

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Mason, Payne and Cook seeking re-election to EMC Board of Directors

By Shawn Jarrard
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YOUNG HARRIS – Gene Mason, Cory Payne and Ray Cook have once again been nominated to serve as candidates for the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors.

The current terms of all three men will expire in September, and the EMC's Nominating Committee met on June 27 to finalize the list of applicants running for one of the open director seats, with the incumbents being the only people to submit nomination paperwork this year.

Mason of Union County, Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, and Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina, were

all elected to their first board terms in 2016, and since they were nominated in 2019 without opposition, they are set to be re-elected in this year's annual meeting.

Challengers may still arise, however, as the petition process for candidate nomination will run through July 15. Petitions are available at the EMC office.

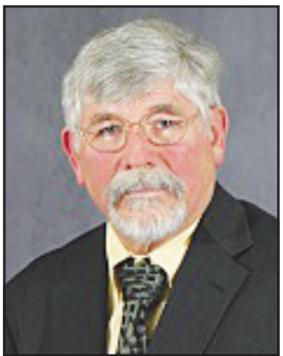
Members seeking nomination by petition must receive signatures from 0.25% of the membership as determined by EMC bylaws, which comes out to 117 or more signatures from among the EMC's 46,676 members.

Per petition process guidelines, "The nominees for director from each county must be a resident of the county; must

be a member of the cooperative for one year; must be a member in good standing; must not be employed by the cooperative; must be at least 18 years old; and must not be a close relative of another incumbent director or a cooperative employee."

The membership voted in 2018 to amend the bylaws to define "member in good standing" as any member who has not lost his or her right to receive electric service from the cooperative.

Should Mason, Payne and Cook win re-election in September, they will begin their second full terms as EMC directors, though Cook served previously as an appointed director for one year following Kenneth Lance's departure from



Gene Mason



Cory Payne



Ray Cook

the board in 2015.

Each director is limited to serving three terms at three years per term as decided by the membership in a 2015 bylaw amendment.

Board leadership positions are decided each year immediately following the annual meeting, and currently, Cook serves as president of the board while Payne serves as treasurer.

Potentially new to the 2019 election, "ranked-choice voting," though it will only apply to board seats with more than two

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Suches says 'Happy Birthday, America!' with fireworks, fellowship

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES – Word is starting to get out regarding one of North Georgia's most unique experiences: the annual July Fourth Suches Fireworks.

The Suches fireworks display remains one of a kind, and this year's event featured one of the largest crowds in recent memory. Approximately one hour before sunset, no parking spots remained at the school, community center, post office or General Store.

As the sun began to sink in the western sky, lawn chairs filled all the elevated viewing areas around the school and community center.

On the field down below, blankets, coolers and American flags dotted the landscape, and patriotic tunes provided the evening's soundtrack as children waved sparklers and tossed footballs and frisbees while waiting on the main event.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the field, the firefighters were carefully arrayed on and around the cement basketball courts while the MVP's of



The Fourth of July Fireworks in Suches is fast becoming a crowd favorite in the North Georgia Mountains.

Photo by Todd Forrest

the evening, the firefighters of Suches Fire Department Station No. 5, looked over their checklists one final time as they geared up for another

spectacular pyrotechnic display.

Shortly after 9 p.m., local

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Americans gather around Meeks Park to celebrate Fourth of July with fireworks

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Patriotic residents from all over the area gathered around Meeks Park on the Fourth of July to celebrate the 243rd anniversary of America's independence with a spectacular showing of fireworks.

Hours before the annual fireworks were set to begin, hundreds of people claimed spots at Meeks Park, North Georgia Technical College, along Georgia 515 and at First United Methodist Church.

Many of these early birds brought food, lawn games and other forms of entertainment to keep them busy until the big show began after dark.

Those who watched from the church enjoyed pre-fireworks live music, barbecue from the local Boy Scouts of America, and a table of historically significant items provided by the Sons of the American Revolution.

"What we have here is show-and-tell, basically," said Jared Ogden, president of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution. "We've got a block



Fireworks over Meeks Park for Independence Day 2019.

Photo by Frank Uhle

of tea similar to what they would have thrown into the Boston Harbor during the events of the Boston Tea Party.

"We have some sugar here that they used, some games they would have played, and just some other information about how our forefathers lived during the time of the Revolutionary War."

For Ogden and his fellow Sons of the American Revolution, it's important that people remember the reason Americans celebrate Independence Day.

"I think in today's society, people don't know the sacrifices that our forefathers made," Ogden said. "We are

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Vogel State Park hosts Independence Day celebration extravaganza

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Vogel State Park outdid itself in 2019 with another great all-day Independence Day celebration geared for people of all ages – toddlers, kids, young adults, parents and grandparents – on Thursday, July 4.

"Today is our Fourth of July celebration," Park Manager Jack Becker said. "We have all kinds of activities and events going on today. This year, we started with our 5K Fun Run and Walk. We had 18 people, so I'm hoping next year will be even better."

The 5K Fun Run and Walk was an addition to the 2019 activities over last year, which pushed the traditional flag-raising ceremony and salute to veterans back to 9:30 a.m.

And the hits just kept on coming at Vogel last Thursday, with a children's bike parade, a paddle boat race, a sandcastle building contest and a whole slew of old-fashioned field games, with a grand finale concert at 8 p.m. in the lake pavilion.

Also new this year, as a kind of fundraiser, Becker, Assistant Park Manager Mikayla Murphy and a few others took turns being dunked in a dunk tank.

Becker is a U.S. Army veteran and is currently serving in the U.S. Army Reserves.

"This is the greatest country in the world," Becker said. "Our independence – it's a great day to celebrate."

Scott and Rebecca Turner drove up from McDonough with their children and another family. The Turners said the family group has been coming up here for over 20 years,

making July Fourth at Vogel State Park a tradition for them.

"We've been here since last Wednesday, and the weather's been amazing," Scott said. "It's nice and cool up here in the woods."

U.S. Navy Vietnam-era veteran Mike Hoover was with the Turner group, and he helped with the flag raising.

"It's just fantastic to watch the spirit and see the real true people who honor America," Hoover said. "We love it. In my opinion, there's no better park in the United States than this one. It's God's greatest creation, this park right here."

Michael Burkett, also a U.S. Army Vietnam-era veteran, helped with the flag raising.

"It's a wonderful holiday when people realize what it's

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Vogel State Park Naturalist Caroline Karnatz leading the 2019 Independence Day Children's Bike Parade.

Photo by Mark Smith

Boy Scout Hunter White supplies flag depositories with help from local artist

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A brief ceremony was held in the Old Union County Courthouse on Saturday, June 29, for the unveiling of four newly-painted American flag depositories for old, worn-out U.S. flags.

The ceremony was hosted by the Union County Historical Society and organized by Historical Society Member Bud Akins.

For many years, people in Blairsville and Union County have had only one American flag depository for old flags – the one located at the Union County Courthouse. And a great many residents aren't even aware of it.

Enter Hunter White, a Boy Scout with Troop 101 in Blairsville and soon-to-be sophomore at Union County High.

White and his father

William, who is a veteran and a scout leader, heard through the local veteran grapevine that there was a need for more American flag depositories in the area.

That's why, for his Eagle Scout project, White raised nearly \$1,000 and acquired four flag depositories for old, tattered American flags to be collected and retired properly.

"On behalf of my troop, and as part of my Eagle

Scout project, I would like to present these to the Union County Historical Society," said White that Saturday. "If you need to dispose of an American flag, you'll put it in here, and then one of the veteran organizations ... will come by and pick them up, and then they'll retire them."

Tragically, White said there are people out there who throw old American flags in

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L-R: Blairsville Boy Scout Hunter White, local artist George Lochli and Union County Historical Society President Judy Carpenter on June 29.

Photo by Mark Smith

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