

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

## Local resident Frances Moon reunites with paramedic who saved her life

**By Mark Smith**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

On March 11, 2019, Frances Moon, a Georgia native and 16-year resident of Blairsville, experienced a heart attack in the middle of the night.

Moon lives alone. Her husband passed away in 1999, before she made the move to Blairsville as they had planned, so she had to call 911 herself. This being her second heart attack, Moon knew what was happening.

"When I called 911, (the dispatcher) told me, 'I'll have somebody right out there,'" Moon said. "It wasn't but a minute and they were there, and there were two ambulances parked side by side."

Paramedic Tim McMichen of Union General Emergency Medical Services manned one of those vehicles, and prior to that early morning

emergency response, he and Moon had never met.

McMichen understood Moon was in critical condition and needed to be in the care of a Level II trauma facility with a heart specialist team as soon as possible, so he decided on the spot to call for medical air transport to take Moon to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville.

As it turned out, McMichen made the right call.

Moon said her physician at Northeast Georgia Medical told her that the paramedic who put her on the helicopter and sent her to Gainesville had saved her life.

She wanted to thank the paramedic for his role in keeping her alive, but she didn't know the man or how to get in touch with him after her heart attack.

So, it was both a surprise and a tearfully happy reunion

when McMichen walked into the restaurant where Moon, her family and friends were gathered on Saturday, Aug. 31.

Moon has been employed by Dr. Thomas Karisny since she moved to Blairsville 16 years ago, and she has a following, including Patti Pierce, who is a patient of Dr. Karisny's.

When Pierce heard about the details of Moon's experience and that her friend was on the mend, she and her husband Mike researched the identity of the paramedic, tracked him down, and organized a surprise reunion for her at the Skillet Restaurant.

Pierce said that Moon knew she'd be meeting with family but didn't know that McMichen would be there.

When McMichen appeared with his EMS partner Kyle Mead, who had accompanied McMichen on that



**Paramedic Tim McMichen of Union General EMS with former patient Frances Moon, who credits him with saving her life after she suffered a heart attack in March.** Photo by Mark Smith

difficult night, the hugs, smiles and tears between McMichen and Moon were heartfelt.

Moon said that when McMichen called her to talk to him in the ambulance so he could monitor her consciousness, she'd responded with, "But I don't know you."

His answer back was something she said she would see Moon, Page 3A

## Wheeler, Franklin earn POST certification as Jail Training Officers

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
North Georgia News  
Editor@nganews.com

The men and women of the Union County Sheriff's Office and Jail pride themselves in their abilities to safeguard both the streets and inmates under their protection.

That's why training is so important to Sheriff Mack Mason and his established chain of command, all of whom ensure that each employee is as prepared as possible to carry out his or her job functions.

In August, Union County Chief Jailer Tommy Holbrook sent two of his jail supervisors to receive training by the Georgia Sheriffs' Association for certification as Jail Training Officers, or JTOs, through the state's Peace Officer Standards and Training Council.

And following their successful completion of the course, Union County Jail Supervisors Lt. Dakota Wheeler and Sgt. Anita Franklin both earned POST certification as



**Union County Jail Supervisors Lt. Dakota Wheeler and Sgt. Anita Franklin both earned POST certification as Jail Training Officers recently.**

Jail Training Officers.

Acceptance into the training program required that each student be a POST-certified jail officer with a minimum of three years' experience on the job, with the past year having been served with their current agency.

"The Jail Training Officer's newly hired trainee to perform at an acceptable level and become an asset to the jail division," according to the Georgia Sheriffs' Association.

See Jail Certification, Page 2A

## City Council approves Arby's sign permit, advances Verizon ordinance

**By Mark Smith**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Blairsville City Council Members approved a sign permit for Arby's Restaurant at 167 Georgia 515 in their monthly meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 3.

The sign permit application was submitted about a month ago, according to City Hall, and Mayor Jim Conley stressed in the meeting last week that "Arby's is not a done deal."

Arby's is one of several restaurant projects currently in development in Union County, though it's not as far along as the LongHorn Steakhouse or Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen.

According to the most recent Arby's news, the restaurant chain famous for its roast beef sandwiches has given a development company the go-ahead to investigate purchasing the property in Downtown Blairsville if the



**Blairsville City Attorney David Barrett with Mayor Jim Conley in the Sept. 3 regular city meeting.** Photo by Mark Smith

site can be developed within target costs.

"It's all predicated on the numbers working right," Union County Development Authority Executive Director Mitch Griggs said. "That's part of the developer's job, is to get all the permitting and the signage ... and all the paperwork together."

Once gathered, Arby's will use all available information to determine the lease rate for the property, which will affect the restaurant's bottom line and ultimately help the franchisee to reach a final decision on the deal, Griggs said.

See City Council, Page 2A

## Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club donates money to erect Meeks Park sign

**By Mark Smith**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Blairsville Sorghum Festival is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2019, a major historical milestone for any such endeavor, and especially one that has given back so much to the community over the years.

And thanks to the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club, which has enjoyed a favorable relationship hosting the festival at Meeks Park in recent years, there's a beautiful new digital sign at the park's main entrance at Georgia 515.

"About 10 years ago, the Union County Recreation Board came up with the idea of installing a nice, new sign



marking the entrance to Meeks Park," Parks and Recreation Director Larry "Duff" Conley said.

At the time, the Blairsville

See Meeks Park Sign, Page 3A

## Veterans groups aim to save lives with Suicide Prevention Training

**By Jarrett Whitener**  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 and Warriors Veteran Outreach are hosting a series of classes focused on Veteran Suicide Prevention Training as part of National Suicide Prevention Month in September.

Millard "Zeb" Blanchard, a member of both organizations, developed the training, which is aimed at helping veterans and others recognize potentially suicidal tendencies in other veterans.

"The Warriors Veteran Outreach has many different segments and units, and the one I belong to has to do with helping veterans with mental

health issues," Blanchard said. "The subset of that is specifically the Battle Buddy Program, which helps veterans with suicide."

"This is coming from Warriors Veteran Outreach, and I just want that to be known."

To help inform people about life-threatening mental health risks associated with veterans, the group has scheduled three classes that are open to the public, with the first having been held after press time at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 10, at the Maj. Leon Davenport Veterans Building.

"We are veterans, and veterans are one and a half times more apt to commit suicide than the general demographic of the population," Blanchard said.



**Zeb Blanchard**

"That's what this is about. WVO is all about veterans, and all their money goes to veterans."

See Suicide Prevention, Page 2A

## Sheriff's Office makes two arrests in separate fleeing suspect cases

**By Shawn Jarrard**  
North Georgia News  
Editor@nganews.com

The Union County Sheriff's Office believes strongly in cooperation between neighboring law enforcement agencies, as once again demonstrated by the apprehension of two on-the-run suspects last week.

On Tuesday, Sept. 3, Union County investigators received information from the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office in North Carolina that a potentially dangerous suspect with active warrants was hiding out in a home on Tate Road in the north end of the county.

The suspect was Phillip Eric McGahee, 30, of Lyons, wanted by authorities out of Jackson County, North Carolina, for allegedly discharging a firearm into an occupied dwelling there, UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn said.

McGahee also had two outstanding parole violation warrants from the middle Georgia area, and he was known by law enforcement officials to have gang affiliations, Osborn said.

After obtaining a search warrant that Tuesday, Union County investigators mobilized the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team before

surrounding the rental home and announcing themselves to whomever was inside, Osborn said.

"McGahee did flee out the back door, where officers were awaiting him, and we did take him into custody without incident," Osborn said. "We have charges on him here for obstruction of an officer and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon."

Also arrested at the residence was Mary Beth Larkin, 24, of Jackson County, North Carolina, for possession of drug-related objects, and further charges could be pending in her case, Osborn

said.

In a separate incident last week involving another suspect known by law enforcers to have gang ties, Fannin County deputies arrested a Union County fugitive on Friday, Sept. 6.

Randy Nathaniel Green, 34, of Blairsville, had been on the run since Wednesday, Sept. 4, when investigators with the UCSO Narcotics Division attempted to make a traffic stop on him following a drug-related investigation, Osborn said.

"He did flee from investigators and drove back to his residence on the western



Phillip Eric McGahee



Randy Nathaniel Green

Vol. 110 No. 37

4 Sections 28 Pages

Weather

Thurs: Sunny Hi 90 Lo 62

Fri: T-Storm Hi 88 Lo 64

Sat: T-Storm Hi 83 Lo 62

Arrests 7A

Churches 3B

Classifieds 3D

Opinion 4A

Legals 5D

Obits 4B

Sports 2C

**SPORTS**

**FOOTBALL**

Sep 13 @ Fannin Co. 7:30 PM

**SOFTBALL**

Sep 10 vs. Banks Co. 5:30 PM

**VOLLEYBALL**

Sep 10 vs. Lumpkin Co. 5 & 7 PM

**NEVER FORGET**