

North Georgia News

4 Sections 28 Pages

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Scottish Festival to return June 11-12 after hiatus

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Soon, the North Georgia Mountains will celebrate the Scottish heritage of Appalachia with the annual Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games, set to return this weekend, June 11-12, after a lengthy three-year hiatus.

The staging area will once again be Meeks Park, where, according to Festival Public Relations Chair Pam Fink, the entire park will be used in some shape or form, with hours running 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. this Saturday and Sunday.

Before COVID, in 2019, Meeks Park flooded and rendered early summer events impossible that year, including

the Scottish Festival. Hope for the next year turned into disappointment and fear when the pandemic struck, wiping out the possibilities of a return in 2020 and 2021.

But now, with pandemic restrictions having largely lifted in 2022, organizers are hopeful that things are indeed starting to get back to normal.

"We usually have between 3,000 and 5,000 people," Fink said. "All the festivals and things that I've been to this year seem to have even higher attendance (than normal). People are dying to get out, but when you haven't had it in three years, you don't know."

Fortunately, people can expect a return to what the festival does best in 2022, with

See *Scottish Fest*, Page 8A



The last time the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games took place was in 2018, so be sure to check out the return of festivities this weekend!
Photo/North Georgia News

Davenport retires; Setzer new assistant superintendent

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport, who started as a teacher here in 1992, announced her retirement at the Union County Board of Education meeting on May 17.

"We have an Extra Mile Award, but we also have a 30 Years In Education Award right here," said Superintendent John Hill in a warm and heartfelt way. "This school wouldn't run without this lady - couldn't ask for a better Assistant Superintendent."

"There's not enough time in this meeting to talk about all the things that Dr. Davenport has done for this school. The millions of dollars in grants she's secured, the continual focus on students, focus on taking care of our staff - she's been so instrumental in so many big initiatives this school



Now-retired Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport in the May 17 Board of Education meeting, as her daughter Janna Akins, a School Board Member, looked on.

Photo by Mark Smith

had in the last 30 years, but especially in the last five.

"She's had a tremendously positive impact on our student body and on our teachers. A lot

of people don't realize that a lot of the things we have here are because of this lady. We owe her a debt of gratitude, and

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Sheriff Mason: 'Donations help defray cost to taxpayers'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason wants the law-abiding members of the community to know that he appreciates their support over the years in providing him with an opportunity to serve Union County.

As the Sheriff's Office operates on a fixed income - taxpayer dollars - community support has come in handy in countless ways, largely in the form of donations that have gone toward purchases of much needed equipment for use by deputies in keeping the county safe.

And Sheriff Mason is proud to help an institution that has used such community contributions to, for example, lock drug dealers up or run them out of town. In addition to taking law breakers off the streets, the Sheriff's Office assists residents in other ways as well.

"We have different facets and ways of helping our citizens here, one of which is our prescription drug drop box out front of the Sheriff's Office," Mason said. "When people have drugs they no longer need or a family member passes,



UCSO Capt. Josh Berry, who serves as Evidence Custodian for the Sheriff's Office, posing with recently donated guns.

Photo/Submitted

they can bring that up here and put it in our drop box, and we destroy it.

"Another thing that we've been asked over the course of me being the sheriff is, 'How can I donate to the Sheriff's Office?' One of the best ways is if they want to make a donation to our Seizure Fund.

"Our Seizure Fund is monitored very closely as to how we spend that money; they

audit us each year on it, that way there's no question about what that money is used for.

"If someone wants to make us a donation - for instance, we had someone donate a pontoon boat motor and trailer that brought in around \$5,000, which we used on a new vehicle.

"Someone donated \$7,500 to buy a narcotics dog.

See *UCSO Donations*, Page 2A

Farmers Market opens season with fresh produce, crafts

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The first day of the Union County Farmers Market's 2022 season was an overwhelming success on Saturday, June 4, with all three buildings packed with "a full house" of vendors and customers eager to get out after a couple years of pandemic worry.

Market Manager Patrick Fix, who is taking over from longtime manager Mickey Cummings this season, anticipates a busy year ahead, saying that the good turnout for the opening day was an excellent indicator of how the rest of the season will go.

"It's a relief not just for the vendors and the customers, but for the staff as well," Fix said. "It was a lot for everybody following protocol on sanitizer, face masks, spacing, distancing. I believe everybody - I know I am - feels more relieved. I'm more laid back this year simply because of those factors."

Known specifically for its fresh produce, the market will feature a rotation of fruits and vegetables as summer wears on.

"I've been talking to a lot of the farmers this morning, and



Farmer Freddie Collins, pictured here selling greens to a customer, posted up at his usual spot at the Farmers Market on Saturday.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

it seems like some of the crops are coming in earlier this year," Fix said, referencing tomatoes currently, though he wants customers to keep an eye out for cantaloupes, watermelons, and, closer to fall, okra.

Freddie Collins has farmed all his life and has sold produce at the Farmers Market ever since it first began over at the Union County Courthouse parking lot. For the season opener on Saturday, he had a table of fresh greens - his best-selling crop during early

summer.

"(We'll have) more greens, tomatoes, lots of sweet corn, green beans, cucumbers, (and) squash," Collins said, giving an idea of what browsers can expect later in the season, with cucumbers especially becoming available as soon as this week.

Just across the way, Lom Domanski had set up a table for her business, Green Papaya Microgreens. Compared to many other stalls set up across

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Early voting starts Monday in Democratic Primary Runoff

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Early voting for the June 21 Democratic Primary Runoff Election is set for Monday, June 13, through Friday, June 17.

Appearing on the ballot will be candidates who failed to clear the majority threshold in the May 24 Democratic Primary, with the top two vote earners in each of four statewide primary races competing to make it to the Nov. 8 General Election.

Runoff races include Charlie Bailey and Kwanza Hall for Lieutenant Governor, Bee Nguyen and Dee Dawkins-Haigler for Secretary of State, Raphael Baker and Janice Laws Robinson for Insurance Commissioner, and William Boddie Jr. and Nicole Horn for Labor Commissioner.

As this is a Democratic

Primary Runoff, the only people eligible to vote in the election are those who participated in the May 24 Democratic Primary or Nonpartisan General Election, or registered voters who did not vote at all in the May 24 elections.

In-person early voting will take place in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville, with voting hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., even during lunchtime.

Runoff Election Day voting will take place Tuesday, June 21, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the 11 pre-assigned precincts of Union County.

All voters must have an acceptable form of identification to cast ballots, such as a government-issued driver's license or identification card.

Voters may request mail-in absentee ballots through Friday, June 10.

Folks wanting to utilize the official drop box to turn in their absentee ballots can find it in the Jury Assembly Room during early voting hours. Completed absentee ballots may also be dropped off at the Registrar's Office inside the courthouse up to 7 p.m. on Election Day.

By utilizing the "My Voter Page" via <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov/>, voters may find their registration status, precinct information, downloadable sample ballots featuring all candidates up for election, mailed absentee ballot status and voter participation history.

April 25 was the voter registration deadline to be eligible to participate in the runoff election.

The 2022 General Election will be held on Nov. 8 and will feature the election of political party candidates who cleared the primary and runoff rounds of voting.

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UCSO Donations...from Page 1A

and someone else donated \$5,000 for our K-9 program for dog food and veterinary bills, which keeps the taxpayers from having to pay it.

“So, there’s different things that we can use this money for. We can buy vehicles, equipment such as radios, firearms, cameras and other technology, and we can even use it during investigations where we buy drugs off the dopers.”

Recently, a couple

of families donated several firearms that the Sheriff’s Office will soon be auctioning off to benefit the Seizure Fund.

“People will come in here and say, ‘I have a firearm that I no longer want,’ or, ‘My relative has passed away, and we don’t have any use for this firearm, and we would like to get rid of it – what can y’all do with it?’” Mason said.

“Whether it’s old, new, worth a whole lot or whatever, along with ammunition, we will

accept that. If it’s something that we can’t use in our official duties, then we send it to Jeff Dobson Auction where they have four gun auctions a year.”

The Sheriff’s Office has been working with Dobson for nine years now, and Mason is very pleased with the results. A Federal Firearms Licensed dealer, Dobson’s online auction can be found at www.jeffdobson.com.

“That’s also how our

seized guns get disposed of,” Mason said. “Once they’re awarded to us by the court, then they go to the auction house, where they go on the World Wide Web through Proxibid, or people can bid live on the floor on auction day.

“Even if it’s something that’s unusable, we’ll run it through the auction as a parts gun. If somebody wants to donate, that’s one of the several ways that they can.”

Added Mason, “When we dispose of guns through the auction house, then we can go and buy new firearms off the state contract, which is really good right now. It’s like the car contracts that they have; we can buy vehicles at so much less cost than the public can.”

Mason said that the Sheriff’s Office has not been making as many criminal seizures – vehicles, guns, properties, cash, etc. – as in years past, primarily due to the decreased frequency of larger drug busts, so donations are

appreciated.

“We’ve got drug users – you’re never going to get rid of the users – but we’ve gotten rid of a lot of pushers that we know of,” Mason said. “As always, if anyone sees activity going on in their neighborhood that doesn’t look right to them, like vehicles only staying a few minutes and then leaving, odd hours of the day or night, then we will be glad to look into activity like that.”

People wishing to donate firearms to benefit the Sheriff’s Office should first call 706-439-6066 to arrange for the donation with either Mason or Capt. Josh Berry, a 20-year veteran at the Sheriff’s Office who serves as the Evidence Custodian and helps the Narcotics Division.

And should someone bring in an item of significant value, the Sheriff’s Office can supply a letter proclaiming the estimated value for tax write-off purposes, Mason said.

“If you have guns or ammunition that you no

longer need or want, or maybe a relative has died, the Union County Sheriff’s Office will be more than happy to take it off your hands,” Mason said.

Apart from the law enforcement aspect of the Sheriff’s Office, “we also administer a community outreach program called ‘Give A Gift for Christmas,’” Mason said, in which deputies accept toys and monetary donations toward the purchase of toys for needy families during Christmas.

“We get donations during the course of the year for our Christmas program,” Mason said. “It’s different from the Blairsville PD Shop with a Cop in that we deal with families with younger children. And we helped more than 80 families through that program last Christmas.”

Give A Gift donations may also be made year-round by calling or stopping by the Sheriff’s Office at 378 Beasley Street in Blairsville.

Frizzell wins Power Play Scholarship

Emily Frizzell of Young Harris, Georgia has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship through a special program made possible by Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and other local power companies across TVA’s seven-state service area.

Emily, the daughter of Daniel and Alecia Frizzell, is among 35 recipients of this year’s Power Play scholarship, provided by the Power Play Scholarship Association to recognize outstanding academic performance and a commitment to community service among high school seniors whose parents are employed by local power companies. Her father, Daniel Frizzell, is the director of engineering for Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

After graduating from Union County High School, Emily will be pursuing a degree in rehabilitation sciences at Georgia Southern University. She has been active in the following clubs and organizations while at UCHS: TSA, Beta club, Interact club, Spanish club, Student Ambassadors of Georgia, NSHSS, and selected to be a member of the United Community Bank Junior Board.



UCHS Student Emily Frizzell with parents Daniel and Alecia.

“We are thrilled and very proud to have one of our employees’ graduating high school seniors to be selected as a recipient of this special scholarship. Emily has worked very hard to earn this award and we wish her the best as she continues her academic jour-

ney at GSU,” said BRMEMC General Manager Allan Glidewell.

Since they were established in 1995, 708 Power Play scholarships have been awarded through contributions and fund-raising efforts by the Power Play Scholarship Association and its members. In 2022, 111 applications were received from across the Tennessee Valley.

Remembering Reece: “I Give My Love to Earth”

The Byron Herbert Reece Society will host a celebration of the 105th birthday of the beloved poet and author on Sept. 10, 2022. Mark the date on your calendar and come join us as we lovingly remember Reece with readings of his poems at the historic and beautiful Reece Farm and Heritage Center, where he grew up lovingly working and dedicating himself to providing and caring for his loving family. We remember and celebrate him as the genius who was inspired by his love of the land and the desire to record his thoughts, which still inspire us. In this column, we are remembering Byron Herbert Reece, with deepest respect, admiration and affection! September 14, 1917 — June 3, 1958.

As I Lie Down

*I give my love to earth, where I
A longer, deeper sleep will take
Than woken from
when night is by,
As I lie down to wake.*

*To earth I give my love,
my love.*

*I give my love to earth to keep
Against the time,
with earth above
When I lie down to sleep.*

Justin Shook, our Keynote Speaker on May 14th at our Annual Meeting of the Reece Society, referenced the following poems regarding nature and the land. Reece loved and respected the land and nature. Reece’s poem “Boy and Deer” shows that mutual respect.

Boy and Deer

*Over the white,
the frozen ground
With cautious step
The deer came down.
The boy who had come to be
Alone with cloud
and rock and tree
Suddenly saw the deer
and hid
To see what that
proud creature did.
But the sharp snapping
of a limb
Made the proud deer
aware of him.
Kindred two,
each watcher stood
With perfect stillness
in the wood,
Each seeing each
with mild surprise,
And each with wonder
in his eyes.*

In much of his poetry, Reece drew analogies that he recognized in real life. Some say that he saw his ailing mother who was so dear to him as the helpless sparrow in his poem:



Byron Herbert Reece marker

Whose Eye is on the Sparrow

*I saw a fallen sparrow
Dead upon the grass
And mused to see how narrow
The wing that bore it was.
By what unlucky chance
The bird had come to settle
Lopsided near the fence
In sword grass and nettle
I had no means to know;
But this I minded well:
Whose eye was on
the sparrow
Shifted, and it fell.*

***Thank you for “Remembering Reece.” The purpose of the Byron Herbert

Reece Society is to preserve, perpetuate and promote the literary and cultural legacy of the nationally acclaimed Georgia mountain poet/novelist.

In addition to enhancing both knowledge of and appreciation for his writings, efforts are to honor the poet’s life with emphasis on his love of nature and farming and to introduce you to the literary genius native to Choestoe. Reece’s poetry and novels are now available at the Union County Historical Society in the Historical Courthouse on the Square.

Jerri Duncan Gill, Chairman



WHO: Legacy Motown Revue

WHAT: Paying homage to music that molded multiple generations that gave Detroit a claim to fame other than cars. THE LEGACY takes you back to the days of the Drifters, The Coasters, The Jacksons, Earth Wind and Fire, The Temptations and so many more legendary icons.

WHEN: September 23, 2022

WHERE: UC Fine Arts Center 926 Overlook, Blairsville, Ga. 30512

WHY: ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE UNION COUNTY SCHOOL BAND

Purchase tickets at LMR.ticketleap.com
only use computer or laptop no phone or tablet orders.
ONLY 750 tickets will be sold.

Scottish Fest...from Page 1A



It wouldn't be the Blairsville Scottish Festival without the Highland Games, with plenty of traditional Scottish sporting events prepared for the two-day festival.

Photo/North Georgia News

all the tried-and-true Scottish fare making a comeback, including the Highland Games, which will boast a record-breaking number of female athletes this year.

"We've got 13, and two of them are world champions," Fink said.

Also returning this year are 38 participating clans and over 30 vendors, along with animal activities like falconry demonstrations on the main field and border collies herding sheep on the lower ballfield. The traditional shaggy Highland cows are also likely to return.

All vendors will carry specially themed Celtic items, whether shoppers are looking for clothing, jewelry, or other crafts. Visitors can also purchase historic and traditional items such as kilts, sporrans and Scottish weaponry, and those interested in historical reenactments can visit Clan Nan Con and the blacksmith near the vending area.

Of course, another popular aspect of festivals – the food – will be available as well. Popular Scottish cuisine like shortbread and the orange soda Irn Bru are on the menu, but for better or worse, there will be no haggis.

The Scottish Festival has something for everyone and is family friendly with a variety of activities for bairns. Scottish for "children" – to take part in. The "Passport to the Clans" activity requires children to visit each of the 38 clan tents to learn one fact and receive a corresponding stamp to their passport. The wee ones earn a prize after filling their passport.

Fink wants folks to keep in mind that, while there will be shuttles running from the uppermost parking lot to the front gates, visiting the Scottish Festival will be a very walking-intensive experience, especially with how widely spread across

the park the activities are.

"Meeks Park has asphalt roads, but there's a lot of up-and-down, so wheelchairs can be pushed easily, but you've got to be strong to do it," Fink said. "If you want to go see the children's activities and then wander over to the athletics and then over to the bands, there's a fair amount of walking involved."

Now in its 17th year, the event originally began as an educational venture meant to give North Georgians an idea of how and why their ancestors came to the Appalachian territory. It's easy to see why – foggy mountain mornings and high altitudes were reminiscent to the climate of the Scottish Highlands.

"The whole purpose of the Scottish Festival was to reintroduce people to their heritage, and there (are) going to be people there (where) you can go to their booth if you want to (find out more about) your family name," Fink said.

Visiting the genealogists' tent may also be fruitful for folks who don't have Scottish ancestry, as they can look up the symbolic crests of other families whose names fall outside of the Highlands. Each "scroll" usually comes with several paragraphs of information on the formation of the family name and a general area where the lineage began.

There's a need for multi-talented volunteers who can work two or three hours during the festival, and interested parties can contact Wendy Beyer at vols.bsfg@gmail.com or visit blairsvillescottishfestival.com for more information.

Tickets are \$20 per person per day at the gate, cash only, and \$21 per person per day for online sales. Children 10 and under get in free, parking is also free, and guests can see a full list of vendors on the website.

Davenport Retires...from Page 1A



(L-R) Christal Chastain, John Hill and Tiffany Setzer in the special called Board of Education meeting May 31.

"We wish her the very best in retirement."

For her part, Davenport said she was incredibly thankful to have worked in the Union County School System for so long, noting the many friendships she has forged in her three decades as a local educator.

"This was a great system when I started work here," Davenport said. "It continues to be a great system. I think that the board is a great intersection between governance and leadership."

Davenport's retirement officially began at the end of business on Tuesday, May 31, the same day that Special Education Director Tiffany Setzer was tapped to replace

Dr. Davenport as assistant superintendent in a called board meeting.

"I've been in Special Education (here) my entire career – 26-plus years – and it's time for me to try something different," said Setzer, who acknowledged that she has some big shoes to fill.

The result of Setzer's transition created an opening for Director of Special Education, which UCHS Assistant Principal and 13-year Union County Schools Special Education veteran Christal Chastain will fill.

"(Setzer) has trained me for the last several years and will continue to mentor me," Chastain said. "I'm very

excited."

And as a result of Chastain's move, Woody Gap School Principal Carol Knight, who is considering retirement in another year, will take over Chastain's duties as Assistant Union County High School Principal.

"We're proud to have the capable staff in-house that can fill these vacancies and move up in the organization, instead of having to recruit outside of the district," Hill said. "That's a blessing."

Hill said an internal memo was sent out on May 31 requesting applicants for Knight's position at Woody Gap School, and he hopes to have a candidate by the June 21 School Board meeting.

Congratulations

to the Union County All-Star Panthers!

12U Softball Mountain Athletic Conference Tournament Champions!



Stella Collins, Addison Whitener, Lexi Davenport, Ava Stover, Livia Haney, Leighton Hunter, Abigail Meyers, Emry Sosensky, Mya Jordan, Marlee Cisneros and Alaine Gibson
Not pictured is Kinsley Kendrick.
Coaches: Clay Whitener and Steven Stover.

They will be play their first District Game Tuesday, June 7th.
We wish them great success in bringing home another win!

Farmers Market...from Page 1A

the market, Domanski is a newcomer, but her four years of experience are certainly nothing to dismiss.

"I came here and didn't have a job," Domanski said. "So, I just started to try to grow my own food, and then I shared (the greens) with my neighbor. And then later, when they had the Farmers Market, I decided, 'OK, I might try to take my greens for sale.'"

On her table, she had a variety of the tiny sprouts for buyers to choose from, offering "something easy to prepare" that could be put in everything from salads to sandwiches and even smoothies.

But there's more on offer at the Farmers Market than produce. Paul Reeves, professional craftsman and trickster, mentioned that on the days he feels like retiring, he thinks about how much he loves the social interaction of his craft.

"I like the people," he



Mickey Cummings, Patrick Fix and Commissioner Lamar Paris posed for a photo at the Farmers Market season opening day June 4.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

said, explaining how rewarding it can be to match someone with the perfect gift or, to some, offer a nugget of life advice.

In Reeves' stall, one can find bird houses – some with and some without faces – or, if they catch him at just the right time, tri-color keychains of black, blue and red braided right there at the market. Kind words and jokes are offered for free.

Collins, Domanski and Reeves are just a small fraction of what one can find at the Market, and many consumers, like Carla Curtis, are regulars. Although it's a 45-minute drive from where she lives in Tennessee, Curtis has made it a habit to go every Saturday for the past six years.

"It's always busy, it's always happening," Curtis said. "You know, I'm always kind

of shocked really to see how much Blairsville is expanding and people are discovering this place, but it makes me happy because all these local people get more business and support."

In particular, Bring Home the Bakin' has become a staple in Curtis' household for gluten-free and sugar-free goodies, but fresh produce and honey are also frequent items on Curtis' grocery list.

She observed that it was easy to get "so overwhelmed by all the beauty and all the craftsmanship and just how personable and friendly and down-to-earth everyone is."

"That's what I love about Blairsville," Curtis said. "It's so community oriented, and you really feel that here."

Curtis' views are shared by most other customers, as

well as Market Manager Fix, that the important thing is to "just support your local artists, whether they're farmers or they're craftsmen or they're beekeepers, just support the people – the real people."

There are in total 100 stalls across the A, B, and C buildings at the Farmers Market, with 86 of those being for permanent vendors who return weekly throughout the season, and the rest being reserved for nonprofits, walk-ups and other special-use cases.

Farmers Market hours have changed slightly in 2022. On Saturdays, the venue is open from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays. For more information or to sign up as a vendor, call 706-439-6043 or email farmersmarket@uniongov.com.