

North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Sinkhole repair projected to take until January '24

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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The Georgia Department of Transportation has projected that the work to repair the sinkhole damage at Murphy Highway and Georgia 515 will take until Jan. 1, 2024, to complete, though "this date as always is dependent on weather factors."

Pittman Construction Company out of Conyers is the contractor doing the project for GDOT.

Last week, Pittman started driving massive steel piles into the ground next to the Shell gas station and Sherwin-Williams Paint Store. The piles will shore up the dirt so that crews can safely excavate the area, determine what went wrong and replace

the infrastructure there.

The 40-foot sinkhole, which has been filled in, was caused by major rainfall that dumped between 4 and 6 inches of water on Blairsville in a matter of hours early Tuesday, Aug. 29.

Two manholes collapsed in the sinkhole, one containing GDOT drainage infrastructure and the other City of Blairsville sewer access, resulting in interrupted gravity flows for both stormwater and sewage.

The repair area is owned by GDOT, and the state is considering the project as a priority to protect the roadway and re-establish drainage for water runoff.

Erosion control has been put in place at the site, and pumps have been installed to carry stormwater from the First

Baptist Church side of 515 to the downstream side of 515 into the pipe under SR 11, or Murphy Highway.

"The remainder of the work entails completing shoring excavation of drainage components and installing new drainage and backfill completion," GDOT District One Communications Officer Elizabeth Johnson said last week. "At present, there are no accurate cost estimates available."

"The crews are working diligently on getting this done. Once completed, the area will be the same as it was originally."

Blairsville city workers restored sewer service Friday to the Shell and paint store by connecting a new line to a

See Sinkhole Repair, Page 6A



GDOT and Pittman Construction crews continued work on the extensive sinkhole repair last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

QuiltFest returns this weekend at Sports Center

By Kathleen Traylor
Guest Contributor

QuiltFest 2023 is coming this weekend, Friday and Saturday, September 22-23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

The event will take place at the Union County Sports Center, 519 Glenn Gooch Bypass, across from Union County High School and next to the Driver's License building and county Health Department.

Sponsored by the Misty Mountain Quilters Guild, the event will fill both of the gymnasiums at the Sports Center, and use the lobby and the conference room in the center hall, as well.

This show is the guild's major fundraiser for the year, enabling the quilters to purchase supplies for their many charity projects and to bring in nationally known speakers and teachers to Guild meetings.

Admission is \$7 per person, cash only, payable at the door. Children under 12 are free. Vendors and the boutique can take credit cards.

See QuiltFest, Page 6A



This 1960s vintage quilt from Linger Awhile Antiques in Murphy, North Carolina, will be on display at QuiltFest.

GBI arrests school worker for child molestation

By Shawn Jarrard
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On Friday, Sept. 15, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation arrested and charged Christopher Daniel Lovell, 42, of Blairsville, with aggravated child molestation and sodomy.

Lovell was employed with the Union County School System as a bus mechanic at the time of his arrest, though "no incidents occurred at a school," the GBI said Saturday pertaining to his charges.

"Union County Schools has become aware that a former employee is currently under arrest and in custody at the Union County Detention Center/Sheriff's Office," Superintendent John Hill said Sunday. "The safety and security of our students is paramount."

"The Union County School System is working in cooperation with local law enforcement and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to assist in the process. This is all

of the information we have at this point as this is an ongoing GBI investigation.

"Mr. Lovell had been employed by Union County Schools for the past two years. Mr. Lovell was terminated Sept. 15, 2023."

As a mechanic, Lovell did not have regular contact with schoolchildren on campus, though he occasionally ran bus routes as a substitute driver.

At the request of the Union County Sheriff's Office on Friday, the GBI Regional Investigative Office in Cleveland took over the child abuse investigation involving Lovell.

"While the investigation is still active and ongoing, preliminary information gathered in the investigation led to the charges against Lovell," the GBI said. "Lovell was booked into the Union County Detention Center. Additional charges against Lovell are anticipated."

"Lovell is a former employee of the Union County



Christopher Daniel Lovell

School System. The Union County School System has been cooperative with the investigation.

"Upon completion of the investigation, the case will be provided to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution."

Lovell has been denied bond and remains in jail. He has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Cub Scouts found safe after getting lost on 'adventure'

By Shawn Jarrard
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Do Your Best! is the Cub Scout motto. And five Cub Scouts up from Atlanta for a weekend trip to Woodruff Scout Camp did their best to be found after wandering too far from camp and getting lost on Saturday, Sept. 16.

The boys – four 8-year-

olds and a 6-year-old – headed off for an adventure on their own in the woods Saturday afternoon. When their parents and Scout Leader couldn't find them as dark approached, they called 911, and local authorities jumped into action.

Deputies with the Union County Sheriff's Office headed out to the camp in the northwest

See Cub Scouts, Page 3A



Sheriff's Office seizes multiple drug types, guns in arrest



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason and Maj. Shawn Dyer showing off the haul from the Sept. 11 drug bust.

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division made a sizable drug bust last week, doubling down on the perennial message that people who use and sell drugs

here are going to get caught, according to UCSO Maj. Shawn Dyer.

Austin Charles Damon, 26, was arrested without incident after the execution of a search warrant at his Harmony Lane residence in Blairsville on Monday, Sept. 11, and booked

into the Union County Jail on 15 felony charges:

Ecstasy trafficking; two additional counts of trafficking; eight counts manufacture, deliver, distribute, dispense, administer, sell, or possess with intent to distribute a See UCSO Drug Bust, Page 2A

Gov. Brian Kemp announces new gas tax suspension

News Special
North Georgia News

ATLANTA – On Tuesday, Sept. 12, Gov. Brian P. Kemp declared a state of emergency due to the 40-year-high inflation and negative economic conditions felt by hardworking Georgians as a result of policies coming out of Washington, D.C.

As part of the declaration, he temporarily suspended the state's excise tax on motor and locomotive fuel to provide

direct relief to families throughout the state.

The executive order went into effect on Wednesday, Sept. 13, at 12 a.m. and will remain in effect until 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 12, 2023. Consumers were expected to see the suspension's impact on prices after several days.

"From runaway federal spending to policies that hamstring domestic energy production, all Bidenomics has done is take more money out

of the pockets of the middle class," Kemp said. "While high prices continue to hit family budgets, hardworking Georgians deserve real relief, and that's why I signed an executive order today to deliver it directly to them at the pump."

"Working with partners in the General Assembly, we'll continue to help Georgians weather the economic headwinds caused by this president, his administration, See Gas Tax, Page 6A



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UCSO Drug Bust...from Page 1A

controlled substance; two counts possession of marijuana, 1 ounce or less; possession of a firearm during certain crimes; and probation violation.

Deputies seized a variety of drugs, with the following amounts estimated: 3 1/2 pounds high-grade marijuana; 200 shrooms; 6 grams cocaine; about 75 ecstasy tablets that field-tested positive for fentanyl; hydrocodone pills not prescribed to Damon; pure MDMA; THC cartridges; and TCH wax.

Investigators also took possession of a shotgun, a rifle, two pistols and \$15,618 in cash, against which the Sheriff's Office will be initiating civil asset forfeiture proceedings.

The arrest came after a two-month investigation spurred by a tip to law enforcement. Apparently, Damon was offering an "online menu" of drugs, utilizing internet postings to connect with customers on inventory, pricing and purchases, Maj. Dyer said.

This case is active and

may lead to additional arrests, Dyer said.

Damon remains in custody without bond. He has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Anyone may offer an anonymous tip about local drug

activity by calling the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

"We're actively working hard on drugs in Union County," Dyer said, noting that cooperation with the community plays an important role in helping deputies do their jobs.



Austin Charles Damon

District 2 Public Health promotes Flu Drive-Thru Clinics for a healthier community

In an effort to safeguard the health and well-being of our community, District 2 Public Health is excited to announce the launch of our annual Flu Drive-Thru Clinics.

The Union County clinic will be held on Sept. 26 at the Union County Health Department from 8:30 a.m. to noon, and from 1:15 p.m. to 6 p.m.

In Towns County, the clinic will take place Nov. 2 at the Towns County Health Department from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

These clinics are designed to provide accessible and convenient flu vaccinations to residents, ensuring that our community stays protected against influenza during the upcoming flu season.

As the nation continues to navigate the challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to prioritize our health. Influenza, commonly known as the flu, can have severe consequences for individuals of all ages, and we believe that prevention is

key to a healthier and safer community.

The Flu Drive-Thru Clinics will be a streamlined and efficient process to ensure the safety and convenience of participants. Here's what you can expect:

Stay in Your Vehicle: Participants will remain in their vehicles at all times, making the process quick and contactless;

Qualified Staff: Trained healthcare professionals will administer the flu vaccine while adhering to strict safety and hygiene protocols;

No Appointment Necessary: Walk-ins are welcome, ensuring accessibility for all residents;

Most Insurances Accepted: All health departments accept most commercial insurance plans, including Medicare, and Medicaid for no co-pay. Self-pay pricing is available for those who are uninsured or under-insured.

By taking advantage of the Flu Drive-Thru Clinics,

you are protecting yourself and your community from serious illness due to the flu virus. Preventing the flu can lead to fewer hospitalizations.

District 2 Health Director, Dr. Zachary Taylor, M.D., M.S., expressed the importance of these clinics, saying, "Our goal is to make it as easy as possible for everyone in our community to get vaccinated against the flu. The Flu Drive-Thru Clinics offer a safe and convenient option for individuals and families to protect themselves and others from influenza."

We urge all residents to mark their calendars and prioritize their health by participating in the Flu Drive-Thru Clinics. Together, we can create a healthier and more resilient community.

For more information about the Flu Drive-Thru Clinics, including specific locations and eligibility criteria, please visit phdistrict2.org or contact your local health department.



Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 Fall 2023 Activities and Events

The Blairsville Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 is in full swing as we approach the Fall. On September 23, the Post is hosting a Poker Ride for all Veterans and their families and friends. "We did this last year, and it was a great success; everyone had a good time," declared Mike Merritt the Post Commander. It's a way for Veterans to gather and spend some time with one another while bringing a little business to our local supporters, offered Kathy Merritt the Senior Vice Commander. If you're interested in attending, contact the Post at alpost121@gmail.com for more information.

Another one of the Post favorite activities is engaging with our local youth. Not only is it rewarding for our members, it's also a core Pillar of the American Legion; that of Children and Youth. As such, the Flag Etiquette program is in full swing as members team with the American Legion Auxiliary and the North Georgia Honor Guard and head to Woody Gap to spend an hour with our children explaining

the importance of the Flag and why everyone should be proud of it. Mike and Kathy Merritt were also the guest speakers at the Mountain Area Christian Academy for their 9/11 Remembrance Service. According to Mike, it was a great time to share our stories of how 9/11 changed our lives and our time in the military. "The majority of the careers of both Kathy and I were shaped by this one event and we each spent several tours in the Middle East for our country," he said.

The entire American Legion Family will be out at the Sorghum Festival to showcase our organizations. We hope folks stop by our tents and see what we're all about. We're especially looking for veterans who may not be part of a Veteran Service Organization to check us out and see what we have to offer. The planning for a Flag Retirement ceremony with our local Cub Scouts on November 18th is in full swing. It's another way to show our local kids what the Flag means and how to properly treat it.

The American Legion is the largest and one of the oldest and most inclusive of all veterans' organizations worldwide and devotes itself to mutual helpfulness, mentoring youth, advocating patriotic honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans.

All members, and interested veterans, are encouraged to attend our next meeting on the third Tuesday of every month at the Veteran's Center, 78 Blue Ridge Street. It's a great opportunity to become engaged in the community and to establish strong bonds with fellow Vets. The Post and Auxiliary, for spouses of Veterans, will begin its meeting at 6:30 PM in the same building on the same day. Additionally, the Sons of the American Legion and the Legion Riders will have their joint meeting beginning at 5 PM.

For more information on the meeting or any Post activities email the Post at alpost121@gmail.com or visit the website at legionpost121.org.

Gov. Kemp: Georgia Breaks Tourism Records in 2022



Atlanta, GA – Governor Brian P. Kemp, in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), today announced that calendar year 2022 was record-breaking for the state's tourism industry, welcoming the largest number of visitors the state has ever seen. While attending the Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference on Jekyll Island, Governor Kemp shared that 167.7 million domestic and international visitors in 2022 brought in \$39.8 billion in spending, surpassing the previous record set in 2019 by \$2 billion. Total economic impact for Georgia travel and tourism reached \$73 billion in 2022 - a 13 percent year-over-year increase. Travel demand supported more than 442,600 jobs across the state, an increase of more than 20,000 jobs between 2021 and 2022.

"Thanks to Georgia's incredible natural wonders, our great small towns with welcoming families, our major cities and attractions, and much more, our tourism industry continues to reach new heights," said Governor Brian Kemp. "This historic growth is evidence that our pro-business policies are working, allowing us to compete like never before in all four corners of the state. I applaud the hardworking men and women who work in this industry, Explore Georgia, and the Department of Economic Development who made these record-breaking

numbers possible."

For the third year in a row, Georgia maintained its No. 5 market share ranking for domestic overnight visitation among all 50 states and Washington, D.C. The tourism industry also generated a record \$4.7 billion in state and local tax revenue, a 10.1 percent increase over the previous record year of 2021.

"Tourism is a key part of Georgia's economic development success story, with benefits that spread across communities in all regions of our state," said GDEcD Commissioner Pat Wilson. "The latest numbers are a testament to Georgia's dedicated tourism industry professionals who constantly provide the best visitor experience possible, bolstered by the great work Explore Georgia has done to market the state as a top travel destination."

Explore Georgia's tourism recovery marketing campaign, "Ready. Set. Georgia.," has remained a key driver for visitation to and within the state since it launched in May 2021. The state destination marketing organization utilized a strategic approach to allocate funds from its federal EDA state tourism grant of \$5.8 million, allocated to Explore Georgia by Governor Kemp in September 2021 for the campaign. The funds were divided over four consecutive years in a prolonged effort to strengthen the state's travel

brand and open new markets for travel to Georgia. Explore Georgia combined state-appropriated funds with the EDA grant to maximize the campaign's paid media impact. An independent SMARI Ad Effectiveness study showed the campaign influenced more than \$113 million in state tax revenue, with a return on investment of \$35 per dollar invested, the largest on record over the seven-plus year history of the study and nearly twice the prior high-water mark set in 2021.

"Georgia's tourism economy is the strongest it's ever been!" said GDEcD Chief Marketing Officer Mark Jaronski. "The pandemic shut down travel around the globe, but not here. Thanks to the leadership of Governor Kemp, our General Assembly, Commissioner Wilson, and the men and women of our statewide tourism industry, including our state tourism office and expert marketing and communications team, travel to and within Georgia and its ensuing benefits to our state's economy and Georgians are higher than ever, establishing an unprecedented legacy for years to come."

Presented by Explore Georgia, the tourism division of GDEcD, the three-day Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference is the premier annual event for the state's travel and hospitality industry. This year, more than 400 tourism industry professionals from across the state attended the conference, which serves to inspire excellence and elevate the state's tourism marketing efforts by providing access to world-class marketing strategies and insights from global experts and industry thought leaders.

Reece Farm & Heritage Center Concerts: Curtis & Kim Jones Friday and Jayna Jennings Saturday

Reece Farm presents Curtis & Kim Jones, Mountain Gypsy Music! Reece Farm & Heritage Center Pavilion, Friday, September 22, 2023, 1-3. Bring your lawn chairs to the pavilion to enjoy two hours of music! Free admission and donations are greatly appreciated! We invite you to come enjoy the exhibits at the farm before the concert.

Curtis Jones reins as the most highly respected flatpicking guitarist on the planet, expanding on the legacy forged by musicians such as John Coltrane, David Gilmour, Doc Watson and Tony Rice. Jones is often called by fans and critics alike, "The world's fastest and cleanest" acoustic guitarist, an extraordinary technique that he both teaches and brings to his contemporary guitar performances and productions. Speed is only a small part of what Curtis can do though. He efficiently plays 22 instruments and is self-taught on all! Through his pure guitar mastery, he has created a new style of Music - "Mountain Gypsy Music" allowing his abilities to weave in and out of Bluegrass, Jazz, Rock, Flamenco, and World Music. It is more original than anything that has been heard since Django Reinhardt!

Kim Jones is an artist, singer, and songwriter. Her vocal influences growing up were Wynonna Judd, Patty Loveless, Janice Joplin, Bobbie Gentry, and Bonnie Raitt, and Stevie Nicks. Her Musical influences include Jaco Pastorius, Richard Wright, Bill Evans, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and McCoy Tyner. She sings and plays upright Bass with Curtis' Bluegrass band-Primal Roots, and performs with Curtis in their Mountain Gypsy Music duo. Kim has been singing her whole life but



Mountain Gypsy Music: Kim and Curtis Jones

has only just begun to perform in front of Audiences within the past few years. Kim plays and sings with emotion and delta blues style soul. When asked about her goals through music, her response is "I Just want to share it. It's in here, deep down inside, and I wanna let it out"!

On Saturday, September 23, 2023 from 1 until 3 p.m., Reece Heritage Farm presents Jayna Jennings! Two hours of original & cover songs!

Only 2% of the population are redheads and Jayna Jennings, three time Josie Music Award Winner, makes music as unique as her fiery hair. Jayna pulls you into her world with her emotive songwriting, a craft she has been honing for the past 11 years. Her newest album, Southern Gothic Romance, releases June 2, and showcases her most vibrant storytelling yet, cementing herself as a rooted songwriter and a force to be reckoned with in country/folk. Her first release offered her first glimpse at international recognition, when all eight songs from her first album received world-wide radio airplay. She has earned several nominations for prestigious awards, and has received the honor of



Jayna Jennings

Folk/Americana Vocalist of The Year at the Josie Music Awards, the world's largest Indie Music Awards Show in Nashville, TN, taking place at the Grand Ole Opry.

Byron Herbert Reece was a farmer and a writer, and his books are available in the gift shop. The farm is set up as a legacy to him & his family with exhibits, farm animals, local books, and crafts. There is also a hiking trail from the farm to Vogel State Park. The farm is also a beautiful venue for your special day with affordable rates. We now have trout stocked in Wolf creek (please follow all Georgia Fishing rules). Check out BHR Farm Village cabin rentals on

Cub Scouts...from Page 1A

corner of the county, quickly contacting the Union County Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency to marshal a greater response.

Union County EMA Director David Dyer activated the Emergency Operations Center at Fire Station No. 1 around 8 p.m., wrangling as many resources as possible to search for the boys.

And it was all hands on deck; Dyer deployed Union County's own Search & Rescue Team, more Sheriff's Office personnel and the Fire Department, and he called in mutual aid agencies in Towns, Fannin, Gilmer and White counties.

The Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Forest Service also joined the search, as did staff at Camp Woodruff, resulting in a rescue effort that

"pulled out all the stops."

Weather conditions prevented the use of a helicopter, but multiple agencies provided drone support and K-9 teams to locate the boys, and a search perimeter was formed and thoroughly investigated.

Around 3:30 a.m. Sunday - roughly 9 and 1/2 hours after being reported missing - members of the Union Search & Rescue Team found the boys outside the initial search area, huddled off a dirt road about 2 miles south of camp.

The five boys were cold and wet from rain that had started up that evening, and they had grown scared from being lost but were otherwise OK, Dyer said. They were transported safely back to camp via a side-by-side utility vehicle.

As it turned out, after striking out on their "adventure," the scouts got turned around in the woods before finding a road and

inadvertently taking it the wrong direction away from camp.

"They just kept walking roads until it got to the point where they couldn't see because it got dark," Dyer said. "So, they kept walking a little while, and then they decided just to bed down because they knew they couldn't go any farther."

Added Dyer, "They were scared. They said, 'Yeah, we were crying at one point, then we realized that wasn't doing us any good.'"

Still, Dyer believes the boys did a great job of "sticking together, supporting each other, and trying to find their way out."

"They knew that they needed to stop moving so that the rescue people could find them - that's what they told us," Dyer said.

The EMA director would like to thank the many agencies that responded to the "high-stakes, difficult rescue," helping to bring a good end to a situation that could have turned out for the worse. In the end, everyone did their best.

Union County Retired Educators September Meeting

Union County Retired educators met on September 13th at Blairsville Restaurant-Grits & Greens. As everyone finished eating, the new President, Allyson McGraw, called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and gave updates and announcements that were of interest which included: update on our emeritus members Charles and Betty Adams; members traveling; new handbook is almost ready; "Bus" for Isaiah House donations which goes with the state project "Totes to Tots" that allows a child traumatized by the move to pick out their own bag and other needed essential items in which they can keep their own belongings; upcoming "shredding" day at River City Bank; Kiwanis's fund raising events including YHC Planetarium programs and raffle for groceries from Foodland.

Mr. Drew Gibbs, GED Testing Service Director, was introduced and gave an overview of the free educational program located in the Shirley Miller building. He was also recruiting volunteers to work with students on academics specific to the GED test. He discussed some of the situations that prevent regular school attendance and obtaining a diploma, and stressed that part of the volunteer job is to help students gain confidence. A question/answer period followed and anyone interested in more information should contact Drew Gibbs at drew.gibbs@northgatech.edu or 706-439-6342.

During the business session, President McGraw, asked for input on future projects including a possible visit to the new Agriscience Building for



UCREA President Allyson McGraw

our November meeting; recognition for teachers for specific accomplishments and for students who plan on becoming teachers. Committees were addressed and some were in need of additional members. More presence on Facebook and in the quarterly GREA Bulletin was suggested. The legislative committee reported that our TRS fund is in good shape but we need to be alert to any attempts to use those funds for other purposes by the state. There was discussion about recent "hacking" attempts and how to protect accounts. Janice Cochran gave out fliers for the Ferst Readers Concert in October featuring the "Sons of the Pioneers." It was decided that half of the 50/50 raffle money goes to Ferst Readers each meeting as this is our local project. Everyone was encouraged to "Get on the Bus" and approach recent retirees about joining GREA and UCREA where their first year of dues will be waived!

Our next meeting will be October 11th and we will discuss further the Georgia



GED Testing Service Director Drew Gibbs

Retired Educators proclamation signing, ways to inform the community about Retired Educator's Day on November 5th, and the school hosting us in November. This will be an important meeting so please plan to attend. Local dues of \$15.00 for the 2023-24 year may be paid at any meeting.

The Union County Retired Educators Association is an affiliate of the Georgia Retired Educators Association and all retired educators, affiliates, and their family members are invited to join this local unit.

Sinkhole Repair...from Page 1A



Workers maneuvering a massive steel beam into place before loading it into a pile driver to shore up dirt near the Murphy Highway/515 sinkhole. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

nearby manhole, Mayor Jim Conley said. On the other side of 515, the city will continue pumping sewage from the manhole behind First Baptist to another one up the street.

Once Pittman has completed the repairs for GDOT, it will transition to fixing the city's sewer access

to its original condition by re-establishing the connection to the existing pipe beneath 515. No new boring under the state highway will be required for the city's purposes.

Conley said the city is hoping to secure GDOT grant funding to help fix its sewer infrastructure.

Importantly, GDOT said the sinkhole repair should not impact the schedule for the multi-phase work to widen Georgia 515 between Blairsville and Young Harris. Phase 1 of the 515 project, to construct a two-lane bypass around Young Harris, is expected to begin this fall.

QuiltFest

...from Page 1A

but the admissions table and raffle tickets will be cash only. Parking is free.

The schedule for Friday, Sept. 22, is as follows:

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Quilt Show and Vendor Booths Open, Quilt Raffle Tickets and Raffle Basket Tickets on sale.

9:30 a.m.: Demonstration, "Wool Appliqué Techniques," in the Conference Room, by Hayesville, North Carolina, quilter Katy Russell.

11 a.m.: Demonstration, "Making Rope Bowls is EZ," by Blairsville quilter Susan Slaton. See how easy it is to turn your colorful fabric scraps into rope bowls! In the Conference Room.

1 p.m.: "Quilt Turning," hear the stories behind some beautiful vintage quilts, owned by MMQG members, as they are "turned" and displayed one by one. Narrated by Susan Slaton of Wazoo Quilts. In the Conference Room.

2:30 p.m.: Demonstration, "Folded Fabric Ornaments," by staff members from Just Stitchin' Quilt Shop in Hayesville, North Carolina. No sewing required! In the Conference Room.

4 p.m.: Demonstration, "Hand Piecing without Fear," by Blairsville quilter Shirley Deasy. See how great-grandma pieced quilts without a sewing machine. In the Conference Room.

4:30 pm: Raffle Basket Drawings for baskets numbered 1 through 9. You do not need to be present to win.

The schedule for Saturday, Sept. 23, is as follows:

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Quilt Show and Vendor Booths Open.

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Quilt Raffle and Raffle Basket tickets on sale.

9:30 a.m.: Demonstration, "English Paper Piecing," by Hayesville, North Carolina, quilter Teresa Pratt. This technique looks complicated but is easy to master. In the Conference Room.

11 a.m.: Demonstration, "Hand Quilting without Fear," by Blairsville quilter Shirley Deasy. You can create beautiful, complex designs on your quilts with nothing more than a needle, thread and a thimble. In the Conference Room.

1 p.m.: "Quilt Turning," hear the stories behind some beautiful vintage quilts, owned by MMQG members, as they are "turned" and displayed one by one. Narrated by Susan Slaton of Wazoo Quilts. In the Conference Room. This



A raffle basket just for a Georgia Bulldog fan!

is a repeat of Friday's Quilt Turning.

2:30 p.m.: Demonstration, "Studio 180 Designs Basic Rulers," with Kelly Garcia from Two Crafty Moosesville, North Carolina. In the Conference Room.

4 p.m.: Demonstration, "An A-Maze-Zing Quilt," with Candace Hassan from Quilt Designs by Candace of Porterdale. See how to make this intermediate-level quilt. In the Conference Room.

4:30 p.m.: Quilt Raffle Drawings and Raffle Basket Drawings for baskets numbered 10-20, in the front lobby. You do not need to be present to win.

Every paid admission gets one ballot to vote on the Viewer's Choice "Card Trick" Challenge Quilts, and one ballot for their choice of all of the show quilts, as well as one raffle basket ticket. Additional raffle basket tickets may be purchased at the raffle basket display. Cash only, please.

This year's QuiltFest will have at least 20 raffle baskets, with values ranging from \$150 to \$300, containing items donated by the QuiltFest vendors, local merchants and national brand purveyors of fabric, thread, and other sewing notions and accessories. Many of the baskets will appeal primarily to quilters, but there are others that a non-sewist would enjoy.

Melissa's Custom Cakes has donated a delicious concoction, which has been paired with a selection of "Tea Time" items, including two handmade pottery mugs.

Logan Turnpike Mill has provided an adorable "Little

Red Wagon" stuffed with goodies from their shop.

A beaded garden stake from Nancy's Fancys will dress up a potted plant, or you can add bling to a wine bottle with a fancy stopper.

A Georgia Bulldog fan will be able to sip from a "G" Yeti cup while stitching up a quilt or placemats from red and black UGA fabric.

If you don't quilt but enjoy cross-stitch and other hand embroidery, there is a basket just for you. And some baskets are holiday-themed, with Halloween or Christmas fabric. If you're left-handed, one basket has a Martelli left-handed rotary cutter! There is something for everyone!

Do you have a vintage quilt and wonder about its age, history or value? Jill Halliday from Linger Awhile Antiques in Murphy, North Carolina, will be available to do informal, verbal appraisals of quilts from before the 1950s at her vendor booth.

If you have any questions about quilts, quilting or the quilt guild, or you would like to see the back of a quilt, just ask one of the "White Glove Ladies" that you will see throughout the show. They will be more than happy to answer your questions, and you might even meet a quilter who made a blue-ribbon quilt! We ask that visitors please not touch the quilts, and that food and drink be kept out of the quilt show area.

For more information, please visit the Guild's QuiltFest 2023 website at <https://www.mistymountainquiltguild.org/quiltfest-2023>, or email mmqinfo@gmail.com.

Gas Tax...from Page 1A

and their allies in Congress."

According to an analysis from Moody's Analytics from August, Americans are spending \$709 more per month than two years ago and \$202 more per month than last year.

Suspension of the excise tax will save Georgians 31.2 cents per gallon of gasoline and 35 cents per gallon of diesel fuel. When the gas tax was suspended from March through December of last year, 2022, Georgians saved roughly \$1.7 billion at the pump.

"I applaud Governor Kemp's suspension of motor fuel taxes to keep our people and

our economy moving despite Washington's inaction on rising fuel prices," said Speaker Jon Burns. "Georgia's success story is no accident – it is the result of conservative policies enacted to keep Georgia the nation's best state for business."

Thanks to the hard work and conservative budgeting of Gov. Kemp and the General Assembly, the State of Georgia can confidently suspend collection of the state motor fuel tax to help lessen the burden of historically high gas prices.

According to AAA, the average cost of a gallon



Brian Kemp
Georgia Governor

of regular gas in Georgia is currently \$3.57, up from \$3.24 a year ago.