

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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CDC, FDA recommend J&J vaccinations to resume

By Shawn Jarrard
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After a 10-day pause for safety review, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced April 23 they had determined the use of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine should resume.

Following this determination, the Georgia Department of Public Health announced Friday it would be resuming J&J vaccinations in the state after initially pausing on April 13.

"The pause was of six cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals following administration of the (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 Vaccine," the CDC said.

Continuing, "During the pause, medical and scientific teams at the FDA and CDC examined available data to assess the risk of thrombosis (i.e., clotting in the brain, abdomen, legs and other places), along with thrombocytopenia, or low blood platelet counts."

The FDA and CDC have reached out to providers to inform them of the potential for

such adverse events and to make sure they can properly manage and recognize these events "due to the unique treatment required for these blood clots and low platelets."

Together, the federal agencies have determined that: J&J vaccine use should be resumed; its potential benefits outweigh known potential risks in people 18 and older; and the vaccine is effective in preventing COVID-19.

Risks of what the CDC is calling thrombosis-thrombocytopenia syndrome, which causes blood clots and low platelets, is thought to be low,

and providers are being asked to inform people of those risks prior to administering the one-shot vaccine.

After a thorough review of available data, thrombosis-thrombocytopenia syndrome, or TTS, was ultimately discovered in 15 Johnson & Johnson vaccine recipients.

All cases occurred in women between the ages of 18 and 59, with a median age of 37 and symptom onset occurring between 6 and 15 days after vaccination. This suggests women ages 18 to 59 may be at increased risk for TTS with the J&J vaccine compared to other

demographics.

"Safety is our top priority," said Acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock. "This pause was an example of our extensive safety monitoring working as they were designed to work - identifying even these small number of cases."

"We've lifted the pause based on the FDA and CDC's review of all available data and in consultation with medical experts and based on recommendations from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices."

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Dr. Janet Woodcock
Acting FDA Commissioner

School Board recognizes Gray, Pruitt; staff offers updates



UCHS sophomore Isaiah Gray finished Third Place in the SkillsUSA state competition, pictured here with Construction Teacher Charley Cattanauch and CTAE Director Josh Davis.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In the April 20 meeting of the Union County Board of Education, sophomore Isaiah Gray of Union County High was recognized for his recent success at SkillsUSA, having placed third in state for electrical construction wiring.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce, according

to skillsusa.org.

"We help each student excel," the website continues. "A nonprofit national education association, SkillsUSA serves middle school, high school and college/postsecondary students preparing for careers in trade, technical and skilled service (including health) occupations."

Superintendent John Hill believes classes and programs that promote such skills are essential for getting students ready for the working world,

and he's glad to see so many students involved with labor-focused programs.

"We are very proud of the students that pursue these careers because we know these folks are what make this country what it is," Hill said.

CTAE Construction Teacher Charley Cattanauch explained how this year's SkillsUSA competition went, since it had to be done virtually rather than the traditional in-person workshop.

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UCHS, Woody Gap School to host proms for senior students

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

As the 2020-21 school year approaches its end, Union County High and Woody Gap School are gearing up for the traditional capstone events for seniors, including graduation and prom.

Union County High will host its prom on Saturday, May 1, at the nearby venue known as The Barn at Young Harris.

UCHS Principal C.T. Hussion is confident this location will provide students a terrific prom experience while also allowing enough space and ventilation to be safe.

"The Barn is an indoor/outdoor facility, and it is well ventilated," Hussion said. "We can utilize that and keep it extremely open, so that is the plan. A lot of schools are either keeping their numbers down or doing indoor and outdoor events."

By hosting the event in a more spread-out venue, both juniors and seniors will be able to attend the prom as they would any other year, and the school anticipates about 250 students will be showing up for the event.

"Giving the kids a sense of normalcy in the safest way



Carol Knight
Woody Gap Principal

possible is what this is all about," Hussion said. "In order to get back to normal, you have to do normal things, but you have to do them safely, too."

"We do these things, and they are voluntary. We aren't telling them they have to go. That helps a lot because it gives students an option on what they want to do. All of the Northeast Georgia school superintendents agreed to put a prom on for these kids."

"I am just so proud of Towns, Fannin and Union. We are probably among the few that made it all the way without shutting down for three weeks. When we started, none of us



C.T. Hussion
UCHS Principal

really knew if we would make it to Labor Day, and then here we are, planning prom and in-person graduation."

Woody Gap School will host prom with a twist, holding homecoming on the same day just before the prom kicks off. The Woody Gap Prom and Homecoming will take place Saturday, May 8, at Kennedy Creek Resort.

Principal Carol Knight invites the community to participate in the Homecoming activities and help the students enjoy their special evening.

"The public is welcome to start arriving as early as 5

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America-loving residents gather to celebrate 2021 Patriots' Day

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution and Old Unicoi Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution teamed up April 19 for a public observance of Patriots' Day on the Blairsville Square.

Generally speaking,

members of these groups must have documented ancestry traceable to a patriot who was "at all times unflinching in loyalty to and rendered acceptable service in the cause of American Independence."

And so it was that, dressed in their colonial best, the patriotic local members of these history loving groups gathered that Monday to speak

with curious passersby and proudly display the country's heritage on the Old Courthouse Lawn.

"We come out every year on Patriots' Day," SAR President Jared Ogden said. "The Battle of Lexington and Concord (took place April 19, 1775, and kicked off the Revolutionary War)."

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The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution joined with Commissioner Lamar Paris on the Blairsville Square for Patriots' Day observance April 19.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Heaton requests second delay in reporting to federal prison

By Linda Erbele
North Georgia News

Under order to begin a six-year stint in federal prison as early as May 1, former Blairsville family physician James Heaton has filed a motion to delay the start of his sentence by two months.

Heaton was originally set to report to prison Jan. 2, though last December, he was granted a delay of four months to give him time to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

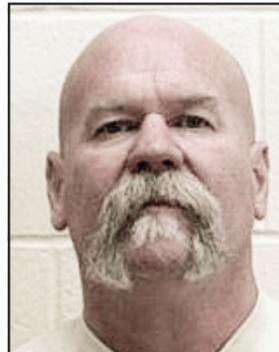
In a motion filed with the U.S. Court Northern District on April 22, he asked for another delay of two more months, reporting that the vaccine was in

short supply in Union County.

When reached for comment April 23 regarding a reported vaccine shortage in District 2 health departments, either in Union County or elsewhere, Georgia Department of Public Health Spokesperson Dave Palmer painted a different picture.

"We have plenty of vaccine at our health department," Palmer said. "We have plenty of vaccine in all of our counties."

According to the latest DPH figures, 15,100 doses of Moderna, 8,190 doses of Pfizer and 400 doses of Johnson & Johnson have been



James Heaton allocated to the various health providers in Union County, including pharmacies at

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Matheson pleads not guilty in shooting of estranged wife

By Shawn Jarrard
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HIAWASSEE - Jason Matheson has pleaded not guilty in the Jan. 26 shooting of his estranged wife Crystal Matheson at her place of work.

An attorney with the Enotah Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office entered the plea in front of Superior Court Chief Judge Raymond George at the Towns County Courthouse on April 22.

Matheson was scheduled to appear in court as part of an official arraignment proceeding,

however, he decided to waive arraignment so did not appear, acknowledging through his attorney that he was aware of the charges against him and would be entering a plea of not guilty.

A Towns County Grand Jury indicted Matheson in March on three charges in connection with the shooting that could result in a prison sentence of up to 40 years: criminal attempt to commit murder, aggravated stalking and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Now that Matheson has been arraigned, the court will set a trial date for his case.

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Jason Matheson

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ALLEGHENY LODGE

LOW COUNTRY BOIL • MAY 1

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May 6, 2021

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