

# North Georgia News

2 Sections 20 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, March 20, 2024

## Veterans seminar highlights benefits, opportunities

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 hosted its Second Annual Veterans Benefits & Opportunities Seminar on Thursday, March 14, featuring multiple speakers who offered information on specialized topics like veterans' laws, loans and health benefits.

Post 121 Senior Vice Cmdr. Kathy Merritt said the idea came to her when she attended a similar seminar in Blue Ridge. Ultimately, it's about enriching the community and helping her fellow veterans, she said.

"It's not just about things that veterans can get," said Merritt, emphasizing the "opportunities" aspect of the

event. "Veterans are a very caring group of people. They're also very mission-oriented, so they want to get involved. So, we have some organizations here they can actually reach out to and volunteer for."

Each participating organization had one or two speakers who addressed the crowd, which amounted to a full house inside the Union County Community Center. There was time afterward for questions, and refreshments were offered during the occasional break in the six-hour seminar.

Tax Commissioner Lee Knight was present to explain his role in local government and the benefits veterans can take advantage of. There are approximately 261 totally disabled veterans

and 22 surviving spouses claiming property tax benefits, amounting to 283 properties, he said.

The audience was particularly fond of Ed Woods with the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton – one of only two national military cemeteries in the state, and the only one available for interment. He tackled the grim subject of veteran burial options by using humor to make it more palatable.

Woods suggested using common sense – final wishes should be made concrete before death to avoid rifts between family members. And even if one chooses an "expensive" casket, it'll be covered by an American flag per funerary military honors. Veterans

should also keep in mind that the last war era they were involved in will be displayed on their gravestone or plaque.

"It really is quite interesting," Woods said, recommending that guests visit the National Cemetery even if they don't plan on resting there after passing. "That cemetery was voted No. 2 Most Beautiful Cemetery in the Country behind Arlington."

Included among the tables dedicated to offering veterans services were representatives from organizations seeking veteran volunteers, including S.A.F.E., Inc., the SHARE Military Initiative at the Shepherd Center, and the Joshua Dream Ranch.

"Veterans used to be  
See Veterans Seminar, Page 4A



Joshua Dream Ranch Operator Gino Zalunardo visited with veterans on Thursday to talk about how they can get involved in his nonprofit animal therapy ranch.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## Presidential Primary ends in Trump, Biden rematch

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Georgia's Presidential Preference Primary Election ended at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, and – no surprise – Republican Donald J. Trump and Democrat Joe Biden easily carried their races in Union County to mirror the statewide result.

Their victories in Georgia have helped set the stage for an official presidential rematch in the Nov. 5 General Election, as both men now have the required number of delegates nationwide to secure their respective party nominations.

That's right, it's 2020 all over again.

The former president garnered 4,373 votes out of 4,960 ballots cast in his primary, earning 88.2% of the Republican vote in Union County.

Coming in a distant second among the 11 Republicans on the ballot was Nikki Haley with 487 votes, followed by Ron DeSantis in third place with 67 votes.



Union County election officials unload the first batch of votes after the Blairsville Precinct arrived from the Civic Center following polls closing on Election Day last week.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

President Biden received 401 votes out of 440 ballots cast in his primary, earning 91.1% of the Democratic vote here.

Rounding out the Democratic ballot was Marianne Williamson with 21 votes and Dean Phillips with 17 votes.

With just 26.08% of the active Union County electorate casting ballots in the Presidential Preference Primary, turnout was rather poor for the election, likely due to the clear front-runner status of Trump and Biden.

See Presidential Rematch, Page 2A

## Sheriff's Office arrests man in \$50,000 scam case

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Sheriff's Office arrested an alleged scammer last week in a sting operation involving 13 deputies and hours of surveillance. When the bagman for the scam finally arrived from out of town to steal a local woman's money, he found handcuffs awaiting him instead.

Milan Chaudhari, 32, of Columbus, Georgia, was taken into custody on Monday, March 11, and charged with two counts of elder exploitation, two counts of criminal conspiracy, two counts of computer invasion of privacy, and theft by deception.

According to the Sheriff's Office, he had already taken \$50,000 cash from the woman, but apparently that wasn't enough; three days later, Chaudhari and at least one unidentified accomplice arranged to steal another \$50,000, only this time, the cavalry had arrived.

Scammers are notoriously hard to catch. They spoof phone numbers, use burner

SIM cards, often communicate from overseas, deploy malicious software to corrupt computers, and impersonate law enforcement officials, financial representatives, tech experts and even loved ones in need.

And scammers appear to be getting more brazen in their exploits, in some cases asking to meet in person to extort victims outright, provide a fraudulent "service," or clear innocent parties in connection with fake crimes. The latter is how this scam went down, the Sheriff's Office said.

Everything started on Thursday, March 7, when the resident in question, an elderly woman, received an email saying she had incurred an online banking transaction for \$869, and that she needed to call a number listed in the email for more information.

"Once she called that number, a man got on the phone and identified himself as Mark, saying he was a (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) agent who was working a large drug operation



Milan Chaudhari in Texas," UCSO Fraud & Financial Crimes Inv. Bob Calamari said.

"Mark" told her he had several warrants for her arrest in the drug operation that was being run out of Washington, D.C. – information that matched his area code – but that she could help to end the investigation and "get out of the warrants" by paying \$50,000 in cash, Calamari said.

See Scammer Arrested, Page 2A

## Two dead in car crash; child hurt but recovering

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Tragedy struck Hiawassee the evening of Sunday, March 10, when a traffic collision on Bell Creek Road killed mother-of-three Rachael Long and resulted in the death of father-of-two Jimmy Reece Reger.

In addition to the families of the departed, the fatal incident has impacted the lives of Towns County first responders and the community at large, as a 6-year-old boy was both injured and lost his mother in the crash.

At approximately 9:13 p.m. on March 10, a 2013 Ford Explorer driven by Reger was traveling north on Bell Creek Road. Reger, 23, is from Jasper but was living in Hiawassee.

Heading south on Bell Creek was a 2022 Ford Maverick carrying Long and her young son, both of Andrews, North Carolina.

Witnesses from another vehicle told Georgia State Patrol the Explorer "passed them on a double yellow line at a hillcrest traveling at a high

rate of speed," putting Reger on a collision course with the oncoming Maverick, which he hit head-on in the vicinity of Bell Street, per GSP.

The Explorer overturned before coming to a stop, and the Maverick, driven by Long's boyfriend Caleb Hart, "rotated approximately 90 degrees clockwise where it came to a final rest."

Long was pronounced dead at the scene. Reger, Hart and the boy were transported via medical helicopter to area trauma centers for treatment of suspected serious injuries.

Reger succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday, March 12, leaving behind two young children.

At the time of his death, Reger was facing multiple criminal charges related to the accident, including drunk driving, homicide by vehicle, serious injury by vehicle, reckless driving, and failure to wear a safety belt.

Hiawassee Police Chief Jeremy Parker said the child is in good condition. Parker was off duty that evening but responded to the scene



Rachael Long

and helped carry the injured 6-year-old for treatment before he was flown to T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The day after the crash, Parker lifted the boy's spirits by visiting the hospital to bring him "two awesome first responder bears from Build-A-Bear Workshop, department patches, and some Junior Police Officer stickers."

"He got to go home on Tuesday, which was a

See Deadly Crash, Page 3A

## CASA celebrates 25 years helping children in court

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For 25 years, the nonprofit Enotah CASA has fought fiercely for the rights of children caught in unfortunate family situations. And they continue to do so through community support, always looking for volunteers to step up and provide stability where there may otherwise be none.

Nationally, CASA began in 1977 when Seattle Superior Court Judge David Soukup decided to give a voice to abused and neglected children; parents and attorneys could argue in court, but Soukup wanted someone to defend the best interests of the most vulnerable members of struggling families.

Fifty citizen volunteers responded to Soukup's call for action, and by 2024, the Court-Appointed Special Advocates organization has grown to include over 59,000 advocates serving in 954 state and local program offices across the United States.

The Enotah CASA specifically began when it was



commissioned in 1999, and to this day serves children of the Enotah Judicial Circuit that includes Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin counties in Georgia.

Today, 60 highly trained volunteers operate in the four counties, serving more than 200 children annually. This includes visiting their appointed child at least once a month and getting information from either their foster family or a related guardian.

Liz Ruf has been a CASA volunteer for 17 years and joined the Enotah CASA Board in 2015, working with over 50 different families. In her experience, the most common reason a minor is placed in state custody is parental drug and/or alcohol use, which can

quickly spiral into abuse aimed at the child.

With each case of child neglect and abuse, local court systems call CASA. If a volunteer is available, they are paired up with a child in need. While they can serve as a mentor and lend an ear when necessary, a CASA's main duties remain in the courtroom.

"We prepare information for the court and attend court hearings, which are generally about every 90 days, and give an update," Ruf said. "And we make recommendations based on the observations and the information that we've learned that are in the child's best interest."

Georgia law requires that every child have a guardian ad litem, or someone who defends the "best interest factors" for their assigned children in court. In many states, there's no distinction between an attorney or volunteer GAL, but in Georgia, GAL is a term purely used for attorneys who take on that role.

By contrast, there is no taxpayer cost for a Court-

See CASA Turns 25, Page 3A

Vol. 115 No. 13

Arrests - 8A    Legals - 9B  
Church - 5B    Obits - 7B  
Classifieds - 8B    Sports - 2B  
Opinion - 6A

**BASEBALL**  
3/22 vs. Providence 5&7 PM

**SOCCER: Sr. Night**  
3/19 vs. E. Jackson 6 PM

**Easter Egg Hunt Saturday**    See Page 4A

**Shrine Ladies Pancake Breakfast**    See Page 5A

**Local 4-H'ers Head to State**    See Page 10A



## Need a Mortgage?

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## Presidential Rematch...from Page 1A

Of course, all but one of the other candidates up for their party's nomination in Georgia had either ended or suspended their campaigns prior to Election Day – Marianne Williamson relaunched her campaign at the end of February after suspending it earlier last month.

There was a silver lining to the turnout here, however, as Union County enjoyed one of the highest voter rates of

any county in the state for the Presidential Preference Primary.

Elections Superintendent Libby Stevens credited the above average turnout – compared with the rest of the state, at least – to several factors, starting with the good people of Union County understanding their vital role in democracy.

Stevens also said the large retirement population likely benefited from the new Voting

Center at Roscoe Collins Drive being more accessible than the Union County Courthouse for early voting, and she noted the professionalism with which election officials dealt with the public.

“We’re always in the top (for voter turnout in Georgia),” Stevens said. “So, this is a good thing. It bodes well for our community for their involvement and belief in elections.”

## Scammer Arrested...from Page 1A

Unprepared to deal with such a wild claim, the scared woman believed the caller and went to her bank the next day. He made her stay on the phone with him throughout the entire ordeal, listening in as she spoke with tellers at two different local bank branches.

The fake ATF agent instructed her to lie to avoid suspicion of withdrawing such a large sum of money, advising her to say that the cash was “for property that her son’s buying,” Calamari said.

When the bank officials tried to warn the woman that she was very likely involved in a scam, she insisted on withdrawing her money anyway, and the bank had no choice but to comply, Calamari said.

“Then, she got instructions that a federal courier would be picking up the money in her driveway,” Calamari said.

At first blush, she was the perfect victim, as the elderly are often easier to scam. They are less technologically savvy and came of age in a more trusting time before globalization and revolutions in mass communication produced the tools to readily facilitate fraud from anywhere in the world.

But after she deposited the cash in the backseat of the BMW SUV driven by Chaudhari – the bagman who had pulled into her residence to receive the money on Friday, March 8 – the realization dawned on her that she had been scammed, Calamari said.

Two days later, on Sunday, March 10, she called 911 to report the event, and after filing an initial report with a patrol deputy, she confirmed her suspicions with Inv. Calamari the following Monday.

And while she may never see her \$50,000 again, when the scammer called back for more money on March 11, she was ready to assist in bringing the alleged criminal to justice.

Unbeknownst to the scammer, the woman was

with Calamari while on the phone call that Monday. The call lasted at least nine hours, the purpose of which appeared to be continuous monitoring of the woman’s activities to ensure she followed instructions and did not call 911, Calamari said.

“Mark” used various tactics to earn the woman’s trust, referring to her as “mom” and making small talk until she had received the additional \$50,000 from her bank and could place it once again in the car of the “courier.”

Calamari said the woman played her part perfectly, responding cordially to the scammer’s small talk while following written directions from the Sheriff’s Office to prevent the con artist from being alerted to the presence of law enforcement.

UCSO deputies set up a command post that Monday, and it was all hands on deck to catch the “courier”; between Patrol, Criminal Investigations and Narcotics divisions, 13 deputies gathered to plan and execute the sting operation.

They sketched a map of the woman’s neighborhood and diagrammed areas where deputies would sit and wait for the “federal courier” to arrive. “Mark” kept delaying the pickup time, so deputies spent hours staking out the residence, during which time the scammer remained on the phone.

When Chaudhari finally arrived at 7:15 p.m., deputies quickly drove up and boxed him into the driveway to place him under arrest without incident, Calamari said.

After executing a search warrant on his person and vehicle, investigators were able to find evidence linking Chaudhari to the initial theft on Friday, and his charges reflect his alleged activities on both March 8 and March 11.

Chaudhari was not the caller “Mark” but was working with him, Calamari said, and the Sheriff’s Office as well as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which has

been brought in to broaden the investigatory scope of the case, believe that the two were working as part of a larger scam ring.

The phone number “Mark” used to call the woman was disconnected soon after Chaudhari’s arrest, and the GBI and other law enforcement agencies will be assisting the Sheriff’s Office in tracking down – if they can – everyone responsible for the theft.

“The Sheriff’s Office is working very hard to try to combat and arrest these criminals,” UCSO Maj. Shawn Dyer said of scammers. “Our deputies’ hard work has really paid off on this one. This remains an active investigation, and hopefully, this arrest will lead to more.”

Investigators would also like to thank Union County E-911 Dispatch for assisting in the case.

Chaudhari has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law. His bond has been denied, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has placed a hold on him, as he was in the country from India on a work permit.

Scams targeting local residents – primarily the elderly – have been on the rise, which is why the Union County Sheriff’s Office decided in recent months to bring Calamari on as an investigator dedicated to fraud and financial crimes.

UCSO investigators have been advocating through local media and public awareness classes to inform the community about the pervasiveness and types of scams in hopes that people can avoid being defrauded of their hard-earned money.

Residents who are contacted online or over the phone by individuals asking for money either in person or via money orders, wire transfers, prepaid cards, etc., are encouraged to call the Sheriff’s Office at 706-439-6066 to speak with an investigator before turning over any money.

## Red Hat Sassy Divas: Mardi Gras Carnival



Fifteen chapters of the Red Hat Sassy Divas attended the Mardi Gras Carnival

If you’ve been missing seeing the Blairsville Red Hat Sassy Divas around town, it’s because they have been busy getting ready to host their first luncheon – Mardi Gras Carnival with a Mediterranean twist that was held on March 5th. Sixty-seven Red Hatters representing fifteen chapters came from Alabama, North and South Carolina and all over Georgia to attend this fun event. The luncheon was held at the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center.

The room was transformed for the Mardi Gras with purple table clothes decorated with fancy wine bottles, beads, candy, cupcakes that were provided by Melissa’s Bakery, a mask or hat flower bomb, and the dinnerware was wrapped with red napkins and held together with a picture of a mask and ribbon.

The stage was decorated with umbrellas that were used for the second line dance and as door prizes. The registration, silent auction, and door prize tables were decorated with green, purple, and gold fringe. At the entrance to the building hung a clever banner made out of rope and napkins. The Vice Queen Judy Yohe

thought of everything. Each guest received a lovely purple bag with a red hatter applique on it that included a Mardi Gras ornament and beads.

Prior to eating, ladies were able to shop at the five vendors – Ginger Designz, The Bling Diva (Paparazzi), Kozy Krochet by Karen, Buck Ridge Gift Shop, and Mission to Romania. There was plenty of bling and hats to buy. Red Hatters know they can never have too much bling or hats!

While shopping, the Woody Gap Steel Band provided fantastic entertainment. It definitely got everyone in the spirit of Mardi Gras in the mountains. The mountains here are blessed to have such a band and from a small school too. The Mistress of Ceremonies was Jazzy Jan, the DJ and choreographer for the line dancing steps to the Caribbean music.

After announcements, saying the Pledge of Allegiance a “Queen of the Day” was selected. The honor went to Ernestine Jones, queen of the Royal Hatters of Snellville. Queen Pat Hogan and Vice Queen Judy Yohe presented Ernestine with a crown, a bag filled with extra goodies and

a bouquet of flowers. This is quite an honor as the Queen of the Day gets to be in the front of the line for everything from shopping to getting her meal.

The Ark catered the food and boy was it delicious and plentiful. Guests could choose all or select what they wanted from guava glazed shrimp, margarita chicken, Caribbean BBQ rib tips, jerk chicken, cilantro-lime rice, Bahamian mac & cheese, mango slaw, and sweet plantains. No one went away hungry. There was plenty left over after people came back for seconds. The left-over food was taken to several ladies living in low-income housing in Hiawassee. Nothing was wasted.

Lots of dancing, picture taking, and rekindling friendships and making new friends was had by all. Everyone went home with a door prize. Our own Karen won the 50/50. Many told us they can’t wait for next year’s event. Even the rain at the end didn’t dampen everyone’s spirit as they left.

The Red Hat Sassy Divas want to send a BIG thank you to the men folk who came out on March 4th and March 5th to help set up and break down the tables.

# CASA Turns 25...from Page 1A

Appointed Special Advocate to accept or be assigned to a case, and sometimes, they can devote more time to their child – or children; Ruf said courts tend to do their best to keep children from the same family together. Federal and state funds

help keep the Enotah CASA afloat, primarily through grants. The community also assists through generous donations, whether from individuals, families or couples, businesses or organizations. In the words of Advocate

Supervisor Gina Bennett, “Our community steps in and helps so much, and that just keeps us going. And while we’re so thankful and blessed to have the federal and state grants, we’re even more blessed to have our community donations that we

have.” CASA also takes an active role in fundraising, especially through community outreach programs. Executive Director Della Lago comes up with several of these, like designer purse bingo and even murder-mystery theater dinners. This year, for the 25th Anniversary of CASA, the organization has set up a special page on its website for folks to visit and make donations, known as the 25th Year Opportunity.

# Deadly Crash...from Page 1A

miracle,” Parker said. “He was undoubtedly saved by being properly restrained in a child safety seat. One of his mother’s last acts of love was making sure her child was properly secured in his seat, which ultimately saved his life.”

Hart was reportedly doing OK at press time, though he is facing a long road to recovery as a result of the crash.

“Please pray for all of the families affected by last night’s events,” Chief Parker posted to Facebook just hours after the crash. “Many first responders were also on the scene of that terrible accident last night. Those first responders worked hard, seen things they will never forget, and have memories etched into their minds that they will forever remember.”

“These first responders answer these calls without hesitation and with professionalism. This is what they do daily, and it often goes unnoticed. We see and do things that most people can’t even imagine. So as you go about your day, stop and say a prayer

for those that are there when you call for help.

“Many families were affected by this incident, and the first responders will also feel these impacts. Everyone worked together and completed the tasks at hand to the best of their abilities. Some even went above and beyond. This is what we do to serve your community.”

“Outstanding work from Hiwassee Police Department, Towns County Sheriff’s Deputies, Towns County Fire & Rescue, Towns County EMS, Life Force flight crews, Georgia State Patrol, and Chatuge Regional Hospital staff. Pray for the families and pray for us.”

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson echoed Parker’s sentiments last week, saying that “all involved far surpassed expectations during an extremely traumatic event,” and Coroner Tamela Cooper commended the teamwork exhibited that evening.

“The way the first responders worked together that night and have leaned

on each other through this is nothing short of amazing,” Cooper said.

Chief Parker stressed that such incidents are why it’s so important to “strongly stand behind positive traffic enforcement and traffic safety.”

“Tragedies like this affect everyone,” Parker said. “The families suffer terrible losses, and the first responders and everyone involved, from the dispatchers to the doctors, are affected by events like these. The community is affected by the stories that may bring up triggers or emotional history as well as just the shock and awe of it occurring in our small towns.

“A single loss of life is too much, much less two. We want everyone to remember that seatbelts save lives – child safety seats save lives. Speeding kills, and never drive after you have been drinking alcohol or taking medication or drugs. Put your phones down and don’t drive distracted. Be the change and not a statistic.”

# FOUCL presents two Special Events

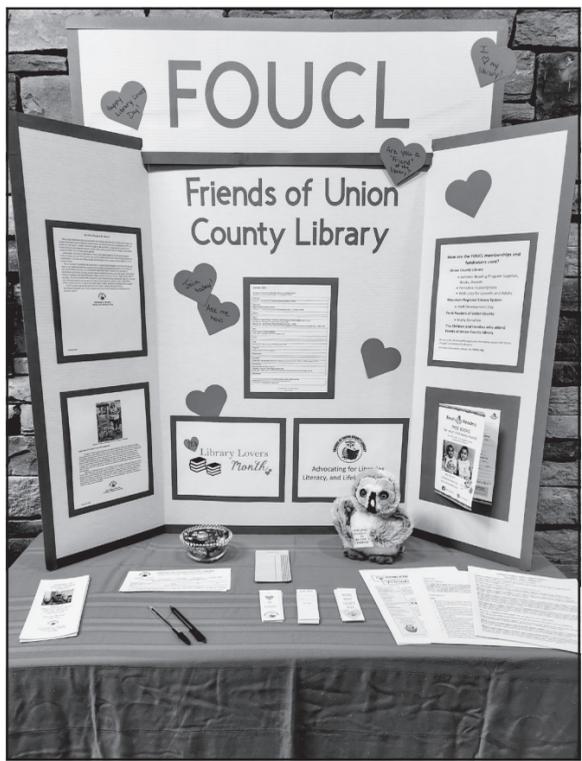


Advocating for Libraries, Literacy, and Lifelong Learning

Friends of Union County Library (FOUCL) will be sponsoring two April events at Union County Public Library, 303 Hunt-Martin Street, Blairsville, in the Community Room. Both events are free and open to the public.

The first is a Poetry Fest on Saturday, April 6, from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Poetry lovers are invited to celebrate National Poetry Month by bringing a published poem, authored by their favorite poet, to share and discuss with other poetry lovers. We are anticipating a wide variety of poems and interesting conversation.

The second event (this one co-sponsored with the library) is Big Hats with Tea and Scones on Saturday, April 27, from 11 AM until 1 PM. In anticipation of the Kentucky Derby, we invite you to jazz up your best big hat and wear it to our tea. There will be a hat contest with winners in several different categories! Come sip some tea and learn about hat history, styles, and purposes while modeling your own design and noshing on scones. This is a registration required event so sign up at the circulation desk beginning on April 1. There will be a limit of 30 registered guests. The library is a wonder-



FOUCL Display Board

ful resource for our community, and it can save you money. The publication Personal Finance for Beginners lists five ways: read a library book for free before deciding if it’s one you want to purchase for your home collection; listen to a free library-accessed audiobook on your phone, tablet, or computer; use the library as your workspace with desks, resource materials, and free internet all in one place; enjoy free perks like help with

research, available digital and print archives of local historical records or family genealogical history software; and attend special free events like those mentioned here.

Our library also offers storytimes for youngsters, monthly Lego Club gatherings, an Adult Book Club, and Summer Reading Program events and entertainers for the whole family.

FOUCL’s mascot Owliver says – “Give a Hoot – Join Us!” Everyone is invited to attend our events, but we also encourage you to join our membership and help support our library.

## UCHS Class of 1989 35th Reunion! March 23, 2024



UCHS Class of 1989 35th Reunion! Saturday, March 23, 2024 5 PM at the Stable in the Mercantile and Tack Room, at Brasstown Valley Resort. For discounted room rates mention “Class of 89” event.

Join our FACEBOOK page called “UCHS CLASS OF 89” for all of the details on where to send payment, upload pictures, share memories, and connect with classmates or call Rehnee Hampton Herr 706-897-1087. We can’t wait to see you!

## NGTC Board Meeting

North Georgia Technical College’s Board of Directors will meet on Wednesday, March 20 at 3:00 p.m. on the Clarkesville campus. For more information, contact 706-754-7702.

# Veterans Seminar ...from Page 1A



American Legion Post 121 welcomed a full house for its free Veterans Benefits & Opportunities Seminar on March 14. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

part of something bigger than themselves, and you're usually looking for something to be a part of again," Merritt said. "If you don't need the service, but you can help the service, this would be great."

The last group, Joshua Dream Ranch, especially tugged at heartstrings, and several members of the audience looked for the Ranch's table to get contact information and brochures.

When Gino Zalunardo lost his 14-year-old son Joshua to cancer, he nearly lost himself to grief. But Zalunardo used

his pain to build a dream, and in Joshua's memory, he erected a local farm dedicated to using animal therapy to help children with special needs.

What many folks don't know is that veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder can also find four-legged – and two-legged – friends at the ranch.

Zalunardo said that veterans have visited the ranch before and found solace in sharing their stories, and he's happy to continue hosting them and helping them find peace, whether through riding

and bonding with horses or by volunteering to care for them.

Merritt said the seminar would return next year, likely to grow again just as it had this year compared to its original iteration in 2023. Feedback forms were left out for folks to share their ideas.

People who want to find out more about options for veteran services and opportunities, or anyone simply wanting to connect with fellow veterans, should check out American Legion Post 121 located at 78 Blue Ridge Hwy in Blairsville.

## Quilts of Valor presented to father and son: Veterans Peter Bowman and Matthew Bowman



(L-R): Matthew Bowman and Peter Bowman

A Coast Guard Veteran, Peter B. Bowman, and his son Army Veteran, Matthew J. Bowman, were each presented Quilts of Valor (QOV) by representatives from Appalachian Hospice on Wednesday, March 6, 2024. Matthew's wife, Cheri, was present, along with neighbors and church family.

QOV is a national foundation made up of quilting groups in all 50 states and overseas. Their mission is to bring honor veterans who have served the U.S.A. in every branch of the military, which includes the Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and the Space Force.

The QOV Foundation was started by a military mom, Catherine Roberts, when her son was about to deploy to Iraq in 2003. She made a quilt of red, white, blue, and gold, which was presented to a returned wounded soldier at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. After she had the honor and privilege of making the first quilt, she asked a group of her quilting friends to help her make more quilts. Today there are thousands of men and women who have made over 377,384 QOVs. Each quilt represents a "Thank you for your service and sacrifice in serving our nation".

Peter Bowman served from October 1953 through June 1962 in the US Coast Guard for two consecutive enlistments. He was discharged

from the first enlistment on October 17, 1957 and reenlisted the next day -- October 18, 1957 -- for his second. He earned the rank of DC2-E5 in April 1957. He served during both the Korean war and the Vietnam War.

Peter served on two Coast Guard ships during his almost 10 years of service -- CCC Tupelo (WAGL-3303) out of Toledo, Ohio and CCC (WPG-68) Androscoggin in Miami, Fl. During his service years, he was awarded two Coast Guard Good Conduct medals for periods ending October 19, 1955, and October 20, 1959, and a National Defense Service Medal. Peter received training in Groton, Connecticut in Damage Control and was discharged June 19, 1962.

Peter's son, PFC Matthew J. Bowman, served in the US Army from June 1992 to February 1996 and in the Army Reserves through December 1999 as a Combat Medic. He received training for Medical Specialist in January 1993 and had additional training in February 1993 at German Headstart (an Army foreign language education program). He separated from the Army into the Reserves from his duty station in Hanau, Germany in December 1999. For his honorable service, while in the Army and Army Reserve, he earned a National Defense Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, and

S.W. Asia Service Medal.

Anyone can nominate a veteran who has been touched by war for a Quilt of Valor by going online to <http://www.qovf.org/>. Click on the words "NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS" on the red banner at the top of the page, and then look for instructions to fill in the "Online Nomination Form."

If you are a quilter and would like to help the Misty Mountain QOV group make these quilts for heroic American veterans, please go to the following website: <http://www.mistymountainquiltguild.org/>. click on the word "More" on the top right side of the home page, and then look for the Quilts of Valor group information. QOV quilters make it our mission to support our local veterans with comforting veterans with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.

### Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



- March 11, 2024**  
In memory of **Paula Paris Johnson** on the anniversary of her death  
by Ginger & Terry Meeks
  - March 19, 2024**  
Remembering **Harry and Shirley Walker** on their 70th Wedding Anniversary  
by Aaron & Joan Mannheim
  - March 19, 2024**  
in honor of **Aaron & Joan Mannheim** by Shirley Walker
  - March 27, 2024**  
In memory of **Gertrude W. Shuler** on her birthday  
by Betty Jane Shuler
  - March 31, 2024**  
in memory of **Harry Walker** on his birthday  
By Shirley Walker
  - March 31, 2024**  
In memory of **Harry Walker** on his birthday, Easter Sunday 1929  
by Aaron & Joan Mannheim
- Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493**

## UNION COUNTY RECREATION DEPARTMENT IS HOSTING ITS ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT MARCH 23, 2024

**Join us for a very special Easter Event!**

**Starting at 11am:**  
**Visit from the Easter Bunny**  
**Free popcorn and hot chocolate**  
**Balloon Artist**

**Egg Hunt begins at 12pm**  
**6,000 eggs with prizes to win for each age group.**  
**Age groups : 2-4 ; 5-8 ; 9-12**

**LOCATION: MEEKS PARK, LOWER BASEBALL FIELDS**  
**PLEASE CALL 706-439-6074 WITH ANY QUESTIONS.**