

# North Georgia News

3 Sections 26 Pages

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## Blood Mountain boundary dispute resolved

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The Union County Commissioner's Office has finally solved a decades-old mystery of how 15 parcels of private property in the vicinity of Neels Gap on the Lumpkin County side of Blood Mountain ended up in Union County hands.

As it turns out, the land containing those parcels has been a part of Union County since its founding in 1832, and so never belonged in Lumpkin County.

But sometime in recent years, official maps of the area started incorporating an incorrect county boundary such that government records appeared to bolster a local

legend that the land had changed hands in a "handshake deal," the specifics of which were thought to be lost to time.

The issue came to light last summer when the owners of Blood Mountain Cabins were trying to sell their property. A potential buyer requested a new survey that, once completed, was filed at the Lumpkin County Superior Court Clerk's Office.

This made sense to the surveyor, as the government records website qPublic.net and maps by the Georgia Department of Transportation showed the property as situated squarely in Lumpkin County.

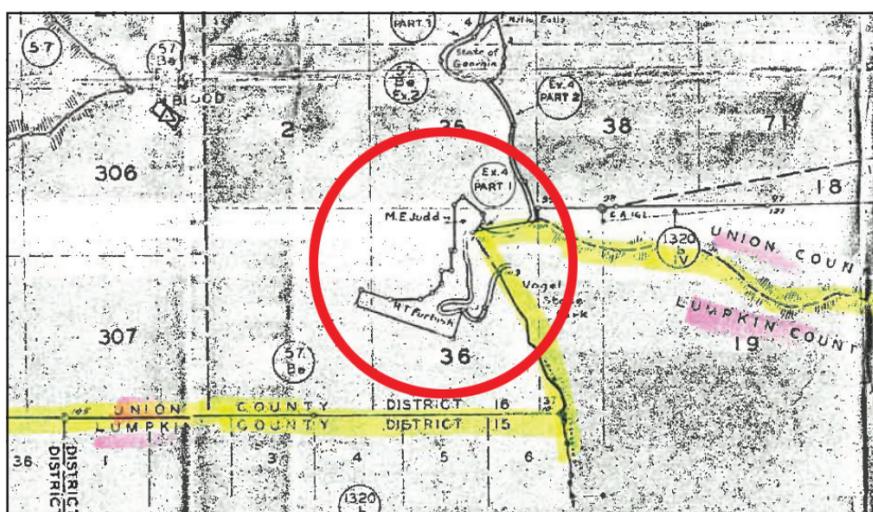
However, all deed records for the 15 private parcels are housed within the Union County Superior Court Clerk's Office – with no records at all in

Lumpkin.

So, when the new survey showed up in Lumpkin County, officials there began looking into the situation with an eye toward taking over those properties if they indeed belonged in Lumpkin, despite Union County's longstanding claim.

When Union County Clerk Jennifer Mahan with the Commissioner's Office learned there was a problem in June 2023, she immediately started digging into the details, which at first glance seemed to support the properties being in Lumpkin County based on official tax maps.

But the property owners of Blood Mountain were having none of it and insisted that



The Blood Mountain land inside the red circle to the left of the highlighted county boundary on this 1935 U.S. Forest Service survey clearly shows the property in question historically being in Union County.

## Shook Triplets first for Union General Hospital



Elissa and Brian Shook with their four adorable children.

Photo/Submitted

By Brittany Holbrooks  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

On Jan. 12, 2024, Elissa and Brian Shook became the proud parents of the first triplets born in memorable history at Union General Hospital.

Now, following a rough start, little Lily, Daisy and Harper have settled in with their parents and big sister Annalise at their home in Blairsville.

The Shooks met in high school and have been together for eight years. Annalise came along three years ago, and they decided to try for another baby. It was a shock, Elissa said, when her first ultrasound discovered there would be not one but three new additions to the family.

"I was shaking," admitted Elissa, with Brian adding, "It was a big surprise."

Luckily, they weren't alone. Their families, particularly their parents, stepped in to help supply them with everything they needed. Clothing, diapers and wipes were common gifts to prepare them for the triplets' arrival.

As her pregnancy progressed, Elissa's initial concerns began to pass. Things were "easy for the most part" until she hit her 18th week, when she started experiencing slight bleeding. She "took it easy" for some time, and once again, her fears largely subsided.

But as time passed, carrying three growing humans proved to be an arduous task.

"I was just getting so large so quickly that I was in a lot of pain," she recalled. She was in so much pain, in fact, that at first she didn't feel the onset

of contractions one night in her 32nd week.

"I began to bleed profusely. It was as if my water broke, and also, there was blood with it. And I was home by myself; I ended up calling my husband, and I told him to go ahead and leave work," Elissa said.

After calling 911, she was taken to Union General in an ambulance.

Lily, Daisy and Harper's entrance into the world was a harrowing experience. Elissa was diagnosed with placental abruption and was immediately taken back for a cesarean section.

"I was awake, but because of the blood loss and it being so cold, just all of that, I was very out of it," Elissa said. "I was conscious, but in the moment,

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## Deputies commended for saving cardiac victim

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Union County's first responders are no strangers to life and death situations. After all, they answer the call whenever it comes in, regardless of the type of emergency, and often, their response comes in the form of life-saving public service.

Such was the case on Sunday, March 24, when Union County E-911 dispatched first responders to a call involving "someone falling out of a moving vehicle."

According to a commendation letter to Union County Sheriff Mack Mason by Staff Sgt. Josh Bergen – a night-



Austin Bradburn  
UCSO Deputy

shift supervisor for the Patrol Division – Deputies Austin Bradburn and Riley Norton demonstrated "outstanding performance" that evening.



Riley Norton  
UCSO Deputy

Bradburn and Norton responded to the intersection of State Routes 515 and 325 within five minutes of being

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## Scam, fraud cases continue apace at Sheriff's Office

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The growing frequency and variety of scams have been alarming law enforcement officials around the nation, contributing to billions of dollars a year in fraud losses.

That same sense of alarm is being felt right here in Union County, where scams have been coming in hot with no sign of slowing down.

Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office are working hard to get the word out about scam



prevention, as the best way to avoid being scammed is awareness of what to do and not do when approached by strangers seeking money – for whatever reason – over the

phone or online.

Scammers are criminals who will go to almost any length to steal innocent people's money. And they often work "smarter" and not "harder" by targeting citizens who are not exactly tech savvy. That's why the elderly are frequently the victims of scams.

And unfortunately, a particular computer scam has been making the rounds with great success for criminals, UCSO Financial Crimes Inv. Bob Calamari said.

The scam involves a

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## Temporary river crossing established at Fisher Field

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

The single-lane temporary crossing over Nottely River at Fisher Field Road is now operational, giving residents peace of mind until their neighborhood's structurally deficient bridge can be replaced over the next three or four months.

Construction of the Georgia Department of Transportation-approved temporary crossing began April 3, the same day Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris awarded a \$332,470 contract to Square Deal Enterprises, Inc. to install both the temporary



Square Deal Enterprises of White County installed this temporary crossing at Fisher Field Road between Wednesday and Friday of last week.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



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# Deputy Heroes...from Page 1A

dispatched, and they were first to arrive on the scene.

"It was determined later to be a medical call in which a female who was experiencing chest pain had fallen out of a stopped

vehicle and went into cardiac arrest," Bergen said.

The woman had no pulse and was not breathing when deputies arrived. The deputies wasted no time in administering CPR, maintaining the procedure

for roughly 10 minutes before medical personnel could arrive to relieve them.

"EMS and (the medical) flight crew agree that the quick decision-making by Deputies Bradburn and Norton to start early and quality CPR saved the patient, as she regained a pulse shortly after EMS took over her care," Bergen said.

"The patient was alive and in stable condition when she arrived at the hospital. Both EMS and flight crew wanted to recognize this life-saving action taken by Deputies Bradburn and Norton."

Bergen went on to express his own belief that these deputies' actions were "prime examples" of what protecting and serving the community is all about.

"It is an honor to work alongside these men, and I recommend they be acknowledged for their exemplary action," Bergen said.

While certainly extraordinary, the actions by Bradburn and Norton were also ordinary, insofar as the Sheriff's Office and all first responder agencies in Union County hold their employees to the highest standards of professionalism and care for the public – even in stressful

situations.

"Our deputies are ready and willing to do anything to protect and serve the public," said UCSO Maj. Shawn Dyer, third in command at the

Sheriff's Office. "Any task that jumps out at them, they're not afraid to jump on it and do what they can to help.

"This is a perfect example of that, them doing

what they could to try to save this woman's life. I'm really proud of our deputies for having the training and knowledge of what to do in any situation."

# Weaver Road Closure...from Page 1A

opened sooner, but the project could also take longer if the county experiences bad weather.

County Manager Larry Garrett said the closure is to replace a large, damaged culvert underneath the road, and as Weaver Road is scheduled for repaving later this year, the county wants to go ahead and get a new culvert in place ahead of time.

Message boards alerting motorists to the impending closure were erected on both ends of Weaver Road last week to give people plenty of time to plan detours around the area, though residents in that stretch will still have access to and from their homes.

Garrett anticipates that traffic will increase on Weaver Road after construction of the roundabout at Pat Haralson

Memorial Drive and Deep South Farm Road, so he plans to have Weaver Road repaved before roundabout work begins.

The roundabout is in the right-of-way acquisition process currently and could go to bid this June. The county expects the roundabout to improve response times for emergency services pulling into and out of Union General Hospital.

# Fisher Field Bridge...from Page 1A



Residents no longer have to use the structurally deficient bridge to get in and out of their neighborhood now that the single-lane temporary crossing is open at Fisher Field Road.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

and prefabricated replacement bridges.

Described by one Fisher Field resident as "a masterpiece of engineering," the temporary crossing consists of three 6-foot culverts placed across the river to allow unimpeded water flow, with riprap, steel I-beams and crushed stone aggregate up top. It opened on Friday, April 5.

Now that the temporary bridge is in place, residents can cross the river without concern for their safety, as the old bridge, built in 1980, has deteriorated to the point that GDOT imposed reduced speed and weight limits last year and directed the county to repair or replace it.

In addition to safe crossing, services to the community will continue as well across the temporary bridge, which was enabled by property owners at the river granting temporary and permanent easements for construction – a process that went smoothly, County Manager Larry Garrett said.

Square Deal Enterprises is a family-run business out of White County that specializes in bridgework. The company assisted during the initial engineering phase to help come up with a solution there.

Scott Kinzie, who co-owns Square Deal, said the company will be coming out "in the near future" to demolish and clear the old permanent bridge.

Once utilities are moved, which could take place in the next couple weeks, Square Deal will provide an anchor for the new bridge by driving steel piles into the ground to "refusal," that is, to the point where they hit solid rock, and then install concrete abutments to hold the replacement.

The abutments will need to undergo a curing process, which, if all goes as planned, should be done by the time the prefabricated replacement bridge is delivered to the site around mid-May.

After that, the new permanent bridge will be set into place, with additional

curing time needed for the deck pouring, so Kinzie said he is hopeful that the new bridge will be ready to use by the end of June or in July pending favorable weather.

When the new bridge opens, Square Deal will remove the temporary crossing, and Garrett will ask for restoration input from the landowners who granted temporary right-of-way.

Restoration will likely include spreading mulch, sowing grass, and putting down rip rap at the river's edge to prevent bank erosion where temporary construction occurred.

Ultimately, Garrett said the county wants these landowners to be happy with the restoration, as they provided tremendous help through easement access.

To that end, two mountain laurels have been transplanted nearby to make room for the crossing, and the county will work to move those back when the time comes.

# Rep. Clyde demands Investigation, Audit of US Postal Service Mail Delays

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, Congressman Andrew Clyde (GA-09) sent a letter to U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Inspector General Tammy Hull to request an audit and investigation of the agency's recent consolidation process in North Georgia.

Earlier this year, the USPS transitioned and consolidated local Processing & Distribution Centers (PDC) across North Georgia to the Postal Service's new Regional Processing & Distribution Center (RPDC) in Palmetto, Georgia.

In the letter, Rep. Clyde explains how this process has impacted his constituents in the Ninth District.

"The recent transition and consolidation of North Georgia's more localized PDCs into the one regional Atlanta GA RPDC and USPS' poor planning for this transition has extensively disrupted mail delivery operations in the region causing my constituents immense trouble and grief in their everyday lives."

The Congressman also notes a concerning increase in constituent communications related to mail delays.

"Since the transition and consolidation of processing and distribution activities from local PDCs across North Georgia into the Palmetto facility on February 24, 2024, my office has received a nearly 90% increase in email and phone call messages from residents of North Georgia about USPS mail and package delays happening in the region."

Additionally, Rep. Clyde offers examples of how the USPS' botched transition has burdened North-

east Georgians.

"Our constituents have shared stories of the loss of revenue, the immense pain, and the hardship these USPS delays are causing them, their loved ones, and their small businesses. One resident in North Georgia writes that costly late fees are being assessed on their bills and their business' 'credit reputation' is in jeopardy due to checks sent through USPS in the mail arriving at their destination more than a month late. A resident of Blairsville, GA writes that rural areas 'depend on efficient mail service,' and she is 'at the mercy of a mail delivery system' to receive her life-saving medications."

Rep. Clyde continues by blasting the U.S. Postal Service's failed consolidation process and demanding accountability for his constituents.

"The current mail delivery situation throughout North Georgia is completely unacceptable, and it is clear that USPS must immediately divert resources to the region to prevent the ongoing suffering of my constituents. Furthermore, it is clear that USPS' poor planning for the transition and consolidation of operations into the Palmetto facility is to blame for the extensive mail delays seen across the North Georgia region. As a member of the House Committee on Appropriations, which provides extensive federal funds to the Postal Service Fund each fiscal year, I am demanding accountability and answers for the residents of North Georgia who continue to suffer every day due to USPS' incompetent



Congressman Andrew Clyde transition and consolidation plan for the Palmetto facility."

In closing, Congressman Clyde requests Inspector General Hull to audit and investigate the ongoing situation.

"Therefore, I request the USPS Office of Inspector General to thoroughly audit and investigate the disastrous situation currently unfolding in North Georgia previously described. I request that you please provide a preliminary response to my office within 30 days of receipt of this letter. Furthermore, I request that you please provide an update on your audit and investigation every three months thereafter of any progress, findings, or preliminary conclusions. Finally, no later than one year after receipt of this letter, I request that you publicly publish a final report detailing the findings and conclusions of your audit and investigation, and furthermore, that you please present your findings and conclusions in a briefing to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform and the House Committee on Appropriations." NT(Apr10Z11)CA

# Scam Cases...from Page 1A

legitimate looking but fake security warning popping up on people's computer screens. This typically occurs when a user is browsing the internet and inadvertently clicks on or navigates to a compromised link.

When the fake warning appears on the screen, it provides contact information like a phone number to call to resolve a "threat" like a virus or malware. What people who call the number fail to realize is that they are actually reaching out to a scammer.

One reached, the scammer pretends to offer tech support, but really, he or she is working to steal vital personal information such as passwords, biographical info, bank account numbers, etc., either by requesting the information or gaining access to the computer.

These scammers will also ask for money to perform fake tech services, demanding payment before they consent to remove malicious files. Such demands include outrageous

"fees" that often total many thousands of dollars – much more than the cost of the computer itself.

On top of impersonating professionals, scammers are known to threaten victims or garner trust to deceive people into sending money. Pre-paid gift cards, money orders, wire transfers, direct account access – a scammer will try any route that money can be sent.

Information gained in the computer pop-up scam is often used to steal very large sums of money from unsuspecting victims.

One elderly couple fell victim to the pop-up last month, enabling the scammer to download a malicious program on their computer. Using information gained via this program, the scammer sent fake Social Security emails demanding a wire transfer of \$44,577 to remove unwanted files.

The couple sent the money on March 13. On March 18, the same scammers contacted them again,

instructing them to get \$25,000 in cash to deposit into a Bitcoin machine in Murphy, North Carolina. They deposited the maximum allowable amount of \$23,700.

Then on March 21, the couple was told to go to a bank in Dahlonega to get a cashier's check for \$69,800 to deposit into a Wells Fargo account tied to fake credentials.

On March 22, their computer locked up again, and once contacted, the scammers directed them to go to a home appliance store to get six \$2,000 gift cards. The store only allowed the couple to purchase four of them there, so the scammer sent them to another location to get four more.

Finally, on March 23, the couple was sent to a Hiawassee bank to withdraw \$16,000 from the wife's IRA account; thankfully, their son had learned what was going on and contacted the Sheriff's Office, which reached out to the Hiawassee Police Department to intercept them.

Law enforcement was able to convince the couple they were being scammed, but

not before they had more than \$150,000 stolen from them. The silver lining: their bank was able to reverse the \$69,800 cashier's check, though they are still out more than \$80,000.

If a security notice pops up while browsing the internet, Calamari said people should simply turn their computer off and let it rest a while before restarting, and residents should also close their web browsers to navigate away from compromised websites.

People may also receive fake pop-up warnings if their computer has been infected with malicious adware, which means the pop-up could reappear, so residents with virus concerns can contact a local tech support company for assistance in detecting and removing unwanted programs.

Many other scams have been making the rounds locally, Calamari said, like text messages and emails for fake package deliveries by the U.S. Postal Service, FedEx, UPS, etc. These fake messages will request personal information to resolve failed deliveries and should be ignored.

And residents are still getting calls from scammers impersonating local law enforcement – using real names

of deputies and police officers – saying they need to pay money to avoid arrest for missing jury duty or else go to jail.

People should hang up on these scammers, as law enforcement does not place such calls, and people may call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066 to report the scam and/or verify that they do not have active warrants.

Additionally, the Sheriff's Office is warning against purchasing vehicles online, especially sight unseen.

One resident purchased a car through a website last month, agreeing to pay before accepting delivery of the vehicle he had never seen in person. The car never arrived, and while there is a chance the scammers will be caught, for now, the victim is out more than \$20,000.

Inv. Calamari also wants people to be aware of investment scams, detailing a recent case of a resident who sent over \$20,000 to a Bitcoin investor she found online.

The investor deposited \$2,700 in her account to demonstrate that she was making money, and within a week informed her that her investment had grown to \$100,000. This sounded too

good to be true, causing the victim to become suspicious, so she requested the amount in full.

At that point, the investor said he could not release the \$100,000 until she sent him an additional \$5,000. When she refused, the "investor" blocked her, and now she is working with an organization that specializes in fraudulent traders to recover the rest of her initial investment.

In yet another scam, a local business unknowingly sent \$120,000 in equipment lease payments to a scammer who had electronically spoofed the identity of the intended recipient, and the business owners are trying to work with the bank to get their money back.

The Sheriff's Office is occasionally able to assist people in recovering stolen funds, but usually, scammers are operating from abroad and the money is long gone by the time law enforcement gets involved.

In its continued drive to alert the public about scams and prevention, the Sheriff's Office will be hosting other Fraud & Scam Awareness Classes for the public this year, so stayed tuned for date announcements.

## UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE SCAM ALERT

DO NOT FALL VICTIM TO THESE SCAMS:

- IF** your computer, cell phone, tablet, etc., locks up and tells you to call a number that appears on the screen.
- DO NOT SEND** a large amount of money via wire transfer to someone you do not know.
- DO NOT PURCHASE** gift cards to pay money you owe or to avoid being arrested for an outstanding warrant or jury duty. We do not call people about this.
- DO NOT RESPOND** to Social Security calls requesting personal information.
- DO NOT RESPOND** to Medicare calls requesting personal information.
- DO NOT RESPOND** to USPS, FedEx, UPS, etc., emails or texts stating you have a package that is undeliverable and requesting personal information.
- DO NOT PURCHASE** a vehicle from Facebook Marketplace or other social media sites.
- PROTECT YOURSELF** against IRS tax identity theft wherein an unknown scammer uses your Social Security number to file taxes.
- DO NOT FALL FOR** grandparent scam in which you receive a call stating your grandchild/child has been arrested and needs money. Call the family member first.
- DO NOT PAY** money to receive a prize or any other offer that is too good to be true.
- DO NOT MAKE** donations for law enforcement agencies other than your local Police Department or Sheriff's Office. Do a walk-in donation.

If you suspect you or someone you know has been the target or victim of a scam, call the Union County Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

Find this Union County Sheriff's Office scam flyer inside this week's edition of the North Georgia News. Pull it out to put on your fridge, next to your computer, or anywhere it will serve as a handy reminder about scam prevention.

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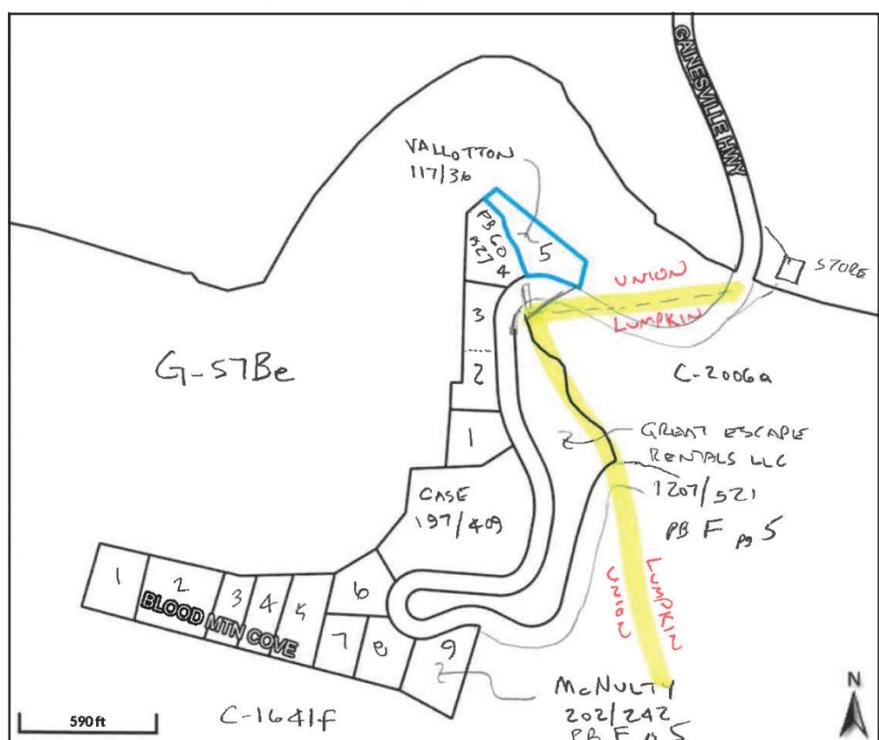
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# Boundary Dispute...from Page 1A



This tax map from qPublic.net illustrates the incorrect boundary line for Union and Lumpkin counties contouring above and around the previously contested parcels, with the correct line highlighted in yellow.

they remain Union Countians, regardless of a property tax savings several of the residents would have received due to larger tax exemptions available in Lumpkin County.

After all, much else besides taxes was riding on the determination, including access to emergency services, voter registration, school districts, residency status, mailing addresses, civic involvement and community identity, to name a few.

The property owners' strong reactions inspired Mahan, and she and Deputy County Attorney William Mercer spent considerable time last year investigating old deeds going back more than 100 years. They found no mentions of Lumpkin County in those records.

Moreover, all the land surrounding these private parcels is national forest or state property, and the oldest federal and state records related to that area were filed in Union County.

"The state and federal government – I can see one of them messing up, but both of them?" Mahan said. "Why would they have filed them in Union if the properties were actually in Lumpkin?"

Mahan also thought it strange that the boundary line in the county tax map contoured conveniently around the parcels even though they were created after the formation of the county, providing yet another reason to continue researching.

"Somewhere along the way, something with qPublic and GDOT maps got messed up, and they did the county boundary incorrectly," Mahan said. "We cannot find where, but all of a sudden, stuff started showing up with the boundary like this."

But before Union County could finish its investigation, Lumpkin officials decided to move on the issue, integrating the parcel information into their own records and sending notifications to property owners there that they would be paying taxes in Lumpkin starting in 2024.

They even transitioned four voters from Union to Lumpkin County voter rolls.

Lumpkin's actions ultimately proved to be premature, as in February, Mahan received the results of an in-depth investigation undertaken by Land Surveyor Mark E. Chastain, a specialist with dispute litigation experience whom the county hired to do a deep dive into the matter.

And the results put to rest any doubt that the properties in question belong in Union County.

Evidence in favor of Union County's claim is extensive, including the original language from founding county documents and old maps commissioned by the State of Georgia and the Forest Service clearly depicting the county line that places the contested parcels and more in Union.

Furthermore, the only way to change a county's boundary is by an act of legislation in the Georgia General Assembly, and to date, no known legislation has ever been introduced to alter the Union/Lumpkin boundary near Neels Gap.

Mahan presented this evidence in a meeting with Lumpkin officials last month, including the neighboring county's commission chair, and on April 2, the Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners voted to accept that evidence and adopt a resolution dropping any claims there.

Acting quickly, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris held a called meeting on April 3 to enact documents here to hopefully resolve the issue for good.

Their combined actions amount to a joint resolution recognizing the actual county boundary, a reversal of the voter roll issue, and an agreement by Union to provide emergency services along roughly 200 feet of US 129 that dips briefly into Lumpkin south of the Walasi-Yi Center.

Now that the understanding has been formalized, the Commissioner's Office will be asking GDOT and qPublic to correct their maps and finally bring an end to the confusion over where those parcels belong.

The county will also be incorporating the relevant documents into the official county minutes and attaching them to each of the previously contested property deeds on Blood Mountain to provide a new historical record of the parcels being part of Union County.

"I'm just excited that the two counties have decided to work together and reach a solution that will hopefully solve the problem, and it will be solved for years to come," Commissioner Paris said.

And while it remains unclear how state maps came to be wrong in the first place, the territorial issue has been a point of local confusion for years.

Going back decades, many locals have heard the tale of how Union County officials long ago made a "handshake deal" with Lumpkin County with an understanding that the properties were in fact in Lumpkin but would be treated, serviced and taxed as part of Union.

Such a deal would have been logical, as residents there would have enjoyed closer access by miles to civilization in Union, including law enforcement, fire and ambulance services, schools, shopping areas, professional services, doctors, everyday conveniences and more.

But no written record of such a deal was ever found, and it would not have been binding anyway given the requirement of state legislation to change the county boundary, so the supposed "handshake deal" is likely just a local legend of sorts.

The confusion was no doubt compounded over the years by the small span of 129 mentioned above, as road signs once appeared in quick succession welcoming people to Lumpkin, then back into Union, with yet another Lumpkin sign past the big bend below Blood Mountain Cabins.

"I'm tickled to death for the property owners, and I'm excited that this is resolved," Mahan said. "It'll be done forever, and we can do away with the ridiculous notion of a handshake agreement that county governments cannot do to change county boundaries."

Added Mahan, "It was exciting to me that they were adamant they were Union County residents and wanted to remain Union County residents."

Mahan said property owners there are likewise thrilled with the result, such as George Case, who owned Blood Mountain Cabins from 1992 to 2015 and still has two parcels of land across the road from his old business.

"It makes more sense for several reasons," Case said of the outcome. "No. 1, that's the way it has been for many, many years. No. 2, it's a long way to commute to connect with Lumpkin County. There's not a lot of Lumpkin people up that way; there are a lot of Union people up that way."

"Schools, trash, telephones, electricity – all this comes from Union County, and it would be a hassle to switch all that over. So, we're pleased that it's staying with Union County."

## Kiwanis Supports 9th Annual Backpack2School Bash



As the 2023-24 school year nears its end, the Union County community begins gearing up for the 9th annual Backpack2School Bash. The Kiwanis Club of Blairsville is pleased to again provide financial support as well as volunteer workers for this worthwhile event. At a recent Kiwanis meeting Allyson McGraw, club president, presented a check to Alexis Noe for the purchase of backpacks.

Local churches, businesses, agencies, and individuals have graciously supported past B2SB events, and their help is again requested. A supply list will be sent out in June so they can begin to gather items to be given to an anticipated 400 students.

The goal of B2SB is to provide a day for families, friends, free backpacks, school supplies, lunch, and fun. This



(L-R): Allyson McGraw and Alexis Noe

year's Bash will be held at First United Methodist Church on August 3, and is open to all families who are residents of Union County. There are no income requirements.

If you or your organization are interested in helping collect school supplies or would like to participate, email Alexis Noe at backpack2schoolbash@gmail.com. Blairsville Kiwanis

Club is a civic organization that has been in service to our community since 1950, helping local children and local organizations through community service and fundraising events. The Club meets the first and third Wednesdays at Blairsville Restaurant Grits and Greens at 7:30 am. You are welcome to visit us in person or visit our website at <https://www.blairvillekiwanis.club/>

# Shook Triplets...from Page 1A

"I wasn't talking or anything."  
 "She didn't really get to hold them for any (extended) amount of time," added Brian. "Just for the simple fact of what had been going on, they had to get the children stabilized to get them ready for transport."

When Lily, the first of the triplets, was born, blood was discovered in her mouth — it had been her placenta that ruptured. She had aspirated blood, requiring her to be intubated and sent by ambulance to Erlanger Hospital's T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital.

Harper was also having difficulty breathing, so she was intubated as well and sent with her sister. Daisy was the most stable, but she, too, was rushed away on the next available ambulance to Erlanger, as weather conditions proved too dangerous to fly the babies out.

From there, the little ones were treated in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Erlanger. Much of that time was spent trying to support them into breathing on their own. Harper was weaned off the continuous positive airway pressure machine, though Lily had a more difficult time.

"Once they got (Lily) to the CPAP, they examined her lungs, and the right lung was completely collapsed. And so, they had to go in and do a bronchial procedure where they sucked out all the mucus plugs that were in (the lung)," explained Elissa.

Within the next three days, Lily perked up. She continued on the CPAP for another week or two before graduating to a high-flow nasal cannula. By the end of February, she was able to breathe in "room air" on her own.

In total, Daisy stayed at Erlanger for 29 days, while Harper and Lily stayed for 49 days. On March 1, all three were reunited at home with the rest of the family.

"I was definitely ready to be home and have all my babies in one spot," admitted Elissa, laughing, though she and Brian agree it can be "chaotic" living with three newborns at once.

For the most part, Elissa handles the daily routine and takes care of the girls while Brian works and focuses on income, but family and friends have no problem coming over to help from time to time.

Looking back, the Shooks believe Union General and Erlanger "gave it 110%" when it came to ensuring the survival and health of their three new bundles of joy. A special thank-you from Elissa goes out to Dr. Cynthia Mercer for delivering the babies and providing swift care.

"You can tell that everyone really cared — it wasn't just a job. They were very sympathetic," said Elissa, with Brian concurring.

"I have to recognize all the staff that day," noted the babies' father. "To me, they all went above and beyond."

At birth, Lily weighed 4 pounds, 4 ounces, while Harper and Daisy both weighed 4 pounds, 2 ounces. All three have gotten past 6 pounds by this point, and they continue to attend doctor appointments for regular weigh-ins every Monday.

Annalise has readily embraced her new role as a big sister. According to her mother, she's always eager to help with the babies. Everyone is doing just fine, and there is no lasting damage to mom or the triplets.

The Shook Triplets are in good company here in Blairsville, joining the Turner Triplets Carlyn, Ava and Jillian, who celebrated their Sweet 16 birthdays last August.



Lily, Daisy and Harper are healthy and happy after spending more than a month each in the hospital following birth. Welcome to the world!

Photo/Submitted

## Jennifer Marsh is Woody Gap's 2024 DAR Good Citizen



Congratulations to Jennifer Lindsay Marsh, Woody Gap School's 2024 Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen.

This national recognition is sponsored by the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter of DAR. According to Chapter Regent Pam Greene of Hiawassee, "DAR recognizes seniors as Good Citizens because they have demonstrated throughout their high school career the qualities of dependability (truthfulness, honesty, punctuality); service (cooperation, helpfulness, responsibility); leadership (personality, self-control, initiative); and patriotism (unselfish loyalty to American ideals)." "Jennifer exhibits these qualities in her

home, school, and community," according to Woody Gap Counselor Kim Perren. Jennifer will attend Western Carolina University. Her proud mother is Kathy Marsh.

The Old Unicoi Trail Chapter of DAR annually sponsors the National Program in accredited Fannin, Towns, and Union County high schools. In the future Ms. Marsh will find that adult leaders in Business and Industry, Government, Education, Healthcare, and the Arts among others will frequently have been DAR Good Citizens as a high school senior and that they include it proudly on their resume. Jennifer will receive an identifying lapel pin, a certificate, and a small monetary award.

The DAR is a women's service organization whose members can trace their lineage to an individual who contributed to securing American independence during the Revolutionary War. DAR promotes historic preservation, educa-



Jennifer Marsh

tion, and patriotism. On May 18th, the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter will conduct an "Introduction to DAR and Old Unicoi Trail" at Union County Library. Email oldunicoitrail@gmail.com for details and to attend. Attendance is limited.

The next Old Unicoi Trail Chapter meeting is April 13th at Blairsville's Grits and Greens Restaurant. If you are interested in attending email us!