

North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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BOE adopts partial rollback rate after hearings

By Shawn Jarrard
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On Thursday, Aug. 31, the Union County Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt the partial rollback rate of 7.523 mills, which is a 9.89% increase in the school system's 2023 property tax levy.

Immediately preceding the adoption was a tax increase hearing that was limited to five speakers from the public, though more than five signed up to offer remarks. It was the third state-mandated hearing in a week, and over a dozen residents attended.

Superintendent John Hill opened the hearing with a brief presentation outlining the need for the tax increase

as established by the Board of Education.

Hill introduced some new information into his presentation last week, noting he had just learned that, among the 14-county Pioneer RESA, Union County Schools had placed No. 1 in financial efficiency in terms of capturing state funding.

As previously reported, in 2023, the schools are having to contend with a major budgetary shortfall due to a variety of factors.

Among the factors are \$2.4 million in state funding cuts from pandemic-era property revaluations inflating the gross digest; a 67% increase in state health care

See School Tax Rate, Page 2A



The Union County School Board voted unanimously to accept the partial rollback millage rate after the third and final tax increase hearing last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

9/11 remembrance set for Monday at Fine Arts Center

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In a public remembrance ceremony at 9 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 11, the county will honor the many casualties of 9/11 and the bravery of the first responders who rallied to the horrific scenes of that fateful day.

The annual ceremony has historically taken place at Meeks Park but will see a venue change to the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center in 2023.

It doesn't feel as though more than two decades have passed since the Sept. 11 attacks befell the nation, but this year, next Monday will mark the 22nd anniversary of the tragedy when, in 2001,



A helmet and flowers sit atop a rack at New York City's Engine Co. 55 firehouse in New York City.

Photo by Eric Draper; National Archives Catalog ID 5997366

2,977 people were killed in four attacks coordinated by Islamic extremists. Since then, countless

more have succumbed to chronic health conditions like cancer and respiratory disease. See 9/11 Ceremony, Page 2A

Flash flood opens sinkholes, causes damage in county

By Shawn Jarrard
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Heavy rainfall caused damage throughout Blairsville overnight Monday, Aug. 28, into Tuesday, Aug. 29, dropping between 4 and 6 inches of rain in a span of hours.

The deluge after midnight flooded multiple buildings around town, opened two sinkholes inside city limits, resulted in the Butternut Creek rising out of its banks at the Farmers Market and Meeks Park, knocked down trees on roadways, and washed out multiple culverts in the county.

Motorists passing the Shell station at Murphy Highway and Georgia 515



This sinkhole opened after torrential rains flooded many areas of Blairsville in the early morning hours of Tuesday, Aug. 29. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Resident killed in motorcycle crash on Jones Creek Road

By Shawn Jarrard
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A Blairsville man died in a single-vehicle crash while riding his motorcycle on Jones Creek Road Saturday, Sept. 2.

The accident occurred around 5:20 p.m. just past the second entrance to Elisha Payne Circle.

Jon McGill, 54, was driving his 1995 Harley Davidson north on Jones Creek when he failed to negotiate a curve, crossed the centerline and traveled off the roadway, according to Georgia State Patrol.

See McGill Crash, Page 2A



Union County resident Jon McGill tragically passed away in a motorcycle accident Saturday. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Scott dies after cardiac event during school outreach

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The community came out to honor local veterans at the Union/Towns football game in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium Friday, with a special dedication for North Georgia Honor Guard Member Walter "Walt" Scott, who tragically passed away the day before on Thursday, Aug. 31.

Scott, 88, was attending a veterans' outreach program at Union County Elementary School last Thursday when his heart stopped as he was walking down the gymnasium

bleachers, causing him to fall to the bottom of the steps in view of the school's assembled fifth-grade classes.

"I saw him before he went down, and he was blue," said Honor Guard Eastern Division Sr. Vice Cmdr. Mark Harbison, who was nearby when Scott took a step on the stairs leading to the gym floor.

Honor Guard Member Ken Sampson was at the bottom of the stairs when Scott fell, and he began CPR immediately with assistance from fellow Honor Guard member and retired firefighter/paramedic Andy Turner. School officials also assisted.



Walt Scott

Harbison said that he and those surrounding Scott attempted to shield the view of

See Walt Scott, Page 3A

Annual Duck Derby raises \$30,000 for Christmas program

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The competition was fierce at the Fifth Annual Rubber Duck Derby hosted by the Blairsville Police Department at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, Sept. 2.

Some 3,000 of the little quackers were dumped into Butternut Creek around 11 a.m., each one individually purchased for \$10 to help fund gift purchases by the well-deserving children who participate in the Shop With a Cop Christmas Program every year.

There was virtually no parking at the popular event by the time things started, with

folks gathering all over the banks of the creek alongside friends and family.

Dogs, children and even several adults waded into the water to splash around, but after the racers were released, they worked alongside Safe Pet Project volunteers to free rogue ducks from sticks and rocks in the creek.

With everything from oars to golf clubs, the birds were fished out and freed, left to rush along the current upright or on their backs or sides – it didn't matter in what position they reached the finish line, just that they made it.

The first two winners were in fact stuck together, arriving at the finish line one

right after the other. Those ducks belonged to Greg Loskoski and Mike Hemphill, who won \$500 and \$250 respectively.

Meanwhile, Woody Woodmansee won \$100 when his duck came in third after avoiding a treacherous branch that snagged many of its bright yellow fellows.

Loskoski, Hemphill, and Woodmansee's ducks were received by Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter amid applause from the gathered crowd.

And as is tradition, the last duck to finish the Butternut trek, lovingly dubbed the "Lame Duck," also won a prize, with the coveted gas grill. See BPD Duck Derby, Page 3A



The Blairsville PD Duck Derby on Saturday was a huge success, bringing community members together for a good cause. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks



Vol. 114 No. 37

Arrests - 2D Legals - 4D
Church - 2B Obits - 4B
Classifieds - 3D Sports - 2C
Opinion - 4A

FOOTBALL
9/8 7:30 PM
vs. Armuchee

Special 9/11 Remembrance See page 6B
EMC Annual Meeting Sept. 9 See page 5C
Blairsville Business Expo Sept. 14 See page 6C



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School Tax Rate...from Page 1A

benefits for employees; yearly inflation; record enrollment; and increased operations, labor, food and other costs.

After hearing from constituents, School Board Member Jason McCarter, who is Regional Credit Manager for United Community Bank, said he wanted to clarify the impact of the ESPLOST passing last year to build a new Elementary School, for which the system has determined a need.

ESPLOST is a voter-approved 1% sales tax that must be used for capital outlay projects such as the multimillion-dollar Elementary School that is currently in the works; education sales tax proceeds cannot be used to fund school operations like teacher and staff salaries, utilities, etc.

To build the new school without ESPLOST, McCarter said the board would have to raise the millage rate another 1.5 mills to cover the annual debt service on bond funding that would ultimately result in more than \$20 million in interest beyond construction costs.

“(Without ESPLOST), you’d be paying 1.5 times what it would cost to build that building,” McCarter said. “If you think that’s a good idea, I’ve got an old pickup truck I’d like to talk to you about buying.”

Factoring into the board’s decision to raise taxes is the fact that about 44% of households will benefit from Gov. Brian Kemp’s one-time Homestead Property Tax Relief Grant for 2023, which will reduce the tax liability of homestead-exempted properties by about \$216 this year.

Separately, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris announced last week that he plans to accept the full rollback rate of 4.286 mills for the county’s part of tax bills, and he will set the county millage rate in a called meeting this Thursday at 5 p.m. in the county courthouse.

Now that the School Board has set its millage rate, after the Sept. 7 called commission meeting, the combined millage rate for property taxes in the county will be 11.809 mills in 2023, down from the 2022 combined rate of 13.313.

Resident Marsha Lodes spoke first, marking her third appearance between the two Aug. 24 hearings and the final one on Aug. 31. She warned the board that increasing taxes “in this recession will cause much more foreclosures, which you’ll see next year.”

“We of Union County will never forget what you have done and what you are doing,” Lodes said.

Joseph Goble spoke next, introducing himself and his wife as Union County graduates with a senior in the school system. He praised the system’s administrators, teachers, coaches, and the School Board for doing the best they can to educate children with the resources available.

And while Goble stated he did not like seeing taxes go up and wants the schools to consider lowering the tax liability of senior citizens, he said he fully supports the decision the system is making in the face of uncontrollable funding cuts, property valuations, and cost increases.

“Makes me think we need to really start paying attention on who to vote for on the state and federal levels,” Goble said. “Let’s be real, let’s be honest, we have a dang good school system. There are 2,200 schools in Georgia and 181 districts, yet we have the third lowest millage rate.

“Maybe that’s not enough for you,” he continued, speaking to critics of the School Board. “On top of that, we are one of three counties that have zero bond debt of all the counties in the entire state of Georgia.”

Levi Kendrick and his wife also graduated UCHS, and his mother taught at Union County Schools. After hearing claims that teachers and administrators were overpaid and that the system was underperforming, he said he did some research and discovered the claims to be unfounded.

“Obviously, we have a great school system,” Kendrick said. “If you just look at it and look at what else is out there, because I’ve lived in other parts



Resident Marsha Lodes delivered remarks in all three tax increase hearings at the Board of Education Central Office in August.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

of this state – I moved back for this school system.

“I moved back for this area, to live here and raise my kids here. And I appreciate everything the School Board’s done for us and continues to do for us.”

Jane Wilson, another Union County grad and a local business owner, said in the hearing that she has two kids in the high school, and she thanked “the board, administration, teachers and staff for your continued support and always putting the students and children first in our system.”

She defined “educational poverty” for those in attendance, making the point that the system’s “amazing curriculums, afterschool programs, clubs, sports, security officers, (and) community support” ensure that Union County Schools remain “far away from educational poverty.”

“With a quality education at an efficient cost, Union County Schools are developing productive, creative, responsible, well-rounded, well-educated young adults that will pour their skillsets and knowledge back into our communities,” Wilson said.

The last speaker of the hearing, Jack Lance, took the time to extend charity toward the critics of the tax increase, saying he believed that many people advocating against the proposed millage rate “genuinely do not believe that this is necessary.”

Still, he said he disagreed with that sentiment due to his “faith in the people that we have currently elected and those that are in the administration,” before going into his reasons for having that faith.

A practicing local attorney who specializes in conducting real estate transactions, Lance deals with people moving here from all over the state and nation. One thing he hears “95% of the time” is how surprised people are to see such low tax rates in Union County.

“The other thing I hear constantly from people that have families,” Lance said, “is they’re coming here because they want their kids to be in a school system that meets and exceeds the standards of where they were coming from.”

Added Lance, “How

many places can brag on the fact that they have a relatively low tax rate and such an exceptional education system?”

Several more people in attendance had signed up to speak at the hearing, though the number of speakers was limited to five, causing multiple people to vocally object to what they saw as just another instance of unwillingness by the board to listen to the public’s concerns.

Afterward, Superintendent Hill said, “When asked about the hearings and public comment, legal counsel has advised to follow the same policies and procedures that have been adopted by the Board of Education,” which includes limiting total speakers to five at three minutes apiece.

“Millage rate hearings are considered meetings of the Board of Education,” Hill continued. “There is a quorum. Notices are provided at least 24 hours in advance, and the Board conducts hearings as it does any other meeting.”

“Therefore, the policies and procedures the Board uses for all its Board meetings would also apply, including public participation.”

“Thank you for coming,” Board Chair Tony Hunter said at the conclusion of the Aug. 31 hearing. “You’re welcome to come every single month – we have (board meetings) every single month; please return and give us your concerns.”

Resident Beverly Iler was one of the property owners who signed up to speak but did not get to deliver her remarks for the board’s consideration.

“With this being so impactful over the residents of Union County, I found it undemocratic for them not to let us speak,” Iler said outside the Board Office that Thursday. “It was almost like you were in another country.”

Iler said she knew her comments were “not going to change anything, but we could have at least spoken and voiced our concerns and maybe opened their minds a little bit.”

Due to a typo in an article that ran last week, the North Georgia News mistakenly reported that resident Vince Peterson believed the School Board had been transparent in its recent budgeting process. Peterson actually believes the opposite.

9/11 Ceremony...from Page 1A

as a result of the toxins released into the air, and still others continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and a myriad of physical and mental disorders.

Union County Fire Chief David Dyer will once again be the guest speaker for the remembrance, and Senior Pastor Ricky Powell of the First Baptist Church will offer a prayer. The Union County High School Chorus, directed by Alicia Covington, is expected to perform.

“We wanted to get the students involved,” Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Steve Rowe said. “We believe that it’s very important for everybody to remember what happened on 9/11. The high school students will be invited to the ceremony if they would like.

“Of course, before, we had weather (to consider). We had to set up chairs and a lot of different things (at Meeks), so logistically, this works out good. We’ve got the nice Fine Arts hall up there; we wanted to get the choir and the students involved, and working with the school system, they were just so cooperative in allowing us to use the facility.”

According to Rowe, the program will be “brief” but no less respectful. There will be fire equipment and flags

displayed outside the building, and designated parking for the public will be available for anyone who feels led to participate.

“I’m just glad to be able to live in a community where we can do this, and it’s even more special to make sure that our history is shared with our youth,” Rowe said. “And we appreciate the school system allowing us to do that, and

especially Chief Dyer willing to do the speech this year.”

Moving forward, there are plans to continue utilizing the Fine Arts Center, and Rowe expects to keep involving students in the future. After all, in his own words, “If you don’t teach about the past, it’s prone to happen again. And nobody wants a 9/11 experience to happen again.”

McGill Crash...from Page 1A

“The motorcycle traveled down an embankment and struck a road sign and came to an uncontrolled rest,” GSP said. “Mr. McGill was pronounced deceased at the crash scene by the Union County Coroner.”

Deputies with the Union County Sheriff’s Office responded to the accident, working traffic and securing the scene as GSP investigated.

According to his obituary, McGill had a passion for leatherwork, directional boring, mule riding and driving tractor trailers. He was a loving and caring husband, father, son, brother and grandfather.

McGill was an Entered Apprentice Mason at the Stephens Masonic Lodge F&AM #414 and attended Philadelphia Baptist Church.

Surviving are his loving wife and best friend of 13

years, Glenda Patterson McGill of Blairsville; his mother Patricia McGill of Blairsville; five children, Marcus and Brittany McGill, Morgan and Beau Ballard, R.J. Brown, Nate and Barbie Brown, and Jaylynn Anderson.

Also surviving are three sisters, Brec Dykes, Molly McGill and Pia Kluth; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Vernon and Patsy Patterson; grandchildren Brylon Ballard, Raelynn Brown, Jon Beckett Ballard, Natalie Brown, Eliza Jayne McGill, Elliana Brown, Mally Ballard and Maren Ballard; and many other relatives and friends.

Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 6, at 2 p.m. at the Philadelphia Baptist Church. To sign the family guestbook, visit www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com.

Audit report, crypto ordinance highlight county commission meeting

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In the Aug. 22 regular meeting of Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, certified public accountant and fraud examiner Samuel Latimer of Rushton & Company accounting firm presented the annual audit report.

Overall, the findings presented “fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of Union County, Georgia, as of December 31, 2022.”

For FY22, revenues increased by 8%, or \$1,830,567. Property taxes increased \$942,747; insurance premium taxes increased \$310,665; local option sales taxes increased \$730,439; and intangible taxes decreased \$148,366. Meanwhile, expenditures increased by 1.6%, or \$317,980.

Also in the meeting, Paris awarded grants to local groups who work with people

addicted to various substances.

“In 2010, the Alcohol Referendum was passed,” Paris said. “I made the commitment to set aside \$50,000 each year from the alcohol license fees and tax receipts to put back into the community for the purpose of helping to combat the alcohol and drug abuse problems that already existed in Union County.”

Four organizations dedicated to helping combat addiction and providing aid for at-risk youth and struggling families received \$5,000 each to reach further and do more for the people they encounter.

These organizations were New Hope Counseling represented by Troy Beaver, Positive Pathways represented by Linda Beaver, Union County Family Connection represented by Becky Tracy, and Freedom Ministries.

The second reading of a new ordinance pertaining to cryptocurrency and data mining

was also held. Talked about at length in recent meetings, the vast majority of those present at both readings have no desire to allow such industries to set up in Union County.

Such facilities house multiple algorithm-solving computers large enough to require noisy fans to stave off overheating. The fans drive away wildlife and can be a strain on the ears of neighbors.

One resident even mentioned the dire effects such businesses can have on human health, and that’s another issue entirely from the burden the warehouses can place on local power demands.

Legally, the county cannot outright ban crypto miners due to a lack of zoning, but Paris said his goal is to make it as unappealing as possible.

Deputy County Attorney William Mercer shared that yet more compliance standards were added to the ordinance



Lamar Paris
Sole Commissioner

since receiving feedback on the initial draft.

Crypto miners will require certifications and permits that must be renewed annually. Anyone looking to open a crypto mining operation needs to know also that all noise from facilities must be contained within the boundaries of their own property.

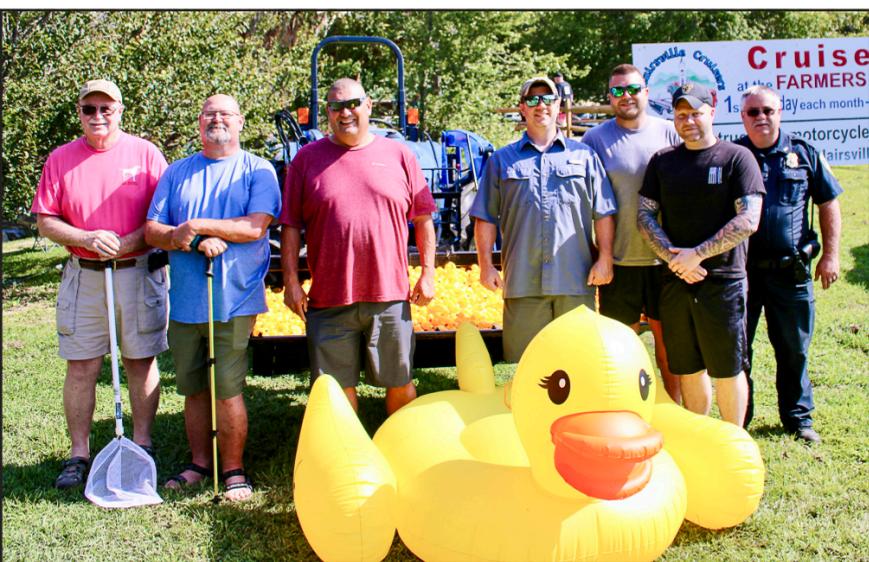
“It doesn’t matter what the acreage is, no closer than 100 feet from their property line, they’re going to measure (sound),” Mercer said. “That basically sets it up so they can’t break that sound barrier outside of their own property, so if it does, they have to come up with resolutions to get that sound back.”

“This is a redraft, so ... if you have a suggestion or an idea, we’re glad to receive those,” added Paris. “We’re not trying to make it to where they can come here; we’re trying to make it legally to where they will not want to come here because of the costs and the fact that it will be almost impossible for them to set up an operation.”

The latest draft of the crypto mining ordinance can be found at <http://www.unioncountyga.gov/>. The Commissioner’s Office is still accepting feedback for the ordinance, which will be enacted in an upcoming meeting.

Paris will hold a called meeting this Thursday, Sept. 7, to adopt the full rollback millage rate for the county’s portion of 2023 property taxes. The meeting will take place at 6 p.m. in the usual venue of the Union County Courthouse.

BPD Duck Derby ...from Page 1A



Blairsville Police Chief Michael “Bear” Baxter had plenty of help putting on the 2023 Duck Derby that raised \$30,000 for Shop With a Cop.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

donated by Home Depot going to Seasons Inn.

In all, that meant that some 110 other lucky ducks went home with prizes as well, ranging from local honey to tools, gift certificates and baskets. There was a little bit of everything to account for a variety of tastes, such as grocery store or restaurant gift cards. Yet others won coupons for car washes or agricultural supplies.

Still, even for the people who didn’t win anything, the outing itself was a reward with

beautiful weather and gorgeous scenery. It helped that the Farmers Market was in full swing, and treats like shaved ice and popcorn were spotted among the human flock both before and after the race.

Even the cleanup was fun. One little girl fell in the water trying to reach a “stranded” duck, and a couple of young boys tossed stray ducks to fill each other’s crates. Some of the wee birds nearly “escaped” past the carefully placed barricade, but it didn’t take long before all

were accounted for.

While 2023’s run is over, there’s still plenty to keep in mind for next year. To keep up with a growing interest and to expand the program, the Blairsville Police will be ordering 1,000 more ducks for next summer’s derby.

This comes after a whopping \$30,000 was raised for the upcoming Shop With a Cop Program in December, ensuring as many local families as possible will have a happy Christmas holiday.

Walt Scott ...from Page 1A

the scene from as many children as possible, especially those sitting closest.

“I looked over and I saw those kids’ faces,” said Harbison, getting emotional. “I haven’t seen faces like that since Vietnam. They were traumatized.”

As soon as Scott fell, teachers pulled their students away and directed them back to their classrooms, emptying the gymnasium that had previously been slightly less than half full for a program hosted by local veterans.

With some kids showing signs of distress, Elementary School Principal Jerry Bavero and Assistant Principal Jana Hussion deployed counselors to help students process what happened and smooth out overwhelming emotions, and the counselors will remain available as needed.

Harbison said he would like to commend the Union County School System for its swift, decisive action in supporting the fifth-graders who witnessed the trauma.

Initially unresponsive, Scott was revived for a time with the help of emergency medical

technicians who quickly arrived on the scene. He was loaded onto a medical helicopter and flown to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville.

Sadly, Scott passed away that night, having never regained consciousness between his fall and being kept in a medically induced coma, so it’s likely he felt no pain, and his family and friends are taking comfort in knowing that he died while doing what he loved – serving his community.

“At any point in his life, if he could be part of something that was helping, leading, coaching – he was there,” said Scott’s grandson William Knapp, himself a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps having followed in his grandfather’s footsteps.

“Grandpa would appreciate the fact that his men are looking after him and that his family wants as much care and consideration that can be done, especially for my grandmother, his wife,” he continued. “And this would just showcase how much he was loved.”

Scott, a Hiawassee resident, was born in Wisconsin

on May 14, 1935. He joined up with the United States Marines on April 5, 1954, serving as a forward artillery batteryman. After an honorable discharge on April 4, 1957, he was transferred to the Marine Corps Reserve.

From Aug. 1, 1998, to his death, Scott was a member of the Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment 783 and held every elected officer position along with serving as Paymaster and Detachment Commander twice for a total of seven years.

According to his obituary, he was a veteran of the Korean War, having served in the 1st Division 11th Marine Regiment. He received the Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Medal.

In addition to the North Georgia Honor Guard and Marine Corps League, Scott was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Devil Dogs and the Knights of Columbus.

Scott was also a past professional umpire and baseball coach, and he was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who never missed a school or sporting event for his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He is survived by his loving wife of 64 years, Sharon Hokenson Scott of Hiawassee; one son, Jeff Scott of Hiawassee; two daughters and sons-in-law, Jody and Fred Federico of Acworth, and Jean and Ty Martin of Lawrenceville; four grandchildren, Tasia and Dan Nabors, William Knapp, Marissa Martin and Harrison Martin; three great-grandchildren, Tate, Beau and Jett Nabors; niece Lori and Ron Matthias; nephew Dan Bell; with many other nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends also surviving.

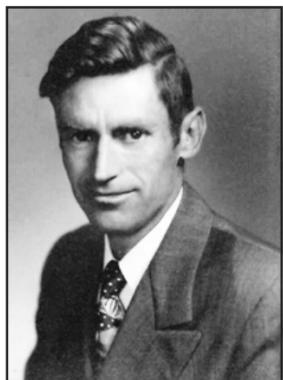
A Funeral Mass will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 6, at 11 a.m. from the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. To sign the family guestbook, visit <https://www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com/>.

Save the Date: Reece Society Celebrates Poet’s Birthday Sept. 9

The Byron Herbert Reece Society will host its annual Celebration of Life for the beloved farmer-poet from Choestoe.

Byron Herbert Reece would be 106 on Sept. 14, 1917, and the Reece Society is gathering to honor the occasion on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center 1 mile north of Vogel State Park on Gainesville Highway.

Everyone is encouraged to attend to hear guest entertainer Dr. Jim Clark, noted Reece Scholar and talented musician who serves as Emeritus Professor of English at Barton College in Wilson, North Carolina.



Byron Herbert Reece

Refreshments will be served, including birthday cake in remembrance of Byron Herbert Reece around noon.

Flash Flood Damage...from Page 1A



GDOT filled in the sinkhole off Murphy Highway in town last week after removing the drive leading up to the Shell station.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

cannot have missed the work being done there to fix issues caused by a 40-foot-deep hole from dirt collapsing in the rain.

The sinkhole is in Georgia Department of Transportation right of way, and the state agency began repairs in earnest last week.

There is currently no timeline or cost estimate regarding what it will take to fix the problem, but the project is a priority for GDOT, as the hole has affected water drainage flow in the area and poses a threat to the roadway.

Two manholes collapsed at the site, which contained fill dirt from work done by a previous property owner in the 1980s. One of the manholes accessed GDOT drainage infrastructure, and the other was for City of Blairsville sewer access.

As for GDOT's part of the fix, the state filled in the hole last week and will be "engineering shoring" there, to include driving pilings into the dirt to get stabilizing walls in place. GDOT will then excavate the hole, determine what went wrong and replace its drainpipe and infrastructure.

In the meantime, drainage remains impacted, with GDOT having to pump runoff that collects on the east side of 515, behind the First Baptist Church, into repurposed brine tanks for transport up the road for dumping.

The city will have to wait for GDOT to complete its repairs before sorting out a permanent solution to re-establish gravity-fed sewer flow through that area. For now, Blairsville has acquired permitting to bore a temporary pipe under 515 to pump sewage across the four-lane.

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley said that the city is currently pursuing funding options to complete its portion of repairs.

A second sinkhole formed early that Tuesday

at Sunshine Manor Personal Care Home in Downtown Blairsville, taking with it part of the drive inside the property and some of the foundation beneath an outbuilding, and the owner has been working to fill in the hole.

Both the Road Department and Recreation Department of Union County Government dealt admirably with several days of cleanup after the rain.

Meeks Park suffered enough damage that it had to be closed for a day and a half. The parking lot next to the Sorghum Field was torn up from water coming out of the creek, and the lower area and ballfields flooded, with the fence at Colwell Field 1 getting flattened in one corner.

Some pavement and culverts along walking trails also washed out, on top of other damage inside the park.

A bridge at the Farmers Market became clogged with creek debris, though there wasn't much damage from flooding. The Butternut Creek Golf Course, another county-owned facility, flooded as well, requiring debris removal and a couple days of drying before it could re-open.

Multiple county roadways suffered from downed trees and culvert damage, which the Road Department got started on right away that Tuesday, and many people lost power for a brief period.

Crossing Creeks RV Resort off Blue Ridge Highway experienced flooding, but thankfully, no one needed to be rescued anywhere, and countywide, there were no reports of injuries due to the flooding.

"For the amount of rain we got as quick as we got it, we're blessed," County Manager Larry Garrett said. "The flooding could have been a lot worse."

Apparently, no neighboring municipalities

experienced the issues faced by Union County as a result of the storm, according to Union County Fire Chief & Emergency Management Agency Director David Dyer, who said, "This settled over us and just dropped."

"When you have that much water concentrated in one area over such a short amount of time, in these mountains, you can have flash floods where water will rise quick," Dyer said. "So, you've got to take these flash flood warnings seriously."

In the event of flash flooding, Dyer advises people to steer clear of water in roadways.

"If you can't see through the water, never drive through it, because you don't know what's underneath it," Dyer said. "That water might be running across some asphalt that will support the weight of the water."

"But there may be a sinkhole underneath that asphalt that, when a 2 1/2-ton car rolls over it, that's more than it can handle, and it'll fall in."

"And for a person who is walking, 6 inches of water can knock them off their feet and wash them away. For a person driving, 1 1/2 to 2 feet can wash your car away, depending on your car."

Dyer would like people to check out a new section of the county's EMA website detailing how to prepare for various emergency situations at <http://www.unioncountyga.gov/departments/emergency-management-agency/areyouready/>.

And people may sign up for local emergency weather alerts by visiting <http://www.unioncountyga.gov/codered/>.

Pertaining to the big sinkhole off Murphy Highway and GA 515, GDOT crews working on the scene have requested that local teachers please "stop sending students out to take pictures."



A corner of the fence at Colwell Field 1 in lower Meeks Park was knocked down by water and debris in last week's massive rainstorm.



The parking lot adjacent to the Sorghum Field in Meeks Park experienced some washed out pavement due to the intense rain Aug. 29.