

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, October 2, 2019

Shriners to begin hospital fundraising for children in October

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Everyone knows the men wearing red fez hats and friendly faces collecting money at local intersections. These men are Shriners with the Appalachian Shrine Club, and they are trusted members of the community volunteering of their time to raise money in the service of good.

And folks who donate to any of these men understand, when they give a donation to a Shriner, their money is going toward a worthy cause.

But how many people know what that cause is? How many people know that their donation – no matter how

big or small – is helping to ease the pain and suffering of children?

The Appalachian Shrine Club has faithfully served the communities and children of Towns and Union counties since 1987, when the Yaarab Shriners of Atlanta chartered the local organization.

Because Shriners are a close-knit fraternity that is generally committed to charity, fellowship, brotherly love, and the ethical principles of Freemasonry, they aid children both regionally and abroad by supporting a medical mission that reaches beyond their hometown community.

One of the main beneficiaries of the Appalachian Shrine Club's fundraising

efforts is the Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville, South Carolina, which is the closest to Georgia of 22 Shriners Hospitals located in three countries: the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Shriners Hospitals for Children provide fully-covered pediatric specialty care for children up to age 18 who suffer from conditions as varied as burns, spinal cord injuries, cleft lip and palate, congenital ear deformities, dog bites and other afflictions requiring reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The Appalachian Shrine Club has sponsored several local kids and teenagers over the years to receive treatment at the

See *Shriners*, Page 6A



Appalachian Shrine Club members with National Patient Ambassador Emily Mellish at Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville, South Carolina, in 2017.

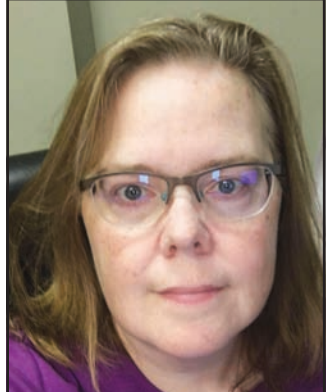
Gov. Kemp announces three nominees for Superior Court judgeship



Jeremy Clough



Buck Levins



Kerry Morris

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Gov. Brian Kemp announced last week that the Georgia Judicial Nominating Commission had submitted for his consideration three recommendations to fill the current vacancy on the Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior

Court. The vacancy was created when Chief Judge N. Stanley Gunter decided to retire from his position on the court, effective Oct. 1.

After conducting interviews with each of the nominees, Gov. Kemp said he would "fill the vacancy from the recommendations

provided," though state law does allow him to appoint any qualified person he chooses.

The names submitted for Gov. Kemp's consideration are Judge Jeremy D. Clough of the Enotah Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court; T. Buckley Levins, senior assistant district attorney of the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit;

See *Superior Court*, Page 6A

42nd Annual Indian Summer Festival kicks off Saturday in Suches

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

SUCHES – The 42nd Annual Indian Summer Festival will take place on Saturday, Oct. 5, and Sunday, Oct. 6, at the Woody Gap School athletic field in the "Valley Above the Clouds."

"It's called the Indian

Summer Festival because fall comes through and you get that first burst of cool weather, and then it's like summer makes a surprise return for a little while," said Woody Gap Principal Carol Knight. "That's the idea behind the Indian Summer Festival, that it would fit in that little spot when you get a little return of summer before the fall really gets started."

The Indian Summer Festival began in 1977, after it became apparent that the school basketball teams needed new uniforms, at which point teachers in the community organized to put on a flea market in a field just down the road at what is now Two Wheels of Suches Resort, Knight said.

"Based on the success

See *Indian Summer*, Page 3A



The Indian Summer Festival is a great way to support the students of Woody Gap School, seen here performing the annual "Cherokee Drama" in 2018. Photo by Todd Forrest

Low member turnout for EMC annual meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

YOUNG HARRIS – The Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation held its annual meeting last week, and as expected, the uncontested director elections at EMC headquarters resulted in the re-election of the three incumbents running.

Directors Gene Mason of Union County, Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, and Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina, were the only members to submit nomination paperwork for the election, and all three were elected to second terms on Thursday, Sept. 26.

Following the close of the business portion of the annual meeting, the directors met privately to select from among their rank board officers for the next year, and they chose to retain the same slate of officers that served in the immediate

See *EMC Meeting*, Page 7A



The North Georgia Honor Guard presented the colors at the 2019 EMC annual meeting on Thursday, Sept. 26. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Judge dismisses 47 counts against Gowder, Heaton; trial starts Oct. 8

By Linda Erbele
North Georgia News

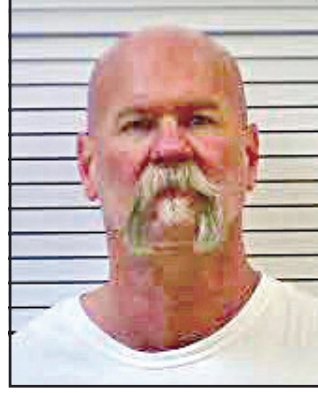
The federal prescription drug case of former hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Blairsville-based physician Dr. James Heaton is going to trial next week at the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville.

Jury selection in the criminal trial is set to begin Tuesday, Oct. 8. Court will close in observance of Yom Kippur on Wednesday, Oct. 9, and proceedings will resume on Thursday, Oct. 10.

Gowder and Heaton will be tried jointly on 103 counts alleging conspiracy to prescribe and obtain controlled substances, with Heaton facing 63 additional counts of prescribing controlled



Mike Gowder



James Heaton

substances "outside the scope of professional practice and not for a legitimate medical purpose."

In a surprise order dated Sept. 19, U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story dismissed 47

counts in the indictment against Gowder and Heaton involving prescriptions allegedly filled in North Carolina and Tennessee.

Gowder's defense team

See *Trial*, Page 2A

Student-grown giant pumpkins amaze at Butternut Creek Pumpkin Festival

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market hosted its annual Butternut Creek Pumpkin Festival on Saturday, Sept. 28.

Market vendors prepared delicious pumpkin and squash food samples and also had giveaways to encourage participation during the Pumpkin Festival.

The main event of the festival was the big pumpkin weighing contest, which featured 10 giant pumpkins grown by Union County 4-H

students and other local children who entered the contest earlier in the year.

"We had 15 students that planted pumpkins this year, and we had a rough season," said Union County 4-H Coordinator Timothy Jennings. "We thought we would have at least six giant pumpkins to show, but as of Monday of last week, we only ended up with three ginormous pumpkins.

"Many of the pumpkins were secondary pumpkins that grew on the vine, and we wanted to give students the opportunity to be here and show off their pumpkins. They worked on

them every Friday throughout the season, and it takes a lot of work and dedication from our students."

Student competitors from the 4-H program included Tanner McGee, Natalie Payne, Dominick Sharp, Sophia King-Rallo, Kaitlyn Beckman, Jessie Holbrook and Ava Sharp.

Contestants in the open division included Grayson Collins, Nora Collins and Peyton Collins.

State record-holding pumpkin growers Patrick Fix and Tim Grizzle of Union

See *Pumpkins*, Page 2A



Local 4-H participants in this year's giant pumpkin growing contest, with First Place going to Ava Sharp for her massive 665-pound pumpkin. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Vol. 110 No. 40
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Sunny Hi 90 Lo 60
Fri: Sunny Hi 85 Lo 54
Sat: Cloudy Hi 77 Lo 55

Inside
Arrests 7C
Church 2B
Classifieds 3D
Opinion 4A
Legals 5D
Obits 4B
Sports 2C

SPORTS

FOOTBALL
Oct 4 vs. Elbert Co. 7:30 PM

VOLLEYBALL
Oct 1 vs. Lake Oconee 5 PM

Senior Night

NASCAR

ELLIOTT WINS AT CHARLOTTE

See page 4C

Vietnam Veterans of America

Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall

Blue Ridge Oct 3-7

See page 6A

Ninth District Opportunity Energy Assistance Funds Available

See page 5C