

Happy Independence Day

from the staff of the North Georgia News

"Land of Lakes, Mountains, Scenic Beauty and Friendly People"

75¢

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Union County to celebrate Independence Day with fireworks, boat parade

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville and Suches are offering a variety of choices this week for residents wishing to celebrate America's birthday Union County-style.

While traditional fireworks displays are the norm across the country, Union County will feature additional options to cater to the overflow of patriotism that takes the community by storm each and every Independence Day.

Two separate firework shows will be available locally on the evening of Thursday, July 4, as both Blairsville and Suches will hold their annual pyrotechnic extravaganzas when the sun sets behind the Blue Ridge Mountains on Thursday night.

One can never go wrong with either show, but there are

a few contrasts between the events hosted by the neighboring communities.

MEEKS PARK FIREWORKS

Held at Meeks Park every year, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce's massive fireworks display is funded in part by a community raffle, which in turn gives people the opportunity to win a \$1,000-plus tailgate package while supporting the show.

This tailgate package features an ultimate summer setup, complete with a Kenmore gas grill, a Lifetime kayak and paddle, two folding chairs, a Fitbit wristwatch, a Yeti Tundra 35 cooler, a Yeti tumbler cup, a 10x10 gazebo tent and a golf umbrella.

Tickets can be purchased for \$10 apiece at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, United Community

Bank and at other participating sponsors. Tickets will also be available from the Chamber of Commerce on Thursday evening prior to the fireworks display at Meeks Park.

The raffle drawing will be held on Thursday before the sun goes down, and entrants don't need to be present to win. All proceeds go to help fund the fireworks display.

Preferred parking has already sold out, but parking should be available in and around Meeks Park, as well as across Georgia 515 at the North Georgia Technical College campus.

Food vendors will be available at North Georgia Tech beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Parking is expected to disappear quickly, so in order to find a spot, it is recommended to arrive before 7 p.m.

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The Lake Nottely Boat Parade and Contest will be held on July 6 this year, and it's always a fun, family-friendly addition to area Fourth of July festivities.

John Hancock makes an appearance at Farmers Market Heritage Day

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

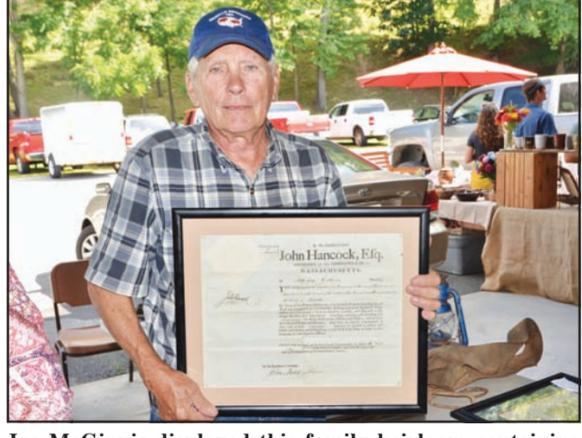
Saturday, June 29, marked the annual Heritage Day at the Union County Farmers Market.

A major part of Heritage Day is the bringing out of antique items by the community for the Historical Society to ponder.

"People have brought in plenty of things to display," said Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "If they have something that they don't know about, like there was an old inner tube patcher from T-model days and I didn't know what it was, but finally someone figured it out."

Local heritage is important to the Farmers Market, as the area has deep agricultural roots.

"Over the years, the older I get, the more I find out that younger people don't understand what our forefathers had to go through for us to have



Joe McGinnis displayed this family heirloom containing Founding Father John Hancock's actual signature during Heritage Day 2019. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

the standard of living that we have today," said Cummings. "When we started the Farmers Market, we made a decision at that time that everything that went on up here had to reflect Union County history.

"So, the music that you

hear is old-time music, the crops are ones that people have grown for years and years. We just wanted people to have a better understanding of agriculture and where we come from."

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Local woman finishes World War II era quilt mother began in 1944

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Kathleen Wiley was just a child when her mother, Edna Cross, started a patriotic quilt for her husband William in 1944.

At the time, William was serving his country in the U.S. Army and had been deployed to Germany, where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

When he returned home to Fallsburg, New York, in 1946, his wife Edna neatly folded the unfinished red, white and blue quilt and put it in a box, where it lay forgotten for 75 years.

"This year, I found the box and opened it," said Wiley. "I unfolded the material to discover the cloth stars sewn on the quilt top. Everything was there, even the cloth batting rolled up in tissue paper to keep the batting from matting together. Cotton seeds still clung in places to the cotton.

"I remember, as a child,



Peggy Hergert and Kathleen Wiley standing in front of the quilt they finished together - a quilt that was started 75 years earlier by Wiley's mother. Photo by Mark Smith

when my mother was sewing the cloth and cutting out the stars. She had a cardboard pattern and she cut out all of the stars. I remember her doing that as a child, because we would sit in the evenings.

"Of course, there was no television then, so we

would listen to the radio and my mother would sew. And my father, in 1944, was in Germany in World War II. When he came back in 1946, she put the quilt away, and she never took it out of the box again."

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Sheriff's Office asking for public's assistance in finding wanted man

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's help in locating Joshua Lee Bryant, a fugitive from justice.

Authorities were still searching for Bryant as of press time Monday, and folks can check in with the "Union County - Georgia Sheriff's Office" Facebook page for the latest information on the search.

He is not thought to be armed but is considered dangerous, according to the Sheriff's Office, and anyone with information regarding his whereabouts has been asked to call 911 immediately.

Bryant is a 32-year-old white male standing 5 feet, 7 inches tall. He weighs about 155 pounds, and he has brown hair, brown eyes, and a barbed wire tattoo on one of his arms.

His last known address was in the Copperhead Road area

of Union County.

On Friday, June 28, Bryant bush bonded during a police chase after wrecking an allegedly stolen truck in a collar field in the north end of the county off Tate Road around 9:45 that morning.

He fled the scene on foot and was able to evade a roughly five-hour manhunt by multiple responding law enforcement agencies, including the Union County Sheriff's Office, Fannin County Sheriff's Office, Cherokee County Sheriff's Office of North Carolina, and officers with the Georgia State Patrol and Department of Natural Resources.

The next day, a Union County deputy spotted Bryant several miles from the scene of his Tate Road crash, and as of Saturday, he was believed to be in the vicinity of West Culberson and Voyles Town roads.

It all started early Friday morning, when the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office took Bryant into custody for allegedly attempting to shoplift at the Ellijay Walmart,



Joshua Lee Bryant

UCSO Capt. Craig Davenport said.

Bryant managed to escape custody in Gilmer County, after which he allegedly stole a truck and fled the area, Davenport said.

Patrol deputies with the Fannin County Sheriff's Office were told to be on the lookout for the stolen truck, and they

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Former DFCS employee arrested for alleged illegal baby trade attempt

By Shawn Jarrard
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BLUE RIDGE - A former employee of the Union County Division of Family and Children Services and her husband were arrested last week for allegedly trying to trade a car for a baby.

"On Wednesday, June 26, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation was requested by the Fannin County Sheriff's Office to assist in an investigation regarding a couple persuading a mother to sign over her rights to her child for the consideration of a vehicle," the GBI said Friday.

The couple was identified as Rebecca McClain, 36, and William Ryan McClain, 44, both of Blue Ridge.

"As the investigation unfolded, it became clear that the 10-month-old child had been in the care of the McClains for several weeks and they were interested in



Rebecca McClain



William Ryan McClain

adopting the child," the GBI said. "Rebecca McClain is a former employee of the Union County Division of Family and Children Services.

"It appears McClain came to know about the child through her position at DFCS. DFCS has been assisting the GBI in this investigation."

Authorities executed a search warrant at the McClain residence off Laurel Crossing Road in Blue Ridge on Thursday, June 27, after which the McClains were arrested

"for directly or indirectly holding out an inducement to a biological parent to part with his or her child."

"The child was found in good condition and was taken into custody by DFCS and has been placed in foster care at this time," the GBI said. "This investigation is ongoing and upon completion will be provided to the Appalachian Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution."

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