

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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## E-911 dispatchers feel the love with appreciation week

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Every year in the second week of April, the U.S. celebrates telecommunications personnel in the public safety community, giving residents a great opportunity to recognize that some heroes wear headsets.

In 2021, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week runs April 11-17, during which time local 911 dispatchers receive much love and recognition for the hard work they do as the very first responder in most emergencies.

As is so often the case everywhere, here in Union County, dispatchers serve a variety of functions ranging from being the voice urging calm in people's most perilous moments, to being the invaluable resource connecting

folks with the exact help they need as quickly as possible.

The job requires talented individuals working together in small teams of just two or three people handling all the emergency and non-emergency calls in the county, working radios, phone lines, and coordinating any number of services and local and state agencies to respond effectively.

For the most part it's a thankless job, though the dispatchers - necessarily disembodied voices at work who are difficult to spot in public - say people still manage to find ways to express gratitude, either through bringing food by the center, sending cards, or calling back to say thanks.

Of course, the local public safety community is more than just a community; it's a family, the members of which love each other as much as they love their

job, which reinforces genuine bonds between first responders no matter the department or agency.

And it was in this spirit of familial togetherness that 911 Director David Dyer and 911 Lt. Millie Baxter held an appreciation reception for dispatchers in the leadup to their regular staff meeting April 8, complete with special guests and refreshments at the E-911 Communications Center.

Attending the reception were Union County Sheriff's Capt. Craig Davenport and Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer, who also serves as Maj. Dyer for the Sheriff's Office. The two men expressed appreciation as well as admiration for the 911 workers.

"On behalf of the city and the Sheriff's Office, we really do appreciate y'all," Maj. See Dispatchers, Page 6A



Union County's amazing E-911 Dispatchers are being treated to a week all their own April 11-17, pictured here at an appreciation reception with local law enforcement on April 8. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Public invited to celebrate arena's 30th anniversary



Patriotic members of the always popular Sass 'n Saddles Precision Drill Team during a past performance at the Union County Arena. Photo by Alysia Hargus

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

It has been 30 years since the grand opening of the state-of-the-art arena that serves as home to the Union County Saddle Club.

In honor of the occasion, on Friday, April 16, the club will open its doors to the

public for a special anniversary celebration at 1:30 p.m. at the Union County Arena. People can find the arena at 73 Saddle Club Drive off Georgia 515 and Nottely Dam Road.

There, local dignitaries will showcase the recent improvements at the arena and commemorate three decades of providing local

family entertainment and a variety of equine projects to the community.

According to Saddle Club Publicity Officer Alysia Hargus, local voters' willingness to approve the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax has allowed the club to continuously provide top- See Saddle Club Arena, Page 3A

## Hannah Todd named 2021 STAR Student at UCHS

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Cheers erupted at Union County High School Monday morning as the announcement came over the loudspeaker that Hannah Todd had been named 2021 STAR Student and April Krieger her STAR Teacher.

Students and teachers were just getting back into the swing of things after celebrating spring break last week, and the news, delivered by Principal C.T. Hussion, was a great start to everyone's return to campus.

The STAR duo will be honored alongside other high-achieving students in the April 15 "Evening with the See STAR Student, Page 3A



UCHS English Teacher April Krieger was thrilled to learn that senior Hannah Todd, the school's 2021 STAR Student, had selected her to serve as her STAR Teacher. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Mask mandate triggers outburst resulting in assault on deputy

By Shawn Jarrard  
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A Suches resident ended up behind bars last week for assaulting a deputy and other crimes after becoming "irate" when employees of the Wolf Pen Gap Country Store asked him to comply with a mask mandate inside the business, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Tyler Jacob Holloway,

23, of Suches, was arrested in connection with the event and charged with terroristic threats and acts, aggravated battery, obstructing law enforcement, criminal interference with government property and criminal trespass, Osborn said.

The incident started around 8 p.m. on Thursday, April 8, when Holloway entered the Suches store without wearing a See Mask Mandate, Page 6A



Tyler Jacob Holloway

## Gowder requests vacated judgment before sentence starts

By Linda Erbele  
North Georgia News

Former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder has filed a motion requesting that his conviction and sentence be vacated - that is to say, voided.

Gowder filed his motion pro se, meaning without the assistance of an attorney. The request was received Thursday, April 8, in the clerk's office of Federal Northern District of Georgia and will be considered by U.S. District Judge Richard

W. Story.

Story presided over Gowder's trial and sentenced him to a year and a day in federal prison in June 2020 following his October 2019 conviction for multiple counts of prescription fraud.

The sentencing hearing was delayed several times due to concerns over COVID-19, and ultimately, Gowder was allowed to delay reporting for his sentence to no sooner than May 1, 2021, to give him See Mike Gowder, Page 3A



Mike Gowder

## Volunteers honor veterans with Quilts of Valor for service

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild returned to the Union County Farmers Market for an outdoor ceremony honoring area veterans with Quilts of Valor on Saturday, April 10.

Historically, the guild has held such events inside the Old Union County Courthouse, but due to risks surrounding the spread of COVID-19, quilts have been presented at the Farmers Market for two ceremonies now, including one back in November 2020.

Local Quilts of Valor Liaison Susan Young said it's essential to show gratitude. See Quilts of Valor, Page 2A



Vietnam Veteran Russell Williams of Blairsville was honored to be presented with his Quilts of Valor April 10. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Counties hosting Saturday mass COVID-19 vaccine clinics Union, Towns top state in vaccination rates

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Health Departments of Union and Towns Counties will each be hosting a single Saturday mass vaccine clinic coming up, one in Union on April 17, and one in Towns on April 24. Appointments are still available for each.

In Union County, people may visit http://www.unioncountyga.gov and click on the registration link at the bottom of the page. This clinic will be held on Saturday, April 17, from 8-11:45 a.m. at the Sports Center. See Vaccine Clinic, Page 2A



Union County Primary School Teacher Amy Underwood got her second COVID-19 dose in an April 8 clinic by the Health Department. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

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