

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Nottely Board Parade continues Independence Day tradition

**By Todd Forrest**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Nottely Marina Boat Parade has provided Union County a unique twist on July Fourth celebrations since 1996, and last weekend's 25th installment proved no different.

With the novel coronavirus presenting a wealth of uncertainty surrounding this year's parade, event planners got a late start and advertised solely through social media and word-of-mouth.

Fortunately, with two-and-a-half decades of Independence Day tradition in their wake, Nottely Marina was able to rely on its flawless reputation of outstanding family fun.

"We couldn't cancel this," said Nottely Marina co-owner Moriah Doucette. "So around Memorial Day, we decided we would give it a try, and we are thrilled with

the way everything turned out this year.

"I'm very proud of everyone that came out. Everybody was on their own boat and they all did fairly well with (social distancing). Everyone on the dock stayed with their families, and everyone on land did really well sticking with their own group."

Doucette's biggest concern leading up to the event was that virus fears would result in guests staying home and parade participants keeping their boats docked. And while this year's turnout was slightly less than previous years, almost 200 boats still took part in the annual July 4 celebration.

As cars lined the Murphy Highway to catch a glimpse, the parade got underway at high noon with an eclectic blend of patriotism, American history, humor, and good old-fashioned elbow grease on display in the cove between

Nottely Marina and US 129.

Each boat made multiple single file passes near the marina in attempts at impressing the judges, who also had a-pose evaluations and award presentations.

When the waves settled, the Graceland-inspired "NottelyLand" boat theme took home First Prize, thanks to its Elvis impersonators and their performance of "The King's" 1957 hit "Jailhouse Rock."

In Second Place was the "Nottely Gras" boat, which brought a New Orleans Mardi Gras theme to Northeast Georgia.

The "Blues Brothers" came in third thanks to a flawless nautical depiction of John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd's iconic big-screen characters.

Most Patriotic went to the "Rock the Vote" craft, while "Women for Trump" was



The Graceland-inspired "NottelyLand" boat theme took home First Prize Saturday, thanks to its Elvis impersonators and their performance of "The King's" 1957 hit "Jailhouse Rock." Photo by Todd Forrest

## Second Annual Rubber Duck Derby expected to top last year



Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter and Assistant Chief Shawn Dyer are excited to announce the Second Annual Rubber Duck Derby Fundraiser. Photo by Mark Smith

**By Mark Smith**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Ticket sales for the Blairsville Police Department's Second Annual Rubber Duck Derby will begin the first full week in July this year.

For folks who are new to Blairsville and don't know about the Duck Derby, it's a fundraising event put on by the Blairsville Police to fund the longstanding "Shop with a Cop Program" for kids at Christmastime.

Shop with a Cop is a big deal in Blairsville and has received much support from the community over the years, with community members buying out tickets for the first Duck Derby last year. And the derby was an unqualified success and fun time for everyone involved.

The derby was as follows: hundreds of small

plastic ducks are numbered with the corresponding names of ticket buyers. Then, on Saturday, Sept. 5, at 11 am at the Farmers Market, the whole kit and caboodle will be dropped into Butternut Creek, and the race will be on.

Last year, the Top Three winners of \$500, \$250 and \$100 donated their winnings back to the cause.

"We started 20 years ago taking just a few kids," Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter said of Shop with a Cop. "I think the first year we took nine or 10, and things have certainly gotten bigger and the need has gotten bigger."

"Now, we're averaging 100 to 105 kids a year that we're taking. (The Duck Derby) is our primary fundraiser."

Added Baxter, "We live in a great place. I've said that many times. We live in a very

giving community and a very supportive community. And people know that 100 percent of the proceeds that we take in goes to Shop with a Cop. It's audited every year with the city's audit."

The chief said his officers enjoy interacting with the community while working hard to sell the tickets for the derby.

"That's important for our office," he said, adding that there is some pretty healthy competition within BPD to see who sells the most tickets. "But the biggest thing is for these kids to have a great Christmas, and I'm afraid with the economy like it is and lots of folks being out of work, we're probably going to see a bigger need this year than we normally see."

"Unfortunately, every year, we have to turn some away because we just don't have the

## Bruce earns Eagle Scout, discusses merits of Boy Scouts of America

**By Mark Smith**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The attainment of Eagle Scout rank is a big deal among the Boy Scouts of America, and on Saturday, June 27, 16-year-old Union County High School student Michael Bruce of Blairsville BSA Troop 101 earned the rank for himself.

For his project, Bruce built a stage and platform for outdoor events, including a regular Sunrise Service, at First United Methodist Church of Union County.

"Getting an Eagle Scout," Bruce said, "not only is it the biggest accomplishment you can get in your Scouting journey, it puts you so much further ahead in life. It's not just in this little bubble community that we live in now."



Michael Bruce, right, earned his Eagle Scout rank building this stage at First United Methodist Church. He is pictured here with his father Jeremy Bruce. Photo by Mark Smith

## TCSO offers reward in disturbing graffiti incident advising 'Kill All Cops'

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
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HIAWASSEE – Towns County Sheriff's Office investigators are looking into a string of roadside graffiti incidents that occurred over the weekend along a stretch of US 76 between Sunnyside Road and Papa's Pizza To Go.

Graffiti on the side of a building, a wall, some roadside signs and utility poles were various messages in black spray paint seeming to advocate extremist views such as "Kill All Cops," "Death 2 Amerikkka" and "ACAB," which stands for "All Cops Are Bastards."

Investigators believe the messages were scrawled sometime overnight between July 4 and July 5. The perpetrator's efforts were short-

lived, however, as residents Brett Nash, Donald Palmer and Brian Caldwell volunteered to clean the graffiti Sunday afternoon, per Facebook.

There were no substantive leads in the case by Spillane, though investigators were hard at work reviewing additional evidence Monday.

The Sheriff's Office has issued a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the



Someone spray-painted "Kill All Cops" and similar messages on surfaces along US 76 between Sunnyside Road and Papa's Pizza To Go over the weekend. Photo/Submitted

## Americans celebrate 244th birthday of USA at Meeks Park

**By Jarrett Whitener**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The annual patriotic fireworks display hosted by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce brought an untold number of patriotic Americans to the area in and around Meeks Park on Saturday, July 4.

Hours in advance of the fireworks, people lined Georgia 515, parked across the way at North Georgia Technical College, and gathered in Meeks Park itself to watch the show, all the while socially distancing in family units in observance of



Fireworks at Meeks Park were as popular as ever, even with COVID-19 still making the rounds. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## FBI info leads to Blairsville man's arrest on child molestation charges

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
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The Union County Sheriff's Office arrested a Blairsville man last week after the FBI provided information indicating he was involved with child pornography, UCSO Sgt. Marc Pilote said.

Patrick Sean Spillane, 48, of Blairsville, was taken into custody on July 1 and charged with five counts of child molestation, three counts of sexual battery, three counts of sexual exploitation of children (pornography) and one count

unlawful eavesdropping or surveillance.

Pilote said the Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division received the information on June 30, and he executed a search warrant for Spillane's residence on Crestwood View Wednesday, July 1.

After the initial investigation, it was determined that Spillane had been sexually involved with a child under the age of 16, and Pilote said he also discovered Spillane to be in possession of child pornography.



Patrick Sean Spillane Spillane was being held in the Union County Jail without bond at press time. He See Arrest, Page 2A

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