

Tractor Supply...from Page 1A

up for in other ways.

Union County is at the epicenter of a geographic and economic “bowl,” as Griggs calls it, with the county sitting squarely in the middle of a mountainous region of communities that are accustomed to the realities of having to travel for shopping and employment.

Furthermore, the county enjoys among its customer base a rather large number of part-time residents and visitors who don’t show up on standard demographic databases, bolstering the unique rural model Griggs has created to showcase Blairsville as a development hotspot.

And it certainly helps

that other national brands call Union County home, like Home Depot, Chick-fil-A, and now LongHorn Steakhouse, the latter two of which Griggs brought here.

Fortunately, Griggs’ recruitment efforts have paid off once again. The retailer has bought into the idea of Union as a hub in the mountains, with access to an entire region – from Blue Ridge to Hiawassee, on into North Carolina and beyond – to draw in customers and employees alike.

That’s why, when a deal fell through last summer to move this retailer into the empty 40,000-square-foot building most recently occupied by Food City in Blairsville,

Griggs convinced the company to consider building a store instead, since it had already determined the market to be suitable.

The retailer sent a preferred developer to Blairsville in October, and Griggs worked with him to settle on the piece of land on Georgia 515 to build a store from scratch, getting approval in January from the retailer’s corporate real estate committee to move forward with the project.

As mentioned above, confidence in the smooth-sailing project has been so high that the developer started site preparation a couple of weeks ago, even though the final paperwork for the land sale and subsequent project development has yet to be inked.

Only 2 acres of a 6-acre tract is to be purchased by the retailer. Some acreage will be consumed by shared infrastructure and slope. The rest of the land will remain with the landowner, who will benefit from the retailer’s development of the site, as the entire property will need to be graded to make it accessible by Georgia 515 via

the car wash and Sears.

This means the remaining acreage of that tract will become more attractive to future developers, all but guaranteeing that the area will become a multi-tenant site, especially when considering proximity to a national brand like the one coming to town, Griggs said.

“This is a great retailer; folks will be excited about it for sure,” Griggs said. “It’s another one of those flags in the ground – it’s another one that will catch other retailers’ attention. It will have a certain amount of gravity that will attract other retailers near it.

“It’s also really a good complement to the area. While there will be some competition, this retailer does fill a gap that we have in our retail mix, so it’s very complementary to what we’ve got, as well as what we don’t have. This has been one of our higher priority targets for a long time.

Rice...from Page 1A

There’s still no clear motive as to why Rice committed her alleged crimes, and the Police Department said that the case remains under investigation.

Two days after her arrest, on Wednesday, Feb. 26, Rice’s daughter, Nikki Wilson, made a public post on Facebook offering a family perspective on the incident. Wilson’s post, titled “An answer to all of the questions,” is reproduced in full below:

“Alcohol abuse affects more than just the person drinking. There are so many unanswered questions. There is so much that we do not understand. We are hurting. We are sad. We are angry. We are so confused. We are so lost.

“We knew my mom struggled with depression. We thought she was finally having a positive breakthrough. We did not see anything like this



The developer for the new retailer coming to town has been busy preparing the Blairsville site for construction of the rumored Tractor Supply.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

“Again, it’s a brand that people know and trust and will be excited about, and it’s such a benefit for the community at large, bringing new jobs, investment and sales taxes.”

In other county

development news, LongHorn Steakhouse at Georgia 515 and Brackett’s Way will hold its grand opening and traditional lasso-cutting ceremony on March 17.

coming. Mental health is so serious.

“My mom needs help. She wasn’t receiving the help she needed. Doctors need to realize that maybe people need more than just a higher dosage of medication. We have tried to help her. We have prayed for her. We have begged her. We have made reports. You can’t help someone until they realize they have an issue.

“I keep saying to myself... what more could I have done? How did I not see how bad she was struggling?

“She is an adult and there is no excuses for her actions. She will have to own up to what she has done. This is rock bottom for her.

“I beg my friends and family to pray that my mom gets the help she needs. And to pray for us as a family. She is going to miss so much... my college graduation being

one of them. I’ll be the first in the family to graduate from college. My boys will miss their mamaw. My sisters and I are going to miss our mom.

“I’m so thankful that no one got hurt. I’m so thankful for the brave people that had to do the unthinkable. I’m so sorry for those who were affected by this.

“I pray that everyone takes a moment to not only pray for my mom, but also pray for others who are struggling with their mental health.

“Thank you for all the thoughts and prayers. I am at peace knowing no one was hurt and my mom is hopefully going to finally get the help she really needs. You can’t help the helpless. You can’t change anyone, only God can.”

Gun Club...from Page 1A

already been through the safety orientation briefing.

“Also, this is a good time for paying your dues to keep up with those who have joined from the very beginning and want to keep their status as being part of the original membership.”

The \$35 in membership dues for charter members are due in March. For new members, there is a one-time initiation fee of \$100, and dues will be \$70 for the year now that it’s definite that the gun range is going to become a reality, Clark said.

Charter members, of which there were over 500 in March 2019, joined before the U.S. Forest Service approved the Target Range for Forest Service land. Charter memberships were discontinued last year after it became certain the range would be approved.

Clark said that, at this point, the club is waiting for officials with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to develop a range site plan for approval by the Forest Service.

“Once they OK that site plan, then it’s a matter of getting the funding together, and we have several options for funding the range,” Clark said, adding that once the funding is set, then the county can start breaking ground.

Details of range funding sources and their potential stipulations and restrictions will be put forth in the March 10 meeting, which will be attended by Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, who submitted the initial Target Range application on behalf of the county, and Sheriff Mack Mason.

“Shooting is a sport,” Mason said. “Shooting is a fun

sport. It is also a fundamental sport, to know how to use a firearm properly, safely and accurately.”

Sheriff Mason has been an adviser to the Gun Club since its inception in July 2017, and he said one of the major determining factors for the Forest Service allowing the range was the initial charter membership group sticking together and paying its dues.

“(In terms of public land), Union County is 47.4% owned by the federal government,” Mason said. “We are the people; we are the

federal government.

“We’ve searched and found what looks to us like what is the only spot in Union County that will not be an abuse to someone’s peace and tranquility.”

Georgia Sport Shooting Association President Carol Rosenqvist is also expected to attend the meeting, and it’s possible that a representative of Congressman Doug Collins’ office and one from Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue’s office will be present as well, Clark said.

National Ladies Homestead Gathering meeting

LHG Chapter of North Georgia Mountains Interest Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 6:30 - 8 PM at the Union County Civic Center, Classroom, 165 Wellborn St, Blairsville, GA.

Come join us as we explore the possibility of starting a Chapter of National Ladies Homestead Gathering!

All women are welcome who have a dream or desire to be more self-reliant. Whether their homesteads are in the planning phase or already established, all women have something to contribute or gain from coming together. Let’s learn from each other & together!

There will be raffle prizes and snacks! All Ladies 16 and up and nursing babies are welcome.