



Election Results will be available online at www.nganews.com on Wednesday, Aug. 12th

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Paris eyes old Shoe Factory property as future county jail site

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris is in the process of securing a contract on the old Georgia Boot manufacturing plant and property on Shoe Factory Road to serve as a future site of a larger Union County Jail and Sheriff's Office.

Pending final appraisal, the purchase price of the property will be between \$800,000 and \$900,000, Paris said.

The deal between the county and Blairsville Motel Properties Inc. will likely close in the next 30 to 60 days. W.C. Nelson's Blairsville Motel Properties purchased the site

from Georgia Boot for \$628,100 back in 2006, several years after the plant shut down.

Known for acquiring land for future county purposes, Paris is hopeful that voters will support a SPLOST referendum in the next few years to build a new jail and Sheriff's Office to replace the current 54-bed facility and offices that were erected at 378 Beasley Street around 2001, which the commissioner said were built on too small a property to accommodate expansion.

According to Paris, Sheriff Mack Mason came to him a few years ago and said, "Lamar, we're out of jail space."

"We have no way to add onto it, so we've kind

of been stuck," Paris said, referencing the small amount of usable acreage off Beasley Street. "The jail was built for 54 inmates, and over time, we've had as many as 90 in it (and up to 111 inmates in custody at one time since Sheriff Mason has been in office).

"Now, they try to keep it at a decent number, and when it gets over 60 or 70, then we have to start housing inmates in other counties."

Paris has been hesitant to commit to building a new jail due to the very high costs associated with such a project, especially since it would take away from his focus on "playgrounds and ballparks, horse arenas, libraries and

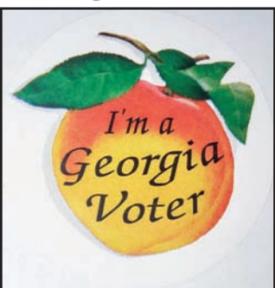
Shoe Factory Road, Page 2A



The old Georgia Boot Shoe Factory has been vacant since it shut down in the early 2000s, and looking ahead, the property may serve as a future county jail site. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Early in-person voting concludes Friday; Election Day is Aug. 11

By Shawn Jarrard
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The second week of early in-person voting for the Aug. 11 Republican and Democratic Primary Runoff

Elections saw more than double the participation from the first week, with 410 votes added in Week 2 for a total of 760 in-person votes as of Friday, July 31.

And due to COVID-19, the Union County Registrar's Office has noted an above average return of greater than 1,600 mailed absentee ballots so far, bringing the combined number of votes through last week to more than 2,300, or about 13 percent of the electorate.

This is the last week for early in-person voting, which runs now through Friday, Aug. 7, between 8 a.m. and

4:30 p.m. each day – even during lunchtime – in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse, which is accessible via a clearly marked separate entry near the lower main entrance.

The courthouse is still under a judicial order because of the pandemic, meaning guests are required to wear face masks, practice social distancing and submit to temperature checks upon entering the building.

Voters would not usually be required to wear facial coverings to vote; however, since early in-person voting takes place in a courthouse

See Early Voting Ends, Page 3A

Nationally renowned singer Heisler performs for local law enforcement

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Resident Dennis Jaegle welcomed members of the Union County Sheriff's Office and Blairsville Police Department to his home on Wednesday, July 29, for a very special performance by Sonia Heisler.

Heisler is a 14-year-old girl who has received national attention this year for performing "The Star-Spangled Banner" nightly in her Orlando, Florida, neighborhood to show appreciation for law enforcement.

After hearing of her patriotic act on TV one morning recently, Jaegle decided to invite her to the area to thank her for what she does in support of the police.

"I've been home since COVID-19," Jaegle said. "I got



Fourteen-year-old patriotic singing sensation Sonia Heisler of Orlando, Florida, performed the national anthem for local law enforcement last week. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

like I usually do – I'm sitting there with a cup of coffee and watching Fox & Friends. This girl starts singing the national anthem, and I'm in tears, because when I hear the national anthem, I get emotional because of our family and all that stuff.

See Heisler Sings, Page 6A

Mineral Bluff man, 21, killed in Georgia 60 crash Saturday night

By Shawn Jarrard
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A 21-year-old Mineral Bluff man died in a single-vehicle accident on Georgia 60 near the Union/Fannin line heading toward Suches on Saturday, Aug. 1, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

The accident occurred around 10 p.m. Saturday when a car being driven by Austin Lane Anderson traveled off the

west shoulder of the road while negotiating a curve, went down an embankment, and struck a tree before coming to rest on its right side, GSP said.

Anderson did not survive the crash, which culminated in the vehicle becoming fully engulfed in flames, GSP said. Further details were not available by press time, as GSP was still working to finalize its report.

See GA 60 Crash, Page 3A



Austin Anderson

Arrest made in family shooting that sent Blairsville man to hospital

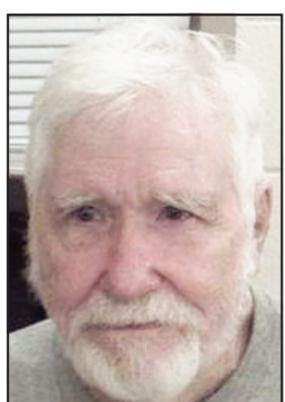
By Shawn Jarrard
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A Blairsville man was scheduled to be released from Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville last week after being shot by an 80-year-old relative, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said.

"The GBI was requested to investigate a shooting at the request of the Union County Sheriff's Office on Sunday, July 26, 2020, at approximately 6:15 p.m.," GBI Region 8 Special Agent in Charge Kim Williams said. "The shooting incident was determined to be between family members.

"The person that was shot was identified as Chris Perry, 57. Perry was transported to Northeast Georgia Medical Center for treatment."

Added Williams, "As a result of the investigation, James Larry Johnson, 80, was



James Larry Johnson

arrested and charged with aggravated assault. This is an ongoing investigation."

Johnson was booked into the Union County Jail on Monday, July 27, where he remained without bond at press time.

Given that the shooting

occurred between family members, according to state law for the relevant code section 16-5-21:

"If the offense of aggravated assault is committed between past or present spouses, persons who are parents of the same child, parents and children, stepparents and children, stepparents and stepchildren, foster parents and foster children, or other persons excluding siblings living or formerly living in the same household, the defendant shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than three nor more than 20 years."

GBI Region 8 Investigative Offices are headquartered in Cleveland, with agents covering the following counties: Cherokee, Dawson, Fannin, Forsyth, Gilmer, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, Pickens, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White.

Sons of American Revolution honor Sheriff's Office with award



The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution presented Union County Sheriff's Office deputies an appreciation award last week. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution presented the Union County Sheriff's Office with an award July 28, thanking Sheriff Mack Mason and his deputies for the work they do despite the level of adversity facing law enforcement in recent days.

Chapter President Jared Ogden spoke on behalf of

the organization during an afternoon shift change that Tuesday so deputies could be recognized personally "for their services, commitment, sacrifices and professionalism."

"We really appreciate what you do," Ogden said to those gathered. "Our uniform guys are getting really bad raps, and we wanted to show our appreciation for everything you do."

Secretary Stephen Weaver explained the goals

of the organization and its initiative to reach out to groups in the community and give them the credit and support that they deserve as good citizens.

"The Sons of the America Revolution has three major goals: promoting patriotism, preserving history and providing education," Weaver said. "This falls into the category of promoting patriotism."

"We are honoring the

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