

North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Scottish Festival mounts triumphant comeback in '22

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Past and present looked toward the future last weekend at the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games, where clan representatives, vendors and historical reenactors educated and entertained thousands of festival attendees.

From far and wide, American Scots – and their fans – gathered in Meeks Park on June 11 and 12 to celebrate an ancient heritage that thrives to this day. Men, women and children alike sported kilts, and even those who didn't were more likely than not to be wearing a plaid shirt, hat or sash.

While the two-day event kicked off around 9 a.m. Saturday, the opening ceremony was underway by

noon. It was in part a very spiritual experience, not just for the initial invocation spoken by local Rev. Travis Adams, but also for the recognition of fallen Scots from all walks of life, with a tribute performance of "The Flower of Scotland."

On a more personal note, the role of Senior Drum Major was officially and ceremoniously recognized. While Ben Linton has had the title since 2020, as bestowed upon him by former Senior Drum Major Don Bogue, the Final Roll Call served as a moving tribute to Bogue, who passed away the same year he handed his title down to Linton.

It's worth mentioning that Bogue served as the Senior Drum Major for every other Blairsville Scottish Festival, and with his recognition after the passing of the torch, there was applause from the crowd,

a rumbling drum roll, and a single plaintive song on the bagpipes.

And with that, the procession cleared out to the tune of "Scotland the Brave," and the Festival & Games began.

Clans, or historical Scottish families, set up tents along the far end of the trail alongside Butternut Creek, and although the "Passport to the Clans" was primarily intended for children, there were plenty of adults taking part in the activity if only to learn more about each of the families, and for some, discover a part of their own history.

In particular, the folks at the Scottish Tartan Museum's tent, who traveled from Franklin, North Carolina, were happy to help with tracking down family colors, emblems

See *Scottish Festival*, Page 6A



Clann Nan Con reenactors displayed traditional Scottish garb and weaponry to the delight of thousands at the Blairsville Scottish Festival over the weekend. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Highland Games highlight elite Scottish physicality

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The return of the Blairsville Scottish Festival June 11-12 brought competitors from the North American Scottish Games Association to Meeks Park to compete in a handful of traditional Scottish athletic events known as the Highland Games.

Four divisions separated the athletes between Amateur A, Amateur B, Master (ages 40-plus) and women. Events included the weight throw for distance, at 28 pounds and 56 pounds; the caber toss; the hammer throw; the open stone put; and the sheaf toss.

Athletes competing in the Amateur A division were Kyle Davise and Donald Laney. The Amateur B division consisted of Brian Butcher, Brian Cavender, Lucien Conti, Chris Cook, Jubal Freeman, David Hall, Wesley Mayeux, Corbin McCray, Jon Silver, Trent Swats, Enrico Villamaino and John Whites.

Taking part in the Master's Division were Bill



A Highland Games competitor participating in the weight throw competition on Saturday, June 11.

Photo by Todd Forrest

Baxter, Joe DeBrohun, David Blackburn, Michael Cotney, Ken Korcak, Randy McClure, Jack McCord, Dustin Sedlak, Scott Shaw and Scott Wilkins.

The women's games included Jessica Chaney, Lacey Crowe, Christine

Giblin, Aslynn Halvorson, Lexi Hamous-Miller, Christy Mull and Adriane Wilson, a five-time world champion and former two-time world record holder in the 28-pound weight for distance and height event.

See *Highland Games*, Page 2A

Eleventh Annual Blairsville Pro Rodeo is this weekend



The Union County Sassafras Saddle Precision Drill Team will be performing at the Blairsville Pro Rodeo this weekend.

News Special
North Georgia News

Get ready, get set, the Blairsville Pro Rodeo is here. Mountain Valley Motors – Ram Truck, the main sponsor of the event, will be bringing

the International Professional Rodeo Association and Professional Cowboy Association rodeo to Blairsville June 17 and 18.

Again, during this year's event, you will be able to enter a drawing for the horseshoe

toss for a chance to win a brand-new Ram truck. If you get a ringer, you win!

The event will be presented by the Union County Saddle Club and Circle N Rodeo Production. It will be held this weekend. See *Blairsville Pro Rodeo*, Page 6A

Suspect arrested in 2014 CVS armed robbery case

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A Canton man has been arrested in connection with previously unsolved armed robberies at two CVS Pharmacy locations, one in Dawsonville in 2015 and the other in Blairsville in 2014, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Marcus Paul Milford, 52, was arrested by the Cherokee County, Georgia, Sheriff's Office June 7 on one count of armed robbery, a charge that was handed up by a Dawson County Grand Jury for his arrest in a bench warrant for, resulting in a bench warrant for his arrest being issued in May, according to GBI.

"During the 2015 armed robbery, prescription pills were stolen," the GBI said. "During this extensive investigation, the GBI was able to identify Milford and secure his indictment.

"Milford was also identified by the GBI as the person responsible for



A 2014 GBI sketch of the Blairsville CVS armed robbery suspect.

a 2014 Blairsville, Georgia CVS Pharmacy armed robbery. The GBI acquired an additional warrant for Milford for the Blairsville armed robbery. A substantial amount of prescription pills was taken during the Blairsville robbery."

As previously reported by the North Georgia News, the robbery at the CVS Pharmacy at 208 Hwy 515 occurred around 12:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 24, 2014, and



Marcus Paul Milford

the suspect, unidentified at the time, escaped on foot, though authorities believed he had a vehicle parked nearby.

GBI Region 8 Special Agent in Charge Kim Williams said in 2014 that the suspect had made off with the controlled substance Dilaudid, a pain reliever.

The GBI, Blairsville Police Department and Dawson County Sheriff's Office

See *Robbery Suspect*, Page 2A

Big rig driver runs off Georgia-348 to stop truck

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The driver of a tractor trailer hauling lumber used the shoulder of Georgia 348 to slow his vehicle on June 7, ultimately coming to a stop after crashing into several trees about two miles south of Ford Mountain Road, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Georgia 348, aka Richard Russell Scenic Highway, features a truck advisory for steep grades, and drivers of large trucks are cautioned via road signs to use an alternate route.

Per GSP, the truck was traveling north around 1 p.m. when, according to statements by the driver, he lost brake pressure. Because his brakes were not slowing him enough, "he decided to drive off the roadway to stop the vehicle before it gained too much speed."

The truck traveled off the right side of the road and struck several trees on its side, after which the truck "continued north off the right side of the road down an embankment"



Miraculously, none of the three passengers – including two children – were seriously injured in this semitrailer accident last week.

Photo/Submitted

before coming to a stop upon colliding with more trees, per GSP. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured in the accident, including the 28-year-old driver

See *Big Rig Wreck*, Page 2A



Vol. 113 No. 25

Arrests - 5B Legals - 4D
Church - 3C Obituaries - 5C
Classifieds - 3D Sports - 2B
Opinion - 4A

UCRD District Tournament
10U Softball @ White Co.

June 14-15
Time-TBD



See page 3A

Runoff
Early Voting
Ends Friday



Flag Day
at
Meeks Park

See page 6B



You work hard for your money.
Shouldn't it be working hard for you?

BLAIR BURCH | LPL FINANCIAL ADVISOR
BLAIRSVILLE | 177 Highway 515 East | 706-745-0435



Securities and advisory services offered through LPL Financial, a registered investment advisor and broker-dealer (member FINRA/SIPC). Investment and insurance products are not FDIC insured, are not bank guaranteed, and may lose value.

Highland Games...from Page 1A

As an NCAA Division II track and field athlete at Ashland University in Ohio, Wilson is a 13-time All-American in the discus, hammer, shot put and the 20-pound weight throw. She also earned seven NCAA Div II National titles and six Runner Up finishes.

She is a former NCAA Division II record holder in the discus and still owns the national indoor and outdoor shot put NCAA Div II records.

Later, Wilson competed in three U.S. Olympic Trials (2004, 2008 and 2012) in the shot put, where she became the 13th American woman to throw over 60 feet in the event.

The 28 and 56-pound weight-for-distance events involve athletes throwing either a block or spherical-shaped weight with chain links and a handle. The weight is thrown with one hand from an area of 4.5 feet by 9 feet.

In the weight-for-height competition, the weight is tossed over a cross bar with one hand. Three attempts are allowed at each height. If the thrower misses all three tries at one height, they are out of the competition.

The caber is a tree that has been cut and trimmed down so that one end is slightly wider than the other, varying in length from 16-22 feet and between 100 and 180 pounds.

The thrower hoists the caber up and cups the small end in his or her hands before taking a short run with the caber, stopping, then pulling the caber up so that the large end hits the ground and the small end flips over and faces away from the thrower.

The caber is scored for accuracy as though the thrower is facing the 12 o'clock position on a clock. A judge determines how close to the 12:00 position the small end lands, with 12:00 considered a perfect toss.

The hammer can be 16 or 22 pounds and has a lead or steel head with a bamboo or rattan handle. The athlete stands with his back to the throwing area, winding the hammer around the head and releasing over the shoulder.

The open stone event is similar to the shot put, except a stone is used that weighs between 16 and 22 pounds.

In the sheaf toss, the sheaf is a 16 or 20-pound burlap or plastic bag stuffed with chopped rope, straw or mulch. The sheaf is tossed over a crossbar using a pitchfork with three attempts allowed at each height. If the thrower misses all three tries at one height, they are out of the competition.

The first historical mention of the Highland Games came during the 11th century A.D. under the reign of King Malcolm III. The modern games are considered a 19th century invention, originating from a period following the Jacobite rebellions.

All told, the Scottish Festival & Highland Games was a highly attended major success over the weekend.



Adriane Wilson during the caber toss event of the women's games over the weekend. Wilson is a five-time world champ and previously held two world records in the Highland Games.

Photo by Todd Forrest



The sheaf toss is a popular Highland Games event, with both men and women competing over the two-day event at Meeks Park.

Photo by Todd Forrest

Robbery Suspect...from Page 1A

conducted the investigations into the armed robberies, according to GBI.

After nearly eight years of searching for the suspect in the local robbery, Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter

said he was thankful to the GBI for helping to solve the case, which SAC Williams attributed to unspecified technological advancements.

Milford is incarcerated in the Dawson County Detention

Center pending transfer to Union County to be booked on the warrant here, per GBI.

He is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Big Rig Wreck...from Page 1A

A witness who was traveling behind the truck reported seeing smoke coming from the rear of the runaway vehicle and noted that they were traveling between 15 and 20 mph when the truck left

the roadway. That area of 348 features a 35-mph speed limit.

Lumber on the truck did come loose and caused a mess at the scene that required cleaning up, according to authorities.

GSP reported that the

children were not wearing safety restraints at the time of the accident, and the driver, Aquil Moore out of Clinton, North Carolina, has been charged with safety restraint violations for the children.

The Tunnel Rats in concert at the Historic Courthouse on the Square Friday, June 17th



The Tunnel Rats

The Tunnel Rats Band, a band made up mostly of Vietnam Veterans, will be singing this Friday night at the Old Courthouse. The Tunnel Rats are a unique collaboration of individuals from different decades, who have come together with a common love of music which depicts the spectrum of experiences and emotions faced by our military men and women of all ages. The historic courthouse is located on the Blairsville town square and the concert will begin at 7 PM. The doors will open at 6 PM. This is a free concert to the public, but donations are greatly appreciated. We hope to see you there Friday night!

Blairsville Pro Rodeo...from Page 1A



Steer wrestling is just one of many fan-favorite activities that will be on display at the traditional American pastime – the Blairsville Pro Rodeo – June 17 and 18 at the Union County Horse Arena.

Friday and Saturday, June 17th and 18th, under the beautiful, covered Union County arena.

Gates will open each night at 6 p.m. and the action will start at 8 p.m. with a presentation by the Union County Sash 'n Saddle Precision Drill Team. They will also perform an additional routine at intermission.

Additionally, the opening ceremony will be dedicated to the Military, Law Enforcement, Fire Rescue, and First Responders.

There will be plenty of action going on to include Bareback Bronc Riding, Saddleback Bronc Riding, Steer Wrestling, Team Roping, Tie-Down Roping, Ladies Break-away Roping, Cowgirl Barrel Racing, and of course, everyone's favorite, Bull Riding. Top quality livestock supplied by Hedrick Rodeo

Company will be used to assure some thrills and spills!

There will also be plenty of things to do for our little Cowboys and Cowgirls, like the calf scramble, bounce houses, bungee jump, and mechanical bull and pony rides. We will also have plenty of great food and homemade ice cream, so help spread the word and come out and enjoy two great nights of excitement.

Everyone will have a great seat on the stadium style bleachers. Advance tickets are on sale now until Friday at 5 p.m. You can save money by purchasing advanced tickets online or at our nine ticket locations. Advanced ticket prices are \$12 for adults, \$7 for children 6-12, and children under 5 are free. Gate prices are Adults - \$15, Children 6-12 - \$10, and children under

5 enter free. You can purchase your tickets online at www.BlairsvilleProRodeo.com.

Advanced ticket sales locations are Mountain Valley Motors in Blue Ridge, United Community Bank branches in Blue Ridge, Blairsville, and Hiawassee, American Cowboy Store, General Supply, and Nelson Tractor Company. Big thank you to the Blairsville Union County Chamber of Commerce for all your marketing assistance.

Come out and enjoy two great nights of excitement. The arena and show grounds are located on the corner of Hwy. 515 and 325 in Blairsville.

For complete information and photos of last year's rodeo action, visit the official website at www.BlairsvilleProRodeo.com or on Facebook. See you there!

Scottish Festival...from Page 1A



Nearly half a dozen Scottish bands, including the local Appalachian St. Andrew's Pipes & Drums, participated in the Massed Bands portion of the Scottish Festival opening, led by Senior Drum Major Ben Linton. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

and history for free. The Tartan Museum kept hundreds of years of history in the swatches of tartans that changed with the passing of time, reminding one perhaps of the paint in a hardware catalogue with their variations.

The 38 registered clans also contained septes displayed in lists on boards outside of the tents for easy finding. Historically, a sept was a smaller family that had pledged fealty to a clan's chief in a system reminiscent of feudalism, but with generations of immigration and change, septes have come to include alternate spellings of the same original "root" name.

The menagerie of Scottish animals was an impressive sight, as spread out as they may have been around the park. Hawks and even an owl were placed with their handlers alongside the clan tents in the main field, although the heat made it impossible for them to fly for proper demonstration Saturday.

Instead, falconers allowed their raptors to perch on their gloved arms while they explained the history of falconry and how the birds of prey – hawks, falcons and owls specifically – were used as hunting companions for the Celts of old.

Perhaps the most popular choice, however, was the border collie herding demonstration, courtesy of Red Creek Farms owner Carol Anne Bailey and her father, Hubert Bailey. Carol Anne Bailey, who has been training dogs ever since she was about 7 or 8 years old, used a whistle to direct commands at the canines.

"I got (into dog training) when he got in it," Carol Anne said. "I've always really liked animals. I like training animals, seeing what they can do, and it's really interesting working with the border collies with their natural instinct and seeing what they already know on their own."

The well-trained animals were admittedly humorous to many viewers in the stands for their sudden crouching and careful crawling in the pursuit of sheep and ducks, but there was no doubt that they were exceptionally intelligent with their superb coordination and impressively lightning-fast reflexes.

Miniature stuffed border collies were just some of the souvenirs being offered down toward the gazebos, where the vendors were set up. Guests could find everything from intricately knotted, Celtic-themed jewelry to their very own kilts and Scottish foods.

Helen Cathey, business owner of Near & Far Scottish, sold authentic tartan-patterned

scarves and sashes among other Gaelic-themed gifts and imported foods. She found herself in her trade upon discovering more about her own heritage, and after attending several Scottish Festivals & Highland Games, she decided 12 years ago that she wanted to become a vendor.

"I knew I had Scottish heritage, and I started going to Scottish festivals and caught the Scottish bug. I wanted to learn more about my heritage, and I had such a wonderful time and I felt automatically drawn to the music and the tartan and the whole experience," said Cathey, who bought the business from a friend and expanded it to make it her own.

"It's just been a really wonderful experience. I'm very passionate about it, and you have to love it to be able to do it. There's a lot of hard work and it's a lot of travel, but you really do meet some wonderful people and make friends," Cathey added, echoing the sentiments of many like-minded merchants, guests, musicians and other attendees.

But none of that would have been possible this year without Roofing Resources of Georgia, the Chieftain Sponsor of the festival, with RRG owner and founder Cary Rich, public relations expert Cimarron Mason and others from the company handing out free balloons and wristbands to kids.

RRG Roofing & Gutters' involvement with the festival was, in large part, serendipitous. Jerry Cannon, who holds a seat on the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games Board, happened to need a new roof after seven years of progressively worsening leaks.

"I went through several interviews with different roofing companies, and nothing seemed to pan out. I got a hold of RRG, and the salesman came out and he wasn't overbearing, he wasn't pushy," Cannon explained.

"They pulled up and the skepticism melted within 30 minutes, because these folks, every one of them knew their job. They were all professional, they were Johnny-on-the-Spot, and they moved like an army. And by the end of the day, I was watching out of joy instead of anxiety."

Because of the friendly rapport, Cannon considers himself friends with the RRG family, and during a conversation happened to mention that the upcoming Scottish Festival was hurting for funds. After undergoing a three-year hiatus, it was unclear whether the event could continue, and sponsors were desperately needed.

"He communicated that to me," noted Mason, "and I communicated that to Cary, and when Cary does something, he does it big."

"When they said they would sponsor us and presented us with a check, it pushed us over from 'Can we do this?' to 'Yes, we can,'" Cannon said. "So that was, in my mind, the defining difference between whether or not these games were going to happen this year."

Mason said committee members stopped Rich to thank him throughout the festival. Rich had to leave the Highland-themed fun for work, but both he and Mason wanted to make it clear that RRG would likely be returning to sponsor next year's games.

Of course, festival organizers were also thankful for the dozens of other community sponsors, whose support levels ranged from "Clansman Sponsor" to "Individual & Family Sponsors," and appreciation was shared for the many volunteers and organizations that aided in the effort.

Overall, the 2022 Blairsville Scottish Festival and the Highland Games – the latter covered in a separate article in this week's North Georgia News – were a tremendous success. Despite the park flooding in 2019, the onset of COVID and the death of Senior Drum Major Don Bogue in 2020, and the extended cancellation in 2021, the historical event came back strong this year.

Movement was fairly streamlined, and the crowd was as considerate of space as it could be. An exhausted family of five, headed by Jim and Amber Burrell, said that they enjoyed their time, at any rate.

Jim learned more about his Scottish ancestry, Amber enjoyed the Celtic music and dancing, including folk performers like Jacobites by Name and Scottish harpist Tracie Brown. Their three young boys – Joshua, Justin and James – also enjoyed the music but were particularly fond of the animals, blacksmith demonstrations, axe throwing and children's games. In fact, two of the brothers won Third Place at rock and mini caber tossing, and sandbag shoveling.

"You definitely need to come up here," said Jim, addressing anyone who may be on the fence about visiting the Highlands without a passport.

"Learn your Scottish roots," added oldest son James, but then, it's as most other festivalgoers said, you don't have to be Scottish to enjoy the Scottish festival. Much like being Irish on Saint Patrick's Day, you can enjoy the tartan no matter who you are.



The Roofing Resources of Georgia family had a blast assisting patrons at the 17th Annual Blairsville Scottish Festival. RRG Roofing & Gutters was the "Chieftain Sponsor," that is, the largest donor, for the weekend festivities. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

DAV Van transport to VAMC Atlanta

The DAV Van, sponsored by DAV Chapter 28, Blue Ridge, started one day a week transportation to the VAMC Atlanta every Tuesday. If you need a ride call John at 706-851-5204 to make a reservation. The van meets each Tuesday at the Veterans Conference Center in Blue Ridge.