

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, August 14, 2019

New sign announces LongHorn Steakhouse is coming to town

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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LongHorn Steakhouse is coming to Union County, as announced by a sign erected last week on the empty lot next to KFC/Taco Bell of Blairsville.

The steakhouse restaurant has been the talk of the town lately, with many people wondering if what they'd heard about the famous chain was true or not – was LongHorn actually coming?

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris shed some light on the situation in his Commissioner's Questions column from this week's edition of the North Georgia News.

"We knew there was a contract on the property and then we heard that the property

had closed," Paris wrote. "I have continued to tell people as late as yesterday that until construction has started and you see an announcement sign, nothing is for sure with a large corporation.

"Well, today (Thursday, Aug. 8, 2019), I just saw the sign installed that says, 'Coming Soon, LongHorn Steakhouse.' The site is completely cleared and there is a double row of silt fence completely surrounding the site.

"So, I would say the odds are about 98%. But the only other thing that is the final positive is when they actually level the site, dig the footers and pour the floor. Then you can put it at 100%."

As far as when the new restaurant might open, Paris

said he hadn't heard anything official yet.

"But the last unofficial word I heard is that sometime in Spring of 2020," Paris wrote.

The restaurant will be located on the lot between United Community Bank and KFC/Taco Bell and will be situated between Georgia 515 and Brackett's Way.

"Founded in 1981 in Atlanta, Georgia, the restaurant began with one man's passion for perfect steak but had very few guests to convince," according to LongHornSteakhouse.com. "Then a freak snowstorm hit Atlanta in 1982, stranding motorists and drawing them to one of the only hospitable places available – a restaurant

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A sign announcing LongHorn appeared at the future site of the restaurant along Brackett's Way in Blairsville last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Qualifying for three Blairsville City Council posts begins Monday, Aug. 19

By Shawn Jarrard
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The city of Blairsville will hold a General Election on Tuesday, Nov. 5, and city residents can qualify for one of three council posts starting next week.

Qualifying as a candidate for one of the council posts costs \$108, and qualifying packets have been available at City Hall since Aug. 1.

All qualifying paperwork must be turned in at City Hall during the qualifying period, which runs Monday, Aug. 19, through Wednesday, Aug. 21, during the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. each day.

The council members currently holding the three posts that are up for election are Betty Easter, Rhonda Mahan and Mary Ruth Cook.

"Terms of office will begin Jan. 1, 2020, and will

expire on Dec. 31, 2023," the Qualifying Fee Notice states. "Eligibility to serve requires candidates be 21 years of age, a resident of the city of Blairsville for at least one year immediately prior to the date of such candidate's election, a registered and qualified voter in the Municipal Election, and shall continue to reside in the city during term of office."

First day back for students of Union County Schools goes off without a hitch

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The first day of the Union County School District's 2019-2020 school year was Wednesday, Aug. 7.

And though it was rather hectic, it went as well as anyone could expect, Superintendent John Hill said.

"We were extremely excited to get the children back in school," Hill said last Thursday. "Kids were excited. I had the opportunity to visit every school yesterday and check in with the teachers and the kids and the principals and the support staff. Overall, our staff is extremely excited and fired up to be here.

"And honestly, it was as smooth of a first day as we've had in my career here. I was extremely impressed with the level of preparation that our staff put in. We didn't have any major problems."

Hill, "We're excited to be really focused on employability with our kids. See Schools, Page 6A



Superintendent John Hill high-fiving a primary school student at the end of the first day back on Wednesday, Aug. 7. Photo by Mark Smith

Narcotics investigation leads to four arrests and seizure of meth, marijuana

By Shawn Jarrard
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The goal of the Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division is simple – get drugs off the streets of Union County.

And last week, investigators continued to further that goal by making a meth trafficking arrest.

Following a two-month investigation, Narcotics Division investigators arrested Brandon Jewell Baker, 37, of Blairsville, last Wednesday, UCISO Lt. Tyler Miller said.

"Three controlled buys were made from Mr. Baker See Narcotics, Page 2A



Meth and marijuana seized by Narcotics Division investigators in a bust last week.

Federal judge hears motions in upcoming Gowder/Heaton trial

By Linda Erbele
North Georgia News

GAINESVILLE – Former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder appeared in federal court in Gainesville on Thursday, Aug. 8, for a pretrial conference in his federal prescription drug case.

U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story, presiding over the case, heard arguments on pending motions filed by the defense teams of both Gowder and his co-defendant, Dr. James Heaton.

Judge Story did not issue a ruling Thursday. He will consider additional briefs to See Trial, Page 2A



The entrance to the federal courthouse in Downtown Gainesville. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Bank OZK makes \$55,000 check presentation to Union General Hospital



Jason Karnes of Bank OZK presenting Union General Hospital with a \$55,000 check on Wednesday, Aug. 7. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Bank OZK Market President Jason Karnes presented Union General Hospital with a \$55,000 check on behalf of the bank on Wednesday, Aug. 7.

This is the second year that Bank OZK has made a contribution to the hospital through Georgia HEART, with an increase of \$5,000

compared to last year's \$50,000 contribution.

Georgia HEART is a statewide rural health organization expense tax credit program enacted by lawmakers to encourage taxpayers throughout Georgia to learn more about the financial and other challenges rural hospitals face.

The program helps community partners contribute to improve the financial

condition and patient offerings of rural hospitals.

Local officials attended the check presentation to show their support for the hospital and express gratitude for Bank OZK being such a good community partner.

"I thank Bank OZK and Jason for letting the chamber be a part of this," said Steve Rowe, president of the Blairsville-Union County See Bank OZK, Page 2A

Chief Deyton attends annual police summer training conference

News Special
North Georgia News

As part of his continuing education and training in the administration of law enforcement, Union County Schools Police Chief Chad Deyton recently attended the 2019 Annual Summer Training Conference sponsored by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police.

The Summer Training Conference was held at the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center July 21-24, with heads of law enforcement agencies from throughout the state participating in the four-day conference.

Chief Deyton was among

more than 550 heads of law enforcement agencies attending the 51st Annual GACP Summer Training Conference.

The association is responsible for the delivery of training to the chiefs of Georgia's police departments and law enforcement agencies.

"In this new era of law enforcement, chiefs are constantly finding new ways to manage their departments," said GACP President Wesley Walker, chief of the Lyons Police Department. "From the type of officer we are hiring today, to the concerns of the public we serve, to the way

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Chad Deyton

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