

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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'All Lives Matter' rally supports police, first responders

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

About 75 people from around North Georgia and western North Carolina rallied honoring law enforcement and first responders at the Union County Courthouse on Saturday, July 11.

The organizer of the event was a 25-year-old woman from Hayesville named Jamie, who asked that her full name not be printed for fear of reprisal.

Jamie started planning the rally about a month ago after deciding that she wanted to show support for law enforcement, first responders and health care workers, "because they've been putting their lives on the line for our community, and I think they deserve recognition for that."

She chose Blairsville to hold the rally because she

felt it was a central location with a larger population base capable of drawing more people than, say, Hayesville in North Carolina. The Union County Courthouse also played host to a "Black Lives Matter" peaceful protest on June 14.

Speaking to the potentially contentious "All Lives Matter" labeling, which is typically used as a critical response to the Black Lives Matter movement, Jamie said it had nothing to do with repudiating supporters of Black Lives Matter.

"It's more about including everyone," Jamie said. "That's what we want, is to literally include everyone. We don't want anybody to feel left out, and we just want to be as inclusive and open-minded as possible. That's the goal of our group."

The group she's talking about is "All Lives Matter

– North Georgia," which is a Facebook group she started a month ago that's already attracted well over 700 members. Similarly, there are several Facebook groups devoted specifically to BLM, even one called "Black Lives Matter – North Georgia."

"We include Black Lives Matter," Jamie said of the All Lives Matter group. "We want them to feel included, and that's one of the reasons I don't want to change the name of the group to Blue Lives Matter or anything else, because I want (BLM supporters) to feel included, but at the same time support other people that are serving the community as well."

Several people made public remarks at the rally, including two scheduled speakers and others who felt moved to speak, though the



About 75 people attended the "All Lives Matter" rally Saturday at the courthouse. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Blairsville pair charged with stealing 'Thin Blue Line' flag supporting cops



Barry Kives and his sons Brian and Andy proudly display this Thin Blue Line flag at their business Southern Polyurethanes, Inc. out of respect for law enforcement.

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

To show their respect for local law enforcement, Barry Kives and his sons Andy and Brian hung a "Thin Blue Line" flag in front of their Blairsville-based business Southern Polyurethanes, Inc. on Murphy Highway.

Kives had ordered one of the flags a few weeks back from ThinBlueLineUSA.com,

which sells them "with the goal of supporting our brothers and sisters in blue"; all told, the flag setup with the poles and installation cost about \$80.

When the flag went missing in the early morning hours of July 7, it became clear to the Kives men that not everyone in Blairsville shared their tremendous respect for police. As soon as he got to work that Tuesday morning, Andy noticed the flag was gone

and called 911 to file a report. Fortunately for the Kiveses, surveillance equipment near the scene captured the theft, resulting in a roughly 12-hour turnaround from the time the flag was removed to an arrest in the case, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn said.

A review of surveillance footage showed Albert Lewis Lafferty, 49, of Blairsville,

McCarter honored for meth-busting role in 'Operation Unicoi Pipeline'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Congratulations to Jay McCarter, who was one of several investigators to receive the "Excellence in the Pursuit of Justice Award" for his contributions to a major multiagency, multistate drug trafficking operation codenamed "Unicoi Pipeline."

McCarter is currently employed as a narcotics investigator with the Union County Sheriff's Office, though he was working for the Towns County Sheriff's Office during the 16-month long investigation.

"On Wednesday, Sept. 5, 2018, multiple law enforcement agencies swarmed on suspected methamphetamine traffickers in Georgia and Clay County, North Carolina, by (executing) numerous search warrants," the Georgia Bureau of Investigation



UCSO Investigator Jay McCarter received a special award from U.S. Attorney R. Andrew Murray and Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Kent at the U.S. Courthouse in Asheville, North Carolina, on June 19. Photo/Submitted

said at the time. "This investigation revealed Charles Michael Ledford and Bobby Roger 'Rob' Burch were responsible for the distribution of more than 150 kilograms of methamphetamine." See McCarter, Page 2A

Canning Plant opens for season with new COVID-19 guidelines

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market Canning Plant opened for the 2020 season on Tuesday, July 7, with several procedural changes and safety precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Of course, Market Manager Mickey Cummings said that safety will remain a priority at the Canning Plant, with mandatory temperature checks and a coronavirus screening questionnaire guests must answer before being allowed entry to the building.

"We are requiring a facial covering," Cummings said. "We are asking people to come in by appointment. We are also providing utensils for everybody and doing sterilization."

"Every time we get through with a table, we wash, rinse and sanitize them. We are doing everything that we can, and we are only allowing so many people in here at a time."

Utilizing the industrial-grade equipment at the plant streamlines the canning process for those needing to preserve food in bulk, which Cummings anticipates will likely become more popular this year due to



Dene and Janet Robinson canned some fresh green beans at the Union County Canning Plant last week. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

the pandemic. "People do a lot of home canning and that sort of thing, but their pressure cookers will hold around seven or eight jars, and these will hold a hundred," Cummings said. "We get done a lot quicker and there is a lot less mess at the house. Canning at home can take a whole day, but here you can do it all in one go around."

"With the pandemic affecting supply chains such as food stores and that sort of thing, I expect there to be a lot of people to process food. Normally, we process somewhere around 15,000 jars (in a season). We have processed as little as 13,000 or 14,000 and as many as 19,000. This year may be one of those years where we get close

Ex-doctor Heaton appeals six-year federal prison sentence

By Linda Erbele
North Georgia News

Attorneys for former local physician James Heaton have filed an appeal of his six-year prison sentence with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

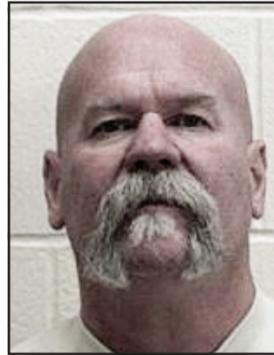
The appeal was filed July 7 and had not been scheduled for a hearing, press noted.

Heaton, who operated a family medical practice in Blairsville for more than 20 years, received his sentence from U.S. District Judge

Richard W. Story on June 24 following his October 2019 conviction on more than 100 counts of prescription drug fraud.

In a separate June 24 hearing, Story sentenced Heaton's co-defendant in the case, former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder, to a year and a day in prison. Gowder was also convicted on more than 100 counts of prescription fraud.

Both men have been



James Heaton

Early in-person voting for Aug. 11 primary runoffs begins Monday

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Advanced in-person voting for the Aug. 11 Republican and Democratic Primary Runoff Elections begins Monday, July 20, and will continue through Friday, Aug. 7.

Early voting will take place weekdays between 8

a.m. and 4:30 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room on the bottom floor of the Union County Courthouse, which will be accessible via a newly marked entrance around the corner from the lower main entrance to the courthouse.

Voters will be able to cast ballots even during lunchtime, though importantly, there is no required Saturday scheduled for weekend early voting due to the runoff nature of the election.

The election will feature two runoff races, one Republican and one Democratic, to decide the respective party nominees for the office of U.S. Representative in the 117th Congress from the 9th Congressional District.

On the Republican side is the contest between Matt

Gurtler and Andrew Clyde, while the Democratic ticket features Devin Pandey and Brooke Siskin. Whoever wins their respective party nomination on Aug. 11 will square off against the other party nominee on Nov. 3.

Since this is a primary runoff, voters who participated in the June 9 election must vote with the same political party. People who selected nonpartisan ballots during the primary, as well as individuals who did not vote in the primary, will be able to choose a party when voting.

Election Day will be Tuesday, Aug. 11, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the 11 pre-assigned Union County voting precincts: Ivy Log



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