

UCSO weapons carry class back by popular demand

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Interested in starting a gun club/shooting range in Union County?

On July 10, 2017, starting at 6 p.m., you will get your chance to organize the effort.

The Union County Sheriff's Office will sponsor a Firearms Conceal & Carry Class. The class is open to the public and free of charge. The actual class will start at 6 p.m. and last until 7:15 p.m. Following a brief intermission, the organizational meeting for the gun club/shooting range will begin at 7:30 p.m., Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

This event will be held at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center at 165 Wellborn St. in Blairsville.

In addition to the class, "We have two ladies' groups that will represent 'The Well-Armed Woman' and 'Women on Target,'" Sheriff Mason said. "After the carry class is completed at 7:15 p.m., there will be a 15-minute intermission. At 7:30 p.m., those interested in organizing a gun club and developing a shooting range are encouraged to stay.

"The gun club/shooting range effort must be organized in order to get it underway,"

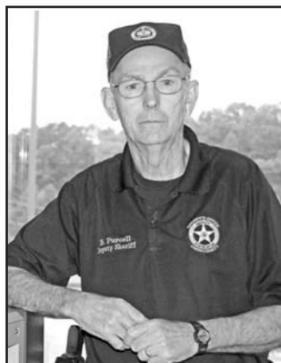


Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

Sheriff Mason said. "This county has many thousands of acres of U.S. Forest Service land, and we would hope to acquire a tract such as the one in Cherokee County, North Carolina, and in Towns County utilized by gun clubs in those counties."

Sheriff Mason asks that those interested should attend the after-hours meeting.

"Let's do more than just talk about getting us a place to shoot," he said. "The Union County Sheriff's Office is required by law to qualify shooting twice yearly, and we don't even have a place for the county sheriff's office to shoot. A shooting range will be of benefit to both law enforcement



UCSO Deputy Billy Purcell

and civilians."

The concealed carry class is open to the public, and all active duty law enforcement officers are invited. There will be one hour of P.O.S.T. credit for all active duty law enforcement officers who attend. This will also be a great opportunity to meet and interact with your local law enforcement personnel.

The training will be conducted by Staff Sgt. Billy Purcell of the Union County Sheriff's office. Sgt. Purcell has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience, including as a Georgia P.O.S.T. certified instructor with Firearms and Defensive Tactics as his major course of instruction.

The sergeant was a senior instructor from 1986 to 2010 at Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College Police Academy, and he was the assistant director of the Academy from 2002 to 2010.

Staff Sgt. Purcell has a degree in Criminal Justice and has graduated from the Professional Management Program, Command College and the prestigious Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy 159th Session.

In addition to his law enforcement service and education, he was one of the few officers selected to travel to Israel and serve as a Law Enforcement Exchange Officer.

This July 10 class is the same class that was taught last year on two occasions.

The invitation for this community event is open to the public. The training will cover dos and don'ts for concealed carry and provide you an overview of how you can legally defend yourself and your property as a citizen.

Sheriff Mason said feel free to come to one or both meetings, the class and the meeting afterward.

No firearm is required. The Sheriff's Office will be looking forward to seeing you there.

Warrants...from Page 1A

for both Gowder and Heaton, as per the state's statute of limitations laws.

Since Gowder and Heaton have not yet been indicted by any grand jury within the Enotah Judicial Circuit, their oldest arrest warrants have started to fall off due to a four-year statute of limitations that counts from the date a crime was alleged to have been committed.

Arrest warrants will continue to drop off as Gowder and Heaton remain unindicted.

All 18 arrest warrants related to these cases in Towns County have exhausted

themselves due to the statute of limitations.

As previously reported, Gowder and Heaton's criminal cases came up in Feb. 27 administrative sessions at the Cherokee County Courthouse in Murphy, resulting in both Gowder and Heaton receiving June 26 continuance dates for future administrative sessions.

Heaton and Gowder were arrested in North Carolina on Wednesday, March 2, 2016, following indictment by a Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five counts of trafficking in opium or heroin, and five counts of obtaining a controlled substance by forgery,

according to Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff Derrick Palmer at that time.

Previously, Gowder and Dr. Heaton received 2016 continuances in their North Carolina cases from March 28 to April 4, then from April 4 to July 11, and from July 11 to Nov. 7.

On Nov. 7, Gowder received a continuance to Feb. 27, 2017, while Heaton got a Jan. 3, 2017, court date to appear in front of a North Carolina Superior Court Judge.

The result of that Jan. 3 appearance was a continuance for Heaton to a Feb. 27 administrative session, the same day as Gowder, and the two appeared again for administration sessions last week.

Heaton and Gowder were arrested in Union County on Feb. 4, 2016, Gowder for three counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, one count of conspiracy; and Heaton for 40 counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances, one count of conspiracy.

Dr. David Gowder, Mike's brother, was also arrested for 36 counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance and seven counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances. Three other Gowder family members were arrested in connection with the incidents in question.

When asked at the start of the year about these cases in Union County, which had not appeared by the January Term 2017 Indictments of the Union County Grand Jury, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley told the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* to check back after the second meeting of the January Term 2017 Grand Jury, to be held in April.

Gail Gowder, Virginia Lou Harkins, Jamie Harkins and David Gowder were indicted in that April session, but Mike Gowder and James Heaton were not.

"In addition, there remains pending investigations regarding Mike Gowder and Dr. (James) Heaton," said Langley in April. "We expect those to be later presented to grand juries, either in this county or in White and Towns counties, because that case involves allegations in all three counties."

Langley said following the April indictments that Gowder and Heaton's cases would likely be presented to grand juries "in one or more of those counties within the next three months."

The scope of the investigation conducted by the Union County Sheriff's Office dates to when Dr. David Gowder was arrested in Fannin County on April 1, 2015 - when Union County became involved in the investigation - up to and beyond the February 2016 arrests of David Gowder, four of his relatives and Dr. Heaton.

Agencies involved in the investigation at the time of the Union County arrests were the DEA Tactical Diversion Squad, the DEA Digital Forensics Lab, the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency, the Union County Sheriff's Office, and the Cherokee County, North Carolina Sheriff's Office.

Celebrate July with the Cruisers!



As we continue to "cruise" through the season of 3-day holiday weekends and laid back vacation days, the Blairsville Cruisers continue to host two car shows every month, with their next celebration being held this coming Friday, July 7th, at the Union County Farmers Market! The fun will begin at 4 p.m. with covered parking spaces for 87 vehicles.

The event will not only feature a presentation of a slick trophy for "Best Work in Progress", but also scrumptious food, door prizes, sweet rides for all to see and a live performance by the band "Rewind"! And if that isn't enough, for a donation of \$5 per ticket (or 5 tickets for \$20) the Blairsville Cruisers will provide you with an awesome oppor-

tunity to take home a sporty 2001 Mustang Convertible (or \$3,000 cash; winner's choice), for which all donations benefit local children's charities! Whether you are participating by bringing your favorite ride (there is no registration fee) or attending as a spectator, the Blairsville Cruisers look forward to seeing you at the Farmers Market this Friday for a night of fun!

If you can't make it on Friday or just want a little more car show action, the original "Cruise-In-On-The-Square", which is held around the historic Courthouse Square in Blairsville, will also be offered on Saturday, July 15th, at which time a "Best Mopar" trophy will be presented, so mark your calendar!

Lastly, the Blairsville Cruisers would love for you to join their group! If you are interested, please call Wayne at 706-897-2501 or Pete at 678-773-5934, or send an email to blairsvillecruisers@gmail.com for further information. We hope you to hear from you!



Blairsville Cruisers Raffle Car

GBI Assessment of Fentanyl Spill

Decatur, GA - On Thursday, June 29, 2017, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) conducted an assessment of the fentanyl spill. This assessment has determined that evidence containing a powder of fine furanyl fentanyl leaked through untaped corners and seams of a cardboard box. The furanyl fentanyl came from powder residue within the box. The Crime Lab has modified lab procedures related to re-packaging and return of drug evidence to ensure that this situation does not recur. These

procedures include enhanced sealing and new containment protocols. Return of drug evidence has resumed.

6/28/17 - The Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Crime Lab is currently reviewing internal procedures for packaging drug evidence. This follows information received from the Duluth Police Department that evidence containing a fentanyl related drug spilled out of a package that was returned to the agency today. Additionally, the crime lab will be conducting a thorough review of this incident with the goal of establishing what caused the spill. A temporary hold has been placed on the release of all drug evidence during the review. An update will be provided following the full assessment.

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