

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Paris discusses local vaccine success, upcoming projects

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In his March 18 regular county meeting at the Union County Courthouse, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was happy to report the success of yet another local COVID-19 mass vaccination clinic at the Sports Center.

"The best thing I can say is that we just had another mass vaccine yesterday," Paris said. "I'm not sure when we will have another mass vaccine - that will depend on the Health Department getting us the amount of vaccines that we would need for that."

"We are hoping to have more vaccines than we have been having on a regular basis."

Emergency Management Agency Director David Dyer attended as usual, reporting that about 7,000 first doses had been

administered locally as of that Thursday, with approximately 5,000 second vaccine doses having been given thus far in the county.

Union County Government has partnered in hosting several mass clinics and volunteered the Sports Center for ongoing Health Department vaccine efforts, and Paris said he's thankful for the local EMA, Fire Department, Health Department, and other contributors to local vaccinations.

Vaccine eligibility continues to expand, including to everyone aged 55 and older, people 16 and older with a wide variety of health conditions, as well as medical workers, first responders and others. Kemp said earlier this month he expects eligibility to expand to everyone by April.

Currently, the local Health Department has enough vaccine to be administering hundreds per day throughout

the week, and appointments may be scheduled at phdistrict2.org or by calling 1-888-426-5073.

For a list of vaccine eligibility criteria and other helpful COVID-19 resources, visit <https://dph.georgia.gov>. People may also call local pharmacies to inquire about vaccine availability, as Ingles, Walmart and Walgreens are all offering shots.

People remain thankful to receive vaccination, especially since COVID-19 circumstances on the ground seem to be improving right alongside increasing vaccine rollout. For example, Union General Hospital reported zero COVID inpatients last week for the first time since May.

Allison Caldwell of West Printing attended the March 17 mass clinic hosted by local government and the Health Department, where she was grateful to receive the Pfizer
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(L-R) Union County Health Department Nurses Wilma Stover, Kaitlyn Odom, Bethany Barret and Tiffany Zimmerman in the March 17 mass vaccine clinic hosted in partnership with Union County Government at the new Sports Center.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

BOE promotes principals, talks summer learning program

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Congratulations to Pat Donaldson and Shane Womack of Union County Schools, both of whom have been internally promoted to principalships at the Middle School and Primary School respectively.

Following the recent

announcement that Middle School Principal Gwen Stafford and Primary School Principal Millie Owenby would be retiring end of year, Donaldson and Womack received their promotions in the March 16 regular School Board meeting on campus at the High School.

Donaldson will be

transitioning from her current role as assistant principal at the High School, while Womack will be heading to the Primary School from his present position as assistant principal at the Middle School.

"Mr. Womack is a strong leader who has a passion for student success," Hill said.

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Union County Head Start readies children for school



Union County Head Start is ready and able to take additional qualifying students for the program.
Photo/Submitted

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
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Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with a goal of promoting school readiness of young children from low-income families.

"Head Start programs also engage parents or other key family members in positive relationships, with a focus

on family wellbeing," per the Office of Head Start. "Parents participate in leadership roles, including having a say in program operations."

Union County is home to one of 30 Head Start and Early Head Start agencies in Georgia, and local Program Director Mary Moss says the program is

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March 15-21 served as Georgia School Board Appreciation Week, and the local Board Office presented awards to the Union County Board of Education March 16.
Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Corrugated Replacements to expand Heat Treat, hire workers

By Shawn Jarrard
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Local manufacturing powerhouse Corrugated Replacements, Inc. is expanding its facilities at North Georgia Heat Treat and taking applications for multiple positions inside the company.

So, what does Corrugated Replacements do? At its core, the company helps corrugated box plants maintain machinery by supplying replacement parts and offering other services like on-site rebuilds.

In a nutshell, the company makes all the parts that make boxes and keeps the machines running, too.

But Corrugated Replacements does so much more, including custom and highly specialized projects for thousands of clients all over the globe, with a total of eight sister companies based right here in Union County, including North Georgia Heat Treat.

Business has taken off amid COVID-19, as the surge in online shopping has ramped up the need for shipping boxes. The current expansion is occurring at Heat Treat, which manufactures corrugated knives and cuts any number of custom



Corrugated Replacements Inc. President Jenny Chandler and Development Authority Director Mitch Griggs are often in contact regarding local economic opportunities, pictured here inside the new Heat Treat building.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

metal jobs using lasers and CNC machining.

Located off Commerce Way in the Blairsville Airport Industrial Park, the primary reason for Heat Treat's expansion is to separate the company's heating and cutting machinery into two buildings.

Historically, the business has operated out of a single facility,

but separating the equipment will allow for one "clean" and one "dirty" building, as the heating equipment produces soot and dust that can cause issues with the cutting equipment over time.

To accomplish this, Corrugated has erected a new 12,500-square-foot facility next to the main Heat Treat building
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Jason Matheson indicted for attempted murder in shooting

By Shawn Jarrard
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HIWASSEE - The Towns County Grand Jury handed up three charges March 15 against Jason Matheson, who stands accused of attempting to murder his estranged wife in January, per court documents.

Matheson, 41, of Hayesville, North Carolina, has been charged with criminal attempt to commit murder, aggravated stalking and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, which could result in a maximum prison sentence of up to 40 years.

Next steps in the case include an arraignment hearing scheduled for April 22 in the Towns County Courthouse, during which Matheson will enter a plea of guilty or not guilty.

He may decide to plead guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence agreed upon by the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, or he could plead not guilty, at which point Matheson would receive an expedited trial, as he remains in custody without bond at Towns County Jail.

"We're working closely with the Georgia Bureau

of Investigation to finalize gathering all the evidence so that we'll be ready for trial as soon as possible," District Attorney Jeff Langley said.

Matheson's charges stem from a Jan. 26 incident in which he allegedly entered his wife's place of work at Chatuge Regional Hospital Rehabilitation & Wellness Center and fired upon her with a 9 mm handgun, striking her eight times. The weapon used in the crime has not been recovered.

At the time, Crystal Matheson, the shooting victim in the case, had a protective order in place against her husband, who was arrested in July 2020 for assaulting her by strangulation in Clay County. He was arrested again in October last year for violating the order.

Miraculously, Crystal survived being shot eight times. She is well on her way to recovery and undergoing physical therapy at her own place of employment, with plans to return to work soon as her stamina continues to increase.

District Attorney Langley, Senior Assistant District Attorney Buster Dreau and Victim Advocate Holly



Jason Matheson

McCollum met with Crystal in Towns County on Friday, March 19, "making sure she knew exactly what our office was doing and how things would follow."

The surrounding community has been incredibly supportive of Crystal during her recovery, helping her to raise funds to offset medical expenses and help pay bills as she gets well enough to go back to work.

A GoFundMe account set up by one of Crystal's friends is still active at <https://www.gofundme.com/recovery-for-crystal-matheson>.

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