

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## UCHS Class of 2017 ready to walk the field on Friday

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

One hundred and seventy-two of our finest students will walk the field on Friday night.

The graduation ceremony for the Class of 2017 will begin at 8 p.m. in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium this Friday, May 26, and seniors have spent the last month gearing up for their special evening.

Between prom at the end of April, then two weeks' worth of end of course testing at the beginning of May, it's safe to say that the soon-to-be graduates are ready for those diplomas.

Leading up to Friday's main event, the Class of 2017 learned that its valedictorian would be none other than Madison Horinek, who was also

the 2017 STAR Student.

The announcement came in the Thursday, May 18, Senior Awards Ceremony, in which all the seniors received their cords, stoles and certificates of honor in front of their parents at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

"I've worked really hard to get to where I am," said Horinek. "I study a lot. Academics don't necessarily come super easy to me, so I had put in a lot of hard work to get here."

And when she's not studying, Horinek spends a good part of her time practicing for the golf team. She and the rest of the team competed in the GHSA State Golf Tournament on May 22 and May 23, though the results of the tournament were not available at press time.

Horinek has been accepted into a prestigious program with



UCHS Class of 2017 Valedictorian Madison Horinek with Principal John Hill. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Augusta University and the Medical College of Georgia, which means plenty more studying so that she can become a doctor of medicine in just seven years.

"I am super excited to graduate and go on," said Horinek. "I love Blairsville, but I'm excited to go out and expose myself to new things."

When it comes to giving her valedictory address, Horinek said last Thursday that her speech was just about finished, and will convey a message of embracing change.

"Union County has prepared us to do great things, so I think we should all take advantage of the opportunities that we've been given, and see if we can do something with them," said Horinek.

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## Woody Gap to send seven graduates into the world

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Woody Gap School, members of the Union County Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield, along with Co-Principals Sheila Collins and Carol Knight will bid farewell to seven graduates when graduation exercises get underway at 11 a.m. on Saturday, May 27.

The seven-member senior class is the second

largest class in recent history after Woody Gap said goodbye to three seniors last year, 11 in 2013, and five in 2012.

As of press time on Monday morning, the Valedictorian and Salutatorian had yet to be named, however one thing that is a guarantee, upon receiving their diplomas seven young men and women will take their first step into adulthood as they prepare to enter the workforce or continue their education at

tech school or college.

There also won't be many dry eyes in Suches as family and friends pack the gymnasium to witness the final act as high schoolers by these seven graduates.

Along with the Valedictorian and Salutatorian addresses, Woody Gap teacher Gary Butler will deliver a farewell address to the departing seniors.

Another highlight of the

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## County to acquire 13 acres next to Farmers Market

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Commissioner Lamar Paris announced in the May 18 regular commission meeting that the county will soon be purchasing 13 acres of land from the family of Leon Davenport.

This land adjoins the Union County Farmers Market, and will connect its easternmost area across the Easternmost Creek to Georgia 515.

"If you know me, the only property I'm interested in is what we own and what it adjoins," said Commissioner Paris. "I've often said that, and it continues in this case."

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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris showing county meeting attendees an overview of the land he hopes the county will acquire the next month or so.

## Relay For Life to celebrate 23 years in Union County

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Not everyone has gone through the nightmare called cancer, but everyone knows someone who has.

And sometimes it's hard to find hope when fighting through the darkest of days following a diagnosis - which is why there's an American Cancer Society and a Relay For Life.

There may not yet be a cure for cancer, but with the annual Relay For Life, the American Cancer Society's main fundraising initiative, there's hope.

Relay For Life raises millions of dollars every year toward the cost of lifesaving medical research, always with an eye toward a cure.

For those who have

always wanted to help out but never knew how, now is the time - the Union County Relay For Life takes place this Saturday, May 27, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market.

Anyone can show up



on Saturday to support the cause.

"If they are cancer survivors, all they've got to do is show up at 4 p.m.," said Allyson McGraw. "We have a picnic for the cancer survivors

and the caregivers, and the cancer survivors get a free T-shirt."

The opening ceremony for this year's Relay For Life at the Farmers Market will begin at 6 p.m., and survivors are honored first in what's called the Survivor Lap, which is followed by the Caregiver Lap to honor those who have taken care of loved ones with cancer.

There will also be a special children's lap called "Take It to the Track," and children under 18 are encouraged to walk the lap.

McGraw has been with Relay for all of its 23 years in Union County, and she said that, though the idea is to walk laps for the Relay, it's not a race, so survivors can go at their own pace for however many laps they want, even just the first one.



Sue Upchurch and Allyson McGraw, longtime representatives of Union County Relay For Life

"If people want to go ahead and plan to buy the luminaria bag, that's for the 9 p.m. ceremony," said McGraw. "We will have those on site, and they can decorate them... and they can name the person they want to pay tribute to."

Luminaria bags are another way for volunteers to raise money during Relay For Life, and ultimately for the cure for cancer. The suggested donation for luminaria bags is \$5 each, and they can be purchased on the day of the event.

Mother and daughter duo Avis Shaw and Carla Persaud, both cancer survivors and longtime Relay supporters, will serve as honorary co-chairs of the 2017 Relay For Life.

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## Memorial Day Parade and ceremony this Saturday

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Those who have died in service of this great country get one day a year set aside specifically for their remembrance.

That day is Memorial Day.

The Memorial Day holiday is observed each year on the last Monday in May, landing Memorial Day 2017 on Monday, May 29.

Which means that on Saturday, May 27, Union County residents will turn out by the hundreds and hundreds for the annual Memorial Day Parade as it rolls through town starting at 10 a.m.

The parade has been ongoing since Bert Schwarz and Roy Hamby organized the first one in the 1990s, and



We Are Still Here won Best in Parade with this float entry in the 2016 Memorial Day Parade. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

it has grown every year since, according to Hamby.

"I think it's a very patriotic thing, and we need to keep it going," said Hamby.

Schwarz passed away some years ago, after which Hamby brought on Bud Akins to help with the parade effort.

Together, Akins and Hamby decided that Hamby's uncle, John Hoyt Hamby, should be the 2017 Memorial Day Parade Grand Marshal.

Hoyt Hamby, a Blairsville native, was drafted into the Army in the thick of World War II, and he served honorably overseas for nearly three years, including in Germany.

For his part, Hamby is proud and excited to be serving as Parade Grand Marshal. The Memorial Day Parade is his favorite parade because it honors those who gave their lives, but

never before has he been asked to be grand marshal.

Peggy Bryson, Hamby's daughter, said that the day will be one to remember for her father and their family.

"There's six kids and all their families, we're all planning on being there to support him," said Bryson.

The entry of patriotic floats or cars into the parade is encouraged, as parade organizers would love to see the parade grow even more this year.

Entrants should keep in mind the theme, "For God and Country, Support Our Troops," and entries can be made all the way up to the morning of the parade.

Those who plan to participate in the parade should show up for check-in around 8

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# Congratulations,

## CLASS OF 2017!

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