

North Georgia News

2 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Blairsville woman dies in accidental house fire

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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A brushfire accident at a home on Talon Trace resulted in the tragic death of a Blairsville woman last week.

Investigators believe that Hilda Sue Stancil, 82, perished from smoke inhalation after the home caught fire the afternoon of Monday, April 8, with official determination of the victim's identity pending DNA verification, according to Union County Coroner Jeff Fortenberry.

Union County Fire Capt. Damon Hood investigated the incident with the State Fire Marshal's Office and Union County Sheriff's Office, and he said they determined that the

fire started when flames from a nearby brushfire spread into the garage of the home.

Stancil's 84-year-old husband had been burning vegetation at the time while his wife remained inside the home. As he was working around the perimeter of the property, he discovered too late that the house had caught fire, Hood said.

"He entered the home several times (through the backdoor) to try to make contact with his wife but was unable to do so and was overcome by smoke and flames," Hood said. "He had some burns on his face and smoke inhalation."

E-911 Dispatch received a call from a resident of the neighborhood at 3:54 p.m.,

prompting an immediate response from firefighters and other emergency personnel.

On their way, firefighters learned that Stancil was inside the home and that her husband had gone in after her, shifting the response from dedicated fire suppression to rescue efforts as well, upping the pressure to get there in time to potentially save lives.

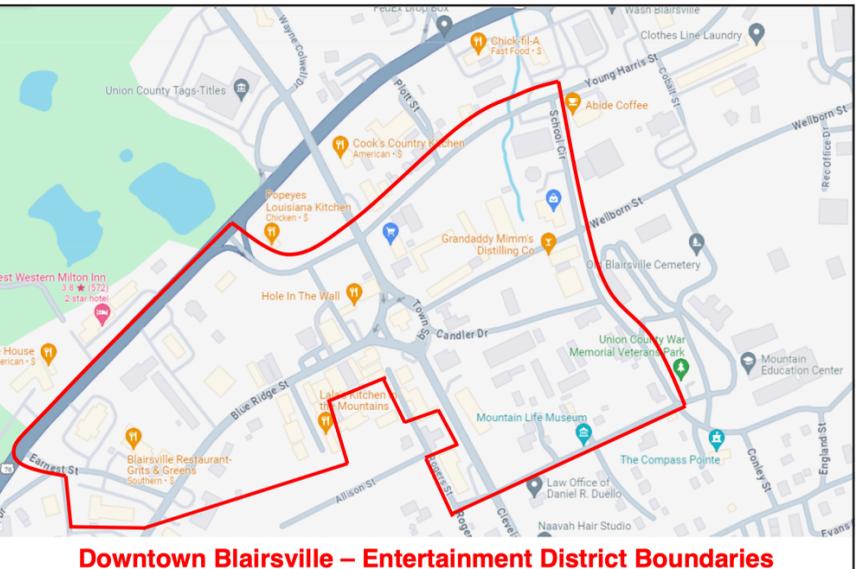
"With our county population being 33% over-65 (years of age)," Fire Chief David Dyer said, "that increases our risk of people not being able to move as quickly or get out of a building as easily, so that ramped everybody up."

"We're always responding as hard as we can to a
See Fatal House Fire, Page 6A



Firefighters worked as quickly as possible last week to extinguish this house fire on Talon Trace that tragically resulted in a woman's death. Photo/Facebook

Open-carry alcohol to get 90-day test run downtown



This map shows the proposed area for the Downtown Entertainment District in Blairsville.

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville City Council and Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Board met for a called meeting on April 8 to discuss the possibility of creating a Downtown Entertainment District, and council members voted 3-1 that evening to authorize a 90-day trial period.

DDA Director Kristen Bentley presented a printed slideshow to talk about what a Downtown Entertainment District is and gave reports from other areas that have implemented the idea.

At its core, such a district would promote patronage downtown by allowing people to carry a small open container of an alcoholic beverage served from a local business within

the district's parameters. In Blairsville's case, this wouldn't require any new construction.

Encapsulating approximately 0.07 square miles in Downtown Blairsville, the area would roughly run from the Blairsville Restaurant to Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co., then down below the Mountain Life Museum.

After speaking with
See Entertainment District, Page 2A

Would-be burglar arrested at Owltown pawn shop

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Sheriff's Office arrested a Blairsville man at the site of a suspected burglary attempt last week.

Dalton Lee Farrell, 20, has been charged with second degree criminal damage to property, criminal attempt to commit burglary, possession of tools for the commission of burglary – all felonies – and three counts of obstruction of a law enforcement officer, plus loitering/prowling.

Farrell's arrest stemmed from an incident that occurred around 10:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10, UCSO Capt. Daren "Bear" Osborn said.

"The alarm went off at North Georgia Gun & Pawn, which is located on Gainesville Highway in the same building as Owltown Grocery," Osborn said. "When deputies got there, they noticed three windows

in the back had been broken out, but none of them were big enough to gain entry into. The owner had arrived, too, and said the windows had been freshly broken out."

When deputies searched the area, they discovered Farrell hiding behind an air conditioning unit outside on the property, Osborn said, noting that Farrell had been unable to get inside the pawn shop before deputies apprehended him.

A wider search of the area resulted in Farrell's car being found a short distance away on Town Creek School Road, inside which a hammer was found that investigators believe was used to smash the shop's windows, Osborn said.

Property damage is estimated at about \$1,400.

UCSO believes Farrell was acting alone, as no other individuals were located, and he was the only one to appear on surveillance footage at the property.

Farrell was still in jail at



Dalton Lee Farrell press time with a total bond of \$38,000. He has been charged until and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

"The deputies did a great job in responding to the scene and locating the suspect to put a stop to the situation before it got worse," Osborn said. "They
See UCSO Arrest, Page 8A

Residents hear from GOP commissioner candidates

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Republican Party welcomed several hundred potential primary voters to a candidate forum inside the Fine Arts Center on Tuesday, April 9.

Months in the making,

the forum offered guests a chance to hear from GOP candidates in two county-level races: Sole Commissioner and Sheriff's Office.

The commissioner's contest is the lone race featuring a Democrat running for local office, so whichever Republican wins his or her

party's nomination in the May 21 General Primary will face longtime incumbent Commissioner Lamar Paris in the Nov. 5 General Election.

An invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance kicked things off, setting a patriotic tone that was matched by
See Commissioner Forum, Page 3A



Republican candidates for Sole Commissioner Patrice Kilpatrick and Harold Collins in the April 9 GOP forum. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Sheriff candidates appeal to voters in public forum



Sheriff candidates Tom Jones, Doug Loyd and Shawn Dyer each gave reasons to elect them in the April 9 Union County GOP forum. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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Voters got a good look at candidates for the upcoming Sheriff's Office race during the Union County GOP Candidate Forum on Tuesday, April 9.

Speaking in a question-and-answer format that evening were candidates Shawn Dyer, Doug Loyd and Tom Jones, all of whom are vying for the opportunity to protect and serve residents as the next county

sheriff.

Because only Republicans qualified for the Office of Sheriff in 2024, the next Top Cop of Union County will be known after the May 21 General Primary Election – or in June if a runoff election is required.

All candidates pledged to safeguard Union Countians to the highest standard and to uphold the Second Amendment and other Constitutional rights of residents if elected, with

illegal immigration, drugs and scams standing out as hot topics during the forum.

Dyer is extensively trained in law enforcement practices and currently serves as third-in-command of the Union County Sheriff's Office. He is also the Assistant Police Chief for the Blairsville Police Department, a position he has held for many years.

At both agencies, Dyer is responsible for "setting
See Sheriff Forum, Page 2A



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Entertainment District...from Page 1A

Blairsville Police Chief Michael “Bear” Baxter, Bentley shared that the area may later be marked off with clear signage, or maps could be placed to better remind patrons of their boundaries.

And boundaries, as with

all things, are important when it comes to the proposed district.

First off, only alcohol purchased from participating businesses would be permitted for open carry inside the district, so no individual would be allowed to bring his or

her own alcohol, nor could they take alcohol purchased within the perimeter outside the district.

Secondly, alcohol can only be consumed from a clear plastic cup “not to exceed 16 ounces in size.” The cups would be obtained from licensed businesses who agree to sell the alcohol as part of the Downtown Entertainment District.

Anyone who leaves the area with an alcoholic beverage in an open container would be subject to a \$100 citation.

Patrons would also only be allowed to carry and consume alcohol openly during a certain timeframe. For example, guidelines could be crafted to state the activity is legal only between Thursday and Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Additionally, special exceptions may be made during significant events, like parades, so that the streets remain alcohol-free and totally safe during such times.

After defining the Downtown Entertainment District and outlining what it would entail, Bentley shared testimonials from other cities

that already have them.

“We anticipate no problems – we would be the first Georgia city with any significant issues, as this has been an overwhelmingly positive experiment (elsewhere),” read a slide.

One report from the mayor of Canton stated that, following the establishment of their own Entertainment District, alcohol violations were actually halved, and “none were related to open-carry issues.”

Rome saw a similar pattern, as the downtown director for the city reported alcohol-related arrests dropped, and downtown businesses saw up to a 50% increase in foot traffic “during open-container events.”

Meanwhile, a city councilmember from Carrollton

Sheriff Forum...from Page 1A

and maintaining budgets, supervising personnel, and maintaining positive relationships between the Blairsville Police Department, the Union County Sheriff’s Office and Union County Schools Police, and all the other state and federal agencies here in the county.”

Dyer spoke about the unusually good working relations between the local law enforcement agencies, which he has helped to foster as a leader in both the Sheriff’s Office and Police Department, and he promised to continue working well with neighboring agencies as well.

Turning to the topic of drugs, Dyer said that UCSO works with local, state and federal agencies to follow drugs “back to different places, whether it be Atlanta or wherever it may go,” citing a larger investigation that Union helped with recently to get 40 pounds of meth off the streets.

Asked about the importance of the Constitution, Dyer said he takes seriously his oaths to uphold both the U.S. and Georgia constitutions as well as the state laws he lives by in performing his job.

The first thing Dyer will do if elected is to set up his command staff, followed by implementation of some ideas he has to fine tune what has already been accomplished in the Sheriff’s Office.

“For the last 12 years, Sheriff Mason has done an outstanding job building a department here in Union County,” Dyer said. “Our equipment is some of the best equipment in North Georgia.

“Now, really, you can take that transition and move this Sheriff’s Office forward with extra technology and things that will just make the job better for our deputies and better for the citizens here in this county.”

Doug Loyd is not currently in law enforcement but has much training and previously served in the area for 20 years, including as a captain at UCSO. He is the associate pastor of The Cross Worship Center in Blairsville and operates a family-run lawncare business.

Loyd is a “lifelong conservative Republican” who has been campaigning as a “Constitutional Sheriff.” When asked what he meant by that, Loyd said he would dutifully “uphold the Constitution” and all the rights it entails.

If elected, he looks forward to pursuing stronger relations with “every agency around.”

On drugs, Loyd’s initial priority will be to make sure “that we are taking care of the drug activity and everything that is happening here,” working with other agencies “to help eradicate and get the upper hand on the drug activity.”

Addressing what he would do first, Loyd said he would build on what Sheriff Mason has done in the Sheriff’s Office, starting with a total department assessment “of every division in every area that we might need to make some adjustments and improvements in.”

“When I take office, we would have to assess the command staff, because there will be some changes in that area – it’s just a given when a new sheriff comes in,” Loyd said. “Until I take office as sheriff, I won’t know exactly until we assess all that.

“But once we start putting our command staff together, then I’ll know how to better serve the community in that area and maybe be more proactive or whatever we need to do. I do have an action plan; there is areas I feel that we could be more community-involved.”

On that note, Loyd said he “will be looking at a Citizens Academy for the community” and bringing Neighborhood Crime Watch to Union County.

reported that in more than a decade of having a Downtown Entertainment District, there have been “no problems.”

And according to the city manager of Duluth, there have been no issues with public safety or public drunkenness in the more than 25 years since they first established their Entertainment District.

But why establish one in the first place? Bentley said it’s all about the economy and making people feel welcomed, whether they’re tourists or locals, young or old. The goal is to foster partnership among local businesses, encourage shoppers to stay and spend more money in multiple businesses, generate incremental tax dollars and more.

The idea was met with initial skepticism, particularly regarding public safety, but

the council decided that night to give it a try, with Council Members Rhonda Mahan, Kayla Hemphill and Buddy Moore voting in favor, and Tony Dyer voting against. Mary Ruth Cook was not in attendance.

This means that an ordinance must be written up first, so City Attorney Marvin Harkins has agreed to draft one in time for the regular city meeting in May. Once the paperwork is in order, the Entertainment District will undergo a 90-day test run, likely sometime this summer.

Clear signage will be posted with finalized hours of availability, and maps displaying the borders will be set up around the parameters of the district and/or offered as stickers to put on authorized cups.

busted a fentanyl house,” Dyer said. “We’ve got a \$350,000 seizure off that house, and I sat in the closing – it was fentanyl.”

“We’ve had other multiple drug arrests where we’ve seized cash, guns and stuff like that with fentanyl. I don’t know how the numbers (referenced by Jones) are calculated or where they came from, but as far as having made fentanyl arrests in this county, we have.”

Jones doubled down on his statements, saying that cartel activity here “is confirmed” and that public records clearly showed “zero fentanyl arrests” in Union County, at least in the last three years.

“I will reorganize the Sheriff’s Office,” Jones said. “We’re going to stop concentrating on writing citizens traffic tickets, and we’re going to reorganize the drug unit ... I will not rest, or I will resign as sheriff if we do not eradicate the drugs out of this county.”

Dyer once more refuted Jones’ comments on fentanyl arrests and said that if the Sheriff’s Office does learn that drug cartels are operating out of Union County, “I’m going to eradicate them by putting them in prison.”

On illegal immigration, all candidates said they would not put up with undocumented migrants being bussed here from elsewhere in the country, and Jones referenced the overcrowded Union County Jail as needing to be updated to house a potential influx of illegal immigrants and others.

Moreover, Dyer said that “every illegal that’s coming into our facility at this time, ICE is being notified.”

“This is a problem that the citizens of this county and the citizens of the United States – it’s kind of like working on a broken water pipe,” Dyer said. “We’re going to have to band together and cut this off at the source (by voting in November) or it’s still going to be a problem.”

“If that does happen,” Loyd said of buses hauling migrants showing up, “just like these other candidates (said), they won’t be staying here. If they’re coming here illegally, they’re bringing drugs, they’re wanting to harm people – we’ve already been seeing it around.

“We’re not a Sanctuary City, County. There’s four in the state of Georgia: Clarke County, Clayton, DeKalb, Gwinnett. Let’s fill them up there and bus them out of here.”

Touching on phone and computer scams that often impact the elderly, Jones said he would ramp up educational efforts in the community to combat crimes that largely originate outside of this jurisdiction.

Dyer said scamming was “probably our No. 1 crime in Union County,” adding that he would continue UCSO’s ongoing awareness efforts – public classes, meetings, print and social media campaigns, etc. – to educate residents how best to protect themselves financially.

Loyd recognized scams as “a serious issue” being dealt with by law enforcement everywhere, and he, too, pledged to conduct an extensive awareness campaign, to include various programs and events with expert speakers on topics like internet security.

On transparency, Loyd said he would have an “open-door policy” with the public; Dyer said, “If you haven’t done anything wrong, you’ve got nothing to hide, so come look”; and Jones would bring “sunlight” to UCSO by meeting with the community, making a new webpage and more.

The entire forum lasted about three hours, with coverage of the Sole Commissioner candidates appearing in a separate article in this week’s newspaper.

People can check out the full event at <https://rumble.com/v4oh3qw-union-county-gop-commissioner-and-sheriff-candidate-forum.html>.

Tom Jones is a former officer out of Florida who is certified for law enforcement in Georgia. He retired in 1998 after serving in many positions – on the SWAT team, in undercover narcotics investigations, as a detective and more – and he has correctional experience as well.

Jones also stressed the importance of both the state and U.S. constitutions, saying, “If you violate any one of the constitutions, I believe the United States ceases to exist.”

Further, he espoused a belief that everyone who can “legally carry a firearm should carry a firearm.”

Jones said he would continue to promote strong relationships with local agencies, adding that he would “expand on that” by strengthening “our relationships with other sheriff’s offices – share intelligence, share training, share equipment, especially when dealing with our drug issues.”

Speaking of drugs, Jones said he would prioritize getting drugs off the streets and working with outside agencies to do just that, as drugs have become a real problem in this and every community.

He also wants to institute body-worn cameras to protect deputies and the public alike, and certify the Sheriff’s Office to execute warrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

Jones assured deputies currently working at the Sheriff’s Office that he will be keeping everyone on staff if he wins election, and he pledged to conduct an audit to determine how money has been spent and what equipment may be needed, plus a reorganization to focus on drugs.

The subject of drugs came up several times in the forum, with each candidate being asked if he was aware of drug cartels operating locally and to characterize “the drug crisis in the county.”

Loyd said that he was not privy to information about drug cartel activity in the immediate area, but he knew that fentanyl, meth and pills “have been on the increase for quite some time,” and that relying on intel-sharing with other agencies would help to tackle the problem.

“If there is any drug cartel in Union County, as the next sheriff, I will deal with them to the fullest extent of the law,” Loyd said.

Dyer stated he was “not aware of any cartel that’s actually operating here in Union County,” but if they were, “we would be actively investigating and working that.”

“As long as I’m your sheriff,” Dyer said, “that would be the No. 1 priority of mine, to make sure we keep drugs down and keep drug dealers afraid to come here, and get some of these users the help they need, to get rid of this drug issue.”

Jones shared his belief that the Sheriff’s Office was “working as hard as they can with the resources they have” but answered definitively that, “yes, the cartel is here.”

He also said that fentanyl “is out of control in this county” and criticized the Sheriff’s Office for filing “zero fentanyl charges at this District Attorney’s Office” in the last three years based on his examination of public records.

“I promise you, if I’m elected sheriff, and you’re a drug dealer ... leave now, because the Sheriff’s Office is going to come after you, we’re going to dedicate resources, and you’re going to live your life looking over your shoulders,” Jones said.

Responding to Jones’ statements, Dyer reiterated that he was unaware of any direct cartel presence in the county, and he denied that UCSO has not made any recent fentanyl arrests.

“As for the fentanyl cases here in Union County, last Friday I sat in a closing where Union County Sheriff’s Office

Commissioner Forum...from Page 1A

plentiful red, white and blue decorations throughout the venue.

In addition to being informational, the forum was an exercise in civility, aided by a moderator taking turns with candidates to pose questions generated by the local GOP, plus follow-up questions. Responses were timed.

First up were Republican commissioner candidates Patrice Kilpatrick and Harold Collins.

Kilpatrick shared her background as a retired police officer out of Florida who has lived in Union County for 10 years. She has experience advocating for local abuse victims via S.A.F.E. Inc. and working with the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services.

Her current work as an executive director at a substance abuse treatment program has her overseeing a budget of over \$1 million, so she feels confident she can handle the Union County Budget, which sits at \$27 million for Fiscal Year 2024.

If elected, she pledges to make the county budgeting process – and much else besides – more transparent, to include quarterly town hall meetings and accountable governance measures like a compliance audit for SPLOST expenditures.

Kilpatrick commended the county for being debt free but said that spending was “out of control,” citing SPLOST projects that have been undertaken by the current administration.

To help get spending under control, she would reallocate SPLOST funding “back into the General Fund” and cut spending she considers wasteful, like county golf course operations, with a benefit of helping lower property taxes.

Among other topics, the grassroots petition for a five-member Board of Commissioners referendum was broached. Kilpatrick said she would support the “will of the people” regarding any vote

that arises to change the style of local government.

Turning to the nation, she said the country was in a state of “spiritual and ideological warfare,” highlighting the importance of “taking a stand locally as conservatives.”

Kilpatrick also noted that the U.S. borders were “being invaded” and implored residents to “start getting involved in what’s happening in our community,” as, essentially, the same could happen here.

“We have to make a change, because a lot of things are coming our way, and I believe this county is not being proactive, and we are not prepared for what’s coming,” Kilpatrick said, referencing the deadly opioid fentanyl as an example.

Born and raised in Union County, Harold Collins is a farmer who has spent his entire professional life in the agriculture industry, operating his Collins’ Farm for more than 40 years. Currently, he is the longest serving board member of the Union County Farm Bureau.

Collins feels his successful family business coupled with his 21 years on the Farm Bureau Board have prepared him to tackle the budgetary concerns of the county.

If elected, his priority will be finding and cutting wasteful spending while ensuring county departments provide quality services to the public. He will also propose development impact fees and cut Chamber of Commerce funding, all with an eye toward lowering the local tax burden.

Transparency and accountability are key issues for Collins, who guarantees that constituents will know where “every dollar” of taxpayer money is going, and, further, that “everyone will have a voice” in his administration.

As for the five-member commission issue, Collins said he, too, would support whatever voters decided but shared his belief that it would result in an expansion of government, and therefore result in “more

taxes.”

Both Collins and Kilpatrick said that, under their watch, county government would not be involved in sheltering illegal immigrants who may end up here and would work with the Sheriff’s Office to make sure they left Union County.

Additionally, both candidates said that Paris – now in his 24th year as commissioner – has simply been in office too long, stating it was time for new ideas.

In her closing comments, Kilpatrick addressed “the good people of Union County” to once again focus on the bigger picture of what is happening around the nation in terms of an assault by the Democratic Party on freedom and conservative values.

“We have spent a good part of the last 45 minutes talking about local issues,” Kilpatrick said. “I would like to now talk to you about our country and why it’s so important that we take a stand locally as conservatives.”

“We are experiencing spiritual and ideological warfare that is tearing at the fabric of our nation. We have to draw a line and choose a side. Once freedom is lost, it is lost forever. And I will not go down without a fight.”

Added Kilpatrick, “So, let the ancient blood from our forefathers pulse through our veins, and we must resist this tyranny. I want you all to grab your shields, stand with me, and push back. Together, we can win.”

Collins thanked everyone in attendance and watching from home for listening “to what I have to say.”

“When I decided to run for commissioner, I was asked by a lot of people, was I qualified?” Collins said. “No, I don’t have Ph.D.s, MDs, RDs, all that kind of stuff – but I do have common sense.”

“Being a farmer, I have weathered hailstorms, tornadoes ... droughts, floods, and I’ve been able to stay afloat for 40 years and raise a family. I believe it would be a piece of

cake running this county in a conservative way.

“So, I humbly ask for your vote tonight in the May primary. With God’s help, we can turn this around, we can lower taxes, have better service for our community.”

“And I just ask you tonight to pray that we do get a Republican president back into office in Washington, D.C., because if we don’t, I think we’re doomed.”

A brief intermission before the second half of the forum allowed guests to visit sponsor tables in the entryway of the Fine Arts Center to learn more about local campaigns and politically oriented organizations in attendance.

Dick Mills received a special thank you from the GOP that evening for being the biggest financial sponsor of the forum. Mills is running as a Republican for the office of District 8 State Representative.

The Sheriff’s Office portion of the forum is covered in a separate article in this week’s newspaper, and the full event can be viewed at <https://rumble.com/v4oh3qw-union-county-gop-commissioner-and-sheriff-candidate-forum.html>.

National Library Workers Day celebrated at the Union County Public Library



Union County Public Library staff and FOUCL members



Advocating for Libraries, Literacy, and Lifelong Learning

Greetings from Union County Public Library (UCPL) staff and Friends of Union County Library (FOUCL)!

Last Tuesday, April 9, was National Library Workers Day and FOUCL observed it by giving gifts of appreciation to the UCPL staff. Those gifts included insulated lunch bags, gift cards (generously donated by Chick-fil-A), and a chocolate cake baked by FOUCL member Lauren Burgence. The photo above shows some UCPL staff and a few FOUCL members who gathered for the

presentation.

Each year, in April, National Library Workers Day recognizes the valuable contributions library staff make every day to their communities through their hard work and dedication. The observance takes place annually on the Tuesday of National Library Week.

Quoting from the American Library Association:

“Libraries do so much more than house the books we borrow nearly any time of the day or night. (Yes, any time, day or night. Online reservation is highly popular.) Today, as always, library workers are masters of research. They find the obscure quote (or partial misquote as the case may be) helping you to annotate your research paper correctly. When you’re on a job search,

they offer internet access and computers so you can polish up your résumé, too.

Libraries also archive local history. The names of pioneers and settlers are usually recorded in books and newspapers of the era. Many libraries across the country house those books, papers, and many other resources.

Library workers champion our youth. They foster creativity and are a wealth of diverse opportunities for growth. Not only do they create projects and inspiration for our youth, but they also create them with enthusiasm! It can be quite infectious.”

National Library Workers Day is past, but it’s never too late to visit your local library and thank a member of the library staff for all they do for our community.

Book Sale at the Union County Library

The Union County Public Library will be having a large book sale starting on Tuesday, April 16th and running through Saturday, April 20th.

The sale will feature books of every type, from fiction and paperbacks to children’s books, large print, and a wide variety of nonfiction. Shoppers are to bring their own bags to the sale, which they can then fill with books for only \$5.

To see even more of the upcoming events at Union County Public Library, visit the list of events on their website: www.mountainlibrary.com.

Mountain Regional Library System

BOOK SALE

Fill a bag FOR \$5

APRIL 16-20

UNION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Patriots' Day observance is April 19th



(L-R): Stephen Weaver - President, Sons on the American Revolution Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter; Sandy Bell - Daughters of the American Revolution, Historic Preservation Committee Chair; and Jared Ogden - Treasurer and Past President, Sons of the American Revolution Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter; with Commissioner Paris, seated.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was joined by members of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution last week for a proclamation signing declaring April 19, 2024, as Patriots' Day in Union County.

April 19th marks the date in 1775 when the towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts were marched upon by the British regulars in an effort to confiscate munitions of the local militia.

The resulting "shot heard round the world" and the defeat of the Redcoats are now celebrated as Patriots' Day.

On April 19, 1778,

Colonel Samuel Elbert, commanding three Georgia Navy galleys, Lee, Washington and Bulloch, encountered three British ships in the Frederica River near St. Simons Island.

After five hours of naval action, the British ships were captured by Colonel Elbert and the Georgia Navy, a victory which boosted the morale of all Georgia patriots and caused the British to delay their invasion of Georgia by more than eight months.

Patriots' Day serves to remind citizens of our Revolution and the sacrifices endured during the years of struggle for American independence by patriots such as Captain John Collins.

The descendants of the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution encourage the community to proclaim April 19th of each year Patriots' Day in commemoration of the American Revolution and the struggle for American independence.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED I, Lamar Paris, Sole Commissioner, of Union County, Georgia do hereby proclaim to participate in PATRIOTS' DAY and urge all Union County residents to become more knowledgeable of the role which the Revolutionary War played in establishing the United States of America.

Sons of the American Revolution Musket Firing set for Friday, April 19th



The Color Guard of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), will continue the tradition of firing muskets on the Blairsville Square (weather permitting) on Patriots Day, Friday, April 19th, between 10 and noon.

April 19th is designated Patriots Day in Georgia to

commemorate two historical events.

First, the "Shot Heard Round the World" occurred on April 19, 1775, marking the beginning of the American Revolution. Second, on April 19, 1798, three Georgia Navy galleys sank three British Navy ships near St. Simons Island, GA.

Fatal House Fire...from Page 1A



UCFD Fire Capt. Damon Hood said that the main portion of the home was uninhabitable by the time firefighters arrived April 8. Photo/Facebook

structure fire, because every second counts. It used to be every minute counts, but now it's every second counts, because fires burn so much faster now.

"In old homes with natural fibers, natural wood, natural furniture, you would have eight to 10 minutes to get out of a home when smoke alarms started going off.

"Nowadays, they're lowering that down to three to five minutes because we have so many hydrocarbon fibers and synthetics, which burn quicker and hotter, produce more smoke - it's just very difficult, once you get that fire going, to get out. So, we were moving."

Fire Stations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 13 responded with apparatus, and volunteers from Station 5 arrived on scene with personnel to help fight the fire.

Unfortunately, about 75% of the structure was ablaze by the time firefighters got there, including the entire first floor and the bathroom area near the garage where Stancil was believed to have been last, so the odds were very low that any rescue attempts would be successful.

That didn't stop Union County Fire from trying.

Chief Dyer did a walkaround of the property as firefighters were staging their rescue and suppression efforts, and they made entry behind the home in the basement, which was smoke-filled but not on fire, while Union General EMS treated the husband for his injuries.

"We determined that the basement was OK enough to do a search without a collapse," Dyer said. "Collapse is our biggest fear in a situation like that, especially when you have

that much fire above you and you're putting water on it, which adds more weight."

Firefighters conducted a primary search of the basement but did not find Stancil, so they retreated and continued to put water on the fire to the point where they could search the upper floor.

Once they determined that the rescue was more than likely going to be a recovery, the Fire Department called in Capt. Hood to assist in investigating the scene.

Hood contacted the Sheriff's Office and State Fire Marshal's Office, which is standard procedure in fires that involve deaths, and investigators found Stancil deceased inside the home near the back porch exit, Dyer said.

Flames from the home had spread to a neighboring house, but firefighters were able to knock the second fire down before too much damage had occurred, and they also extinguished the brushfire that had started the incident.

Stancil's husband was life-flighted for medical treatment and was discharged the following day.

"It was a huge effort from everybody," Dyer said of UCFD's work that day. "We hate that it was a tragedy, that we couldn't save a life on that, because we were really gearing up for a rescue. But we're always going to be here, and we're always going to respond like that to anything we have."

"We want to extend our condolences to the Stancils, and also to the neighbors, the community and the Fire Department."

Generally speaking, Dyer advises residents to follow the five letters of SSTAR when it comes to safe

vegetation burning practices. More information can be found at <https://gatrees.org/>.

He also said that people who find themselves in a burning structure should immediately make their way to an exit, as there's simply no time to waste, especially given modern construction.

"If your house is on fire and your smoke alarms start going off, you need to get out," Dyer said. "You do not have time to do anything. If you think you can put that fire out and have the equipment and ability to do it, then try."

But if personal suppression efforts are not working or the equipment needed to extinguish a house fire is not immediately available, Dyer said people need to get out before they become overcome with smoke, which happens quickly.

A memorial service will be held for Stancil on Saturday, April 27, at noon inside House of Prayer Church located at 1400 Pat Colwell Road.

The family has asked that donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association in her memory at <http://act.alz.org/goto/hildasue>.

"Mrs. Hilda Sue Stancil was a loving and caring wife, mother, sister, grandmother and great grandmother," according to the Alzheimer's Association link. "Her father, Mr. John Green Brendel, encountered a long fight with Alzheimer's during which Hilda and her Mother Edith provided care."

"Late in her life, Hilda was beginning to show signs of Alzheimer's as well. The family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to continue the fight against this disease."

DAR salutes 40-year daughter Carole Thompson



Regent Pam Greene, Recording Secretary Pam Matthews and Carole Thompson



When asked what DAR membership means to her, Carole Thompson of Blairsville responded, "In a word, PROUD. For 40 years, I have taken pride in being a part of a group of amazing women that "get the job done" when it comes to promoting patriotism, helping needy children get an education, preserving our great country's history, honoring Veterans, promoting respect for the United States Constitution and much, much more."

Old Unicoi Trail Chapter (OUT) of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) recognized Carole, a Chapter Charter and Organizing member, for forty years of DAR membership. Introducing the honoree to new members and guests, Regent Pam Greene of Hiwassee shared, "We honor Carole today as she continues to be our #1 Chapter Cheerleader. She has served in multiple offices including Chapter Regent and in numerous committee positions, notably as Chair of the DAR School Committee. 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. Carole's patriots are Stephens Staples, Thomas Stark, and John Stark Sr, all of Virginia."

Also, at its April Chapter meeting Daughters met 'Pistol', a registered and champion Keeshond, who uniquely supports literacy among his young human friends. Pistol's owner Cathy Sikard of Murphy, was inspired by her grandson Jacob's multiple learning difficulties resulting in his inability to read after having been promoted in another state despite his learning challenges. Jacob, who is now progressing in an Orton-Gillingham program, inspired Pistol and his Grandmother Cathy to team up to promote literacy among the children of Shepherd Academy of Murphy's Shepherd of the Mountains Church. Young learners of the Academy talk and read to Pistol and share pictures with him from their readers! Cathy and Pistol briefly introduced Daughters to the Orton-Gillingham Approach, a highly structured learning program that breaks reading and spelling down into

smaller skills involving letters and sounds and then builds on these skills over time. The program was sponsored by OUT's Literacy Committee.

OUT Officers for 2024-26 were elected and are Regent Barbara Weaver, Murphy; Vice Regent Sandy Bell, Blairsville; Recording Secretary Pam Matthews, Blue Ridge; Treasurer Becky London, Morganton; and Registrar Linda Carr, Blairsville. Appointed officers are Historian Cindy Rafter, Blairsville and Chaplain Ann Atchison, Young Harris. Officers will be installed at the June 8th Chapter meeting which will be held at St. Clare's Episcopal Church, Blairsville. OUT is thankful to Grits and Greens Restaurant for hosting their April meeting in the Veterans Room.

On May 18th, the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter will also present DAR at WORK - an "Introduction to DAR and Old Unicoi Trail" at Union County Library. Email oldunicoitrail@gmail.com for details and to attend. Attendance will be limited.

UCSO Arrest...from Page 1A

did their jobs, and that's what we are here to do. Their work made our jobs in the Criminal Investigations Division much easier.

"We all try to work together to keep citizens safe. And even though a

crime was committed, it was not as bad as it could have been, because he could have gotten in and stolen a bunch of guns, which would have made this an even worse situation; the owner trades in a lot of guns."

Blairsville's Veterans Commanders Group seeks entries for Annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony



The Blairsville - Union County Memorial Day Parade Committee invites you to participate in this annual parade which starts at 10:30 AM on Saturday, May 25, 2024.

The theme this year is "Honoring our Korea Veterans: The forgotten war that never ended." We will be grateful to have two Korean War Veterans, one who survived the 1950 battle at Chosin Reservoir, North Korea (known as the "frozen Chosin"), as Grand Marshals.

Any church, business, civic organization or other group can participate in the parade to support the theme. Whether it's a decorated float, vehicle, or anything else, participation is key to properly supporting our Veteran community and remembering those that gave the ultimate sacrifice. However, at the minimum, entries are asked to respectively display our American flag. This year all entries will be judges for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place overall.

As in year's past, the parade route will begin at the old gymnasium, past Union County War Memorial Park, turn right on Cleveland Street and wind around the old courthouse onto Blue Ridge Street. It will then turn left at the pub-

lic library and head back to the Union County War Memorial Park. Also, please join our Veterans at the park for a Memorial Day ceremony that will begin shortly after the parade.

Even though this is an election year, Memorial Day commemorates U.S. men and women who died while in military service. The committee asks that everyone put aside all political issues and advertising

and honor our fallen heroes with a large turnout showing a sincere display of American patriotism.

For more information on how to participate in the parade fill out the form below and return to the Leon Davenport Veterans Center, 78 Blue Ridge Hwy., Blairsville, GA 30512 or contact the committee at ga.iraweaver121@gmail.com.

Honoring Our Korea Veterans



The forgotten war that never ended

Memorial Day Parade Saturday, May 25 • 10:30 am Downtown Blairsville

Name of Entrant: _____

Contact name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate number of the following types of entries:

_____ Float (Length: _____)

_____ Vintage Car/Truck (Type of vehicle: _____)

_____ Other (specify: _____)

Please no throwing of candy or other items along the parade route

If your civic organization, church, business or other group wishes to participate in the Memorial Day Parade, please fill out this entry form and email it to: ga.iraweaver121@gmail.com

Please have your entry checked in between 8:30-9:30 am in front of the old recreation gym at 371 School Circle, Blairsville, GA 30512

Sponsored by all Union County Veterans Organizations

Quilters Guild April 23rd Meeting

The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild will hold its next general meeting on Tuesday, April 23, in the Fellowship Hall of First United Methodist Church, 938 GA-515, Blairsville, GA. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. for sign-in and the meeting begins at 1 p.m.

Everyone is welcome, especially new and potential members - we are eager to share our enthusiasm for quilting!

Last month, Diane Vandiver wowed the guild with a presentation of her bright, scrappy quilts made from fabric strip sets and lots of helpful advice. Our April speaker will be Muriel Pfaff, known as The Quilt Teacher, who lectures nationwide. A trunk show of her pieces will also feature her love of history and reproduction quilts.

The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild has over 160 members, hailing primarily from Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida. Our mission is to educate, share, promote and keep alive the craft and traditions of quilting.



MMQG member Meredith Warwick's quilt for an upcoming Blairsville pickleball club fundraiser, featuring a pickleball court on the back and pickleball-themed stitching.

To learn more, visit our email mmqginfo@gmail.com website at <https://www.misty-mountainquiltguild.org> or We look forward to seeing you at our meeting.

Matt's Ministry and Brasstown Community Center hosts Community Food Pantry



(L-R): Suzanne Deslauriers, Paulette Tonielli, Maggie Butler, Melvin Cantrell, Larry Shoeman, Charlotte Majercik, Gary Majercik, Sharon Hayden, Lynda Snyder-Gibson and Bill Gibson

The Brasstown Community Center, partnering with Matt's Ministry, will be hosting its monthly Food Pantry on Thursday, April 18th from 12-2 PM for individuals or families experiencing food insecurity. If anyone could benefit from some supplemental food, know you are welcome to attend. Brasstown Community Center is located at 255 Settawig Road, Brasstown, NC.

Tables are set up outside so you can just drive up, select food you would like to receive and load up your car. In case of rain, the tables are set up in the

main building. Tell everyone you know and especially persons in need - there is no sign-up or income requirement.

Matt's Ministry, a faith-based group in Hayesville, that provides community members with supplemental food. We could always use volunteers to help set up the food pantry and/or load food boxes in cars. If you would like to help with the pantry or have any questions contact Linda Snyder 828-360-5058.

Last month's volunteers included: Suzanne Deslauriers, Paulette Tonielli, Maggie Butler (Matt's Ministry),

Melvin Cantrell, Larry Shoeman, Charlotte Majercik, Gary Majercik, Sharon Hayden, Lynda Snyder-Gibson (board member), Bill Gibson, Mary Bess Shelton (board member) and Carolyn Anderson (board member).

Please partake of this program that is so freely offered! If anyone would like to support this community effort, please make a donation to Matt's Ministry directly and mention that it is for the food pantry.

Please spread the word and we look forward to seeing you there!