

McCarter...from Page 1A

over the past two years.

“Authorities seized more than 15 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, (65 firearms, and more than \$30,000 in drug proceeds). The street value of the seized illegal drugs is more than \$725,000.”

McCarter played an important role in the investigation, being the first to track Ledford’s movements over Unicoi Mountain after receiving information that the Towns County native was bringing drugs into town.

During the operation, McCarter took on new investigatory responsibilities such as organizing controlled drug purchases from local individuals like Michael Dean “Mikey” Byers of Young Harris, who was later charged with trafficking meth in Georgia and in Clay County, North Carolina.

As it turned out, Ledford had been delivering large quantities of Mexico-sourced meth to various mountain areas like Towns County, where people like Byers would sell it locally.

Resulting from the investigation, authorities charged Ledford with trafficking meth. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute and to possession with intent to distribute meth on Oct. 9, 2019, for which he received a 27-year sentence in federal prison, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

“It was a good team effort,” McCarter said of the operation. “Receiving this award is humbling. I don’t feel like I did as much as everybody else, but I was glad to be part of it and recognized for the work I did.”

Drug-sniffing K-9 Hunter assisted McCarter in his investigations involving traffic stops, though Hunter retired from law enforcement when McCarter transferred to the Union County Sheriff’s Office in August 2019.

Due to COVID-19, awards were handed out individually instead of in a large celebration. McCarter received his “Outstanding Case Award” on June 19 from U.S. Attorney R. Andrew Murray and Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Kent at the U.S. Courthouse in



Drug-sniffing K-9 Hunter assisted McCarter in his investigations involving Towns County traffic stops. Photo/Submitted

Asheville, North Carolina.

The 18 other “Unicoi Pipeline” award recipients from various law enforcement agencies were: Clint Bridges, Debra Harris, Anthony Johnson, Dennis Miller, Jason Reid, Tim Stutheit, Patrick Wilhelm, W. Lee Swafford, Nathaniel Anderson, Carolyn Johnson, Terry Julian, Matt Rollins, Todd Wingate, Thomas Woodard, Brian Leopard, Ken Howard, Brett Anders and Tyler Hooks.

The following agencies had active roles in the investigation: Towns County

Sheriff’s Office; Clay County, North Carolina, Sheriff’s Office; Rockdale County Sheriff’s Office Special Investigations Unit; Macon County Sheriff’s Office K-9 Unit and Special Response Team “SRT”;

Highlands Police Department; Cherokee Indian Police Department; Swain County, NC, Sheriff’s Office; North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation; DEA; Hall County Sheriff’s Office Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad; and GBI’s West Metro Regional Drug Enforcement Office.

Thin Blue Line Flag...from Page 1A

allegedly crossing the street from a residence he was staying at across from the business to cut the flag down before returning to his residence, Osborn said.

Lafferty was arrested and charged with theft for taking the flag, and investigators also charged him with possession of methamphetamine that they discovered after executing a search warrant at his Murphy Highway address, Osborn said.

Ronda Sue Nix, 31, of Blairsville, was with Lafferty the morning of the theft, and she, too, has been charged with theft by taking in the incident, Osborn said.

A county resident discovered the flag discarded alongside Georgia 325 in an area that happened to be on the way to Nix’s residence from where Lafferty was staying on Murphy Highway, Osborn said, and the Sheriff’s Office was able to reunite the Kiveses with their flag that same day.

“When (Lafferty stole the flag), he insulted us, but worse – he insulted the police,” Barry Kives said. “We’ve got

some great police in this town, and I don’t think they make enough money.”

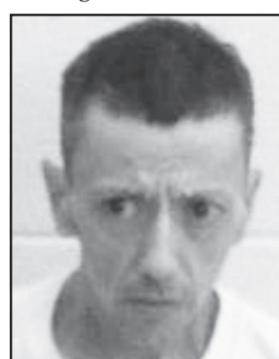
Kives is a strong supporter of police. For example, last year, he helped the Blairsville Police Department by purchasing body cameras for all officers. At the time, Chief Michael “Bear” Baxter said he was incredibly grateful for the cameras that serve as protection for officers and the public alike.

He also makes annual \$5,000 donations to Blairsville PD’s Shop with a Cop Program, which enables underprivileged children of the county to go shopping for themselves and their families at Christmastime.

For their part, local law enforcement officers seem grateful for the support of individuals and businesses in the community, especially in light of ongoing national conversations about policing.

“During this time, it’s appreciated that we get this support – we’ll gladly take it,” Osborn said.

Established in 1998, Southern Polyurethanes, Inc. is “a two-generation



Albert Lewis Lafferty

family-owned premium coatings manufacturer,” per southernpolyurethanes.com. “Our goal is to provide you with the finest clears, primers, solvents and additives available today using only the best raw materials and latest technologies.

“We manufacture all our products in house in our Blairsville, GA facility so we know our products are comparable if not superior to any other coating in their class at any price in the automotive aftermarket.”

Heaton Appeal...from Page 1A

allowed voluntary surrender and do not have to report to prison before Jan. 2, 2021, in consideration of the novel coronavirus.

Former Union General ER director David Gowder – brother to Mike – was originally a co-defendant in the case that began with his April 1, 2015, arrest and was followed by the arrest of all three men

in February 2016. A 2018 federal indictment featuring 212 charges named them as co-conspirators.

David avoided trial by entering a negotiated guilty plea in March 2019 to a single charge of dispensing a controlled substance outside professional practice, resulting in dozens of dismissed charges. Last month – more than five

years after his initial arrest – Story sentenced him to 18 months in prison.

He will begin his sentence at a low-security satellite camp of the federal correctional institution in Jesup, Georgia, on July 28. Judge Story allowed voluntary surrender in his case as well but noted that David had expressed a desire to get his sentence over with, hence the earlier reporting date.

Early Voting...from Page 1A

Dooly, Gum Log, Blairsville, Pat Colwell, Trackrock, Coosa, Jones Creek, Owl Town, Choestoe and Suches.

Voters are not required to bring their mailed precinct cards, but they must show a valid photo ID to vote.

Poll workers will be following COVID-19 best practices, including social distancing enforcement, regular equipment sanitation and wearing of masks. Voters are encouraged but not required to wear facial coverings to vote, and hand sanitizer will be provided by the Union County Government.

As a recap, registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day are eligible to vote during early voting, though July 13 was the registration deadline for voters looking to participate in the Aug. 11 election.

Registered voters may request mail-in absentee ballots or inquire about their absentee status by visiting the Secretary of State’s Office website at sos.ga.gov, calling the local Registrar’s Office at 706-439-6016, or swinging by the office at 65 Courthouse Street.

For the rest of the year, absentee ballots will be automatically mailed to voters who informed the Registrar’s Office they were elderly or disabled on a previous application, though all others will need to apply for mail-in absentee ballots on a per-election basis.

People wanting to fill out their absentee ballots/applications and drop them off in person to the Registrar’s Office can do so at the courthouse up to 7 p.m. on Aug. 11.

An absentee ballot/application must be submitted

by the voter requesting one, except for a disabled person, who may have a relative by blood or marriage return his or her absentee ballot/application.

Those who receive an absentee ballot by mail but decide to vote in person will need to have their absentee ballot canceled at time of voting.

Voters can access.mvp.sos.ga.gov ahead of the election for information on voter registration status, mail-

in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county office, sample ballots and more.

It should be noted that voters are not allowed to display campaign-related materials at polling places where promoted candidates appear on ballots. For example, for the Nov. 3 election, voters will not be allowed to enter polling places wearing clothing promoting Donald Trump or Joe Biden for president.

Canning Plant...from Page 1A

to 19,000.”

With so much uncertainty surrounding the virus and certain supplies that were quickly depleted at the beginning of the pandemic, guests of the Canning Plant seem to agree that people will need to do more canning this year.

Dody Arrendale of Atlanta and Angela White of Axson visit the Canning Plant a couple of times each year to partake in the hobby and prepare some long-lasting food to take home.

“We have been coming here for about four years now,” White said. “We come up every 4th of July, and we come over and we can a variety of things.

We have done salsa and soups; we are doing a salsa today. We come back in the fall and do some applesauce.

“Canning is just a fun little activity, and we love it. We have noticed that it was great to have something to pull from at the house. I have definitely used up everything I did last summer, so I think I will do more this year.”

The Canning Plant will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays by appointment. For more information or to make an appointment, call 706-439-6043. And be sure to check out the Farmers Market, open every Tuesday from 2-5 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.