Education Center - aka Experiment Station - and he's been working on a grant-funded project to grow heirloom apples and preserve the history of apple

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'Oro Arrowhead' opens to crowded theater, applause

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE - Towns County local Bill Rahn partnered with Union County High School Theater Director Chris Adams to write and produce the movie "Oro Arrowhead," which featured a well-attended Red Carpet Premiere on Saturday, Feb. 27, at VIP Fieldstone Cinemas.

Revolving around a golden arrowhead with magical properties, the project was filmed entirely in the area using local talent and businesses.

"We do movies all over the country," Rahn said. "A lot of the movies are distributed out of the country, but I live here. I moved here about eight years ago, and my family has been up here for visiting for about 25 years."

"I just said that we should do a movie right here, and we

decided to take a couple of concepts and write the script and do it here. We used local people and locations, so it is a very local piece.

"We did all this on a very low budget; it has turned out really well, and you'd never know it was (low budget) because of the things that we do."

Rahn takes pride in the fact that his company, Tri-Rahn Pictures, makes clean movies that families can enjoy together, with "Oro Arrowhead" featuring a few action scenes spicing things up a bit.

"It is an exciting movie, and there are no bad words in it or anything dirty," Rahn said. "People get punched, kicked, hit and killed, but there is nothing dirty and no nasty dialogue. But boy are there some mean people in this thing. It is a great mystery."

"(Basically) the Indians discovered gold in Dahlonega, then got removed and hid a golden arrowhead that has powers, and nobody has known about that for about 200 years. There is a mean woman, and she is trying to find it, and that is the whole concept of the film."

The Red Carpet Premiere was a major success for the project, with the event preselling over 200 tickets before the evening event arrived.

Producer Scott McClannahan found the project to be exciting and was happy to see such a high level of local support as he and Rahn shot the movie.

Locations featured in the film include places near Downtown Hiawassee, Trackdown Campground and

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UCSO Narcotics Division seizes 5 pounds of marijuana in search

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In the early morning hours of Saturday, Feb. 20, the Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division conducted an operation resulting in an arrest and seizure of marijuana and marijuana wax.

Investigators seized approximately 5 pounds of marijuana during a search, which was found to be in possession of Trevor

Joel William Bilbo, 22, of Blairsville, the Sheriff's Office said. Bilbo was transported to Union County Jail where he is currently being held without bond.

Charges include three counts of sales of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and possession of a Schedule I controlled substance.

The arrest was the result of a two-monthlong

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Trevor Joel William Bilbo



The cast and crew of "Oro Arrowhead" dressed to the nines for the Feb. 27 Red Carpet Premiere of their locally filmed movie. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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