

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

January 11, 2017

## Wintry weather settled in for a long weekend

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Winter Storm Helena moved through the Southeast last Friday night into Saturday, dropping her snow like a cold blanket over Union County and its neighbors.

It was a pretty snow at first, upward of 6 inches of powder prone to be carried on the wind.

The catch was that temperatures stayed well below freezing through the weekend and into Monday, causing prolonged hazardous road conditions due to snow that melted during the day only to refreeze overnight.

Thankfully, employees with the Union County Road

Department worked tirelessly around the clock to keep county roads as clear and treated as possible, all the while the Georgia Department of Transportation maintained the main thoroughfares.

Some black ice was unavoidable, however, given the constant low temperatures, which ranged between single digits and into the 20s throughout the weekend, causing melted snow and ice to refreeze.

The temperature first went below freezing around 2 p.m. Friday afternoon, with the low point of the weekend hitting 0 degrees Fahrenheit around 8 a.m. Sunday, and the temp stayed below freezing until Monday afternoon.

Union County Schools

closed Monday for all students, staff and faculty, a decision Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield made after careful assessment of road conditions and considering the likelihood of hazardous travel due to black ice.

County leaders took to social media on Friday before the storm to urge residents to stay indoors until conditions were safe, and many residents did stay home Saturday as the road department bladed snow for those who would travel.

Several businesses around town decided to open their doors to customers, though many waited until the sun had been up a few hours to do so.

Sunday was much the same as Saturday, with  
*See Weather, Page 2A*



The Union County Road Department worked around the clock with nearly a dozen trucks to make sure roads were scraped and treated for safer travel.

## Retired U.S. Army Maj. Leon Davenport will be missed

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
editor@nganews.com

Most people only know Leon Davenport as the retired administrator of Union General Hospital.

Davenport, 90, who died last Thursday, was the most decorated war veteran in Union County history. He also is the namesake of the Veterans Building off Georgia Highway 515 in Blairsville.

Funeral services were held on Monday, Jan. 9, at Blairsville First Baptist Church, with Dr. Fred Lodge officiating. Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and family friend John Gambino also spoke at the service.

Davenport will be interred in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. Arrangements have been entrusted to the care of Cochran Funeral Home and Crematory of Blairsville.

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Leon Davenport, a Union



These seven flagpoles were installed and dedicated at the Maj. Leon Davenport Veterans Center in July 2016. Following Davenport's death last Thursday, the flags were lowered to half-staff.

County native, is one of the most decorated veterans in U.S. Military history, and without a doubt, the most decorated soldier in Union

County history. Davenport began his military career as a U.S. Army private in 1944 and rose through the ranks to major, receiving

a battlefield commission in Korea in 1953.

During his 22-year military career, Davenport

*See Davenport, Page 6A*



Leon and Barbara Davenport share the major's Quilt of Valor, which he received in March of 2014.

## Remembering local hero and paramedic Jim Barnes

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Jim Barnes of Blairsville was only 61 when he passed away a year ago on Jan. 5, but he lives on through the immeasurable impact he had on others during his time on earth.

He was a devoted husband and best friend to his wife Shirley, whom he called "Shirl" for short; he was an instructor to an untold number of policemen, firemen and medical workers through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency; he was a loving son, brother and uncle; a medical professional, a volunteer and a remarkable friend to many.

And Jim Barnes was a hero in life, as can be attested by



James "Jim" Barnes, June 12, 1954-Jan. 5, 2016

the person who knew him best.

Barnes met the woman who was to be his wife, then Shirley Anderson, more than

two decades ago in paramedic school. They both worked in

*See Barnes, Page 2A*

## First baby of 2017; Anastasia Skye Radford

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Happy Birthday and Happy New Year to Miss Anastasia Skye Radford, Union General Hospital's first baby born in 2017.

Little Anastasia was welcomed into the world bright and early at 8:33 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 1, by her loving and proud parents Corey Radford and Crystal Bryant of Murphy, North Carolina, with a big brother and sister waiting patiently at home to meet her.

"We were surprised when we were told she was the first baby of the year," said Radford. "There were four  
*See Baby, Page 3A*



Anastasia Skye Radford was born on Jan. 1 at 8:33 a.m. And while she didn't have much to say at first, she had a very happy New Year's Day.

## Local alcohol violation prompts visit from state

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

A discussion and hearing concerning a recent alcohol ordinance violation was the primary focus for the first Blairsville City Council meeting of the new year on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

The Georgia Department of Revenue, Alcohol & Tobacco Division, recently visited Union County to conduct a routine investigation of area alcohol vendors, such as gas stations and drug stores, to ensure all state and local laws are being upheld.

Of the 20 stores visited by the DOR on Dec. 21, only one store was found in violation of both state and local law, the Blairsville Marathon,



Blairsville Councilman Tony Dyer and attorney David Barrett during the alcohol hearing on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

prompting the DOR agent in charge of the investigation, Special Agent MaryEllen Loggins, to bring the case to

the city. The case in question regarded the selling of alcohol to a minor, an undercover

operative of the DOR, who was only 17 years old.

City Attorney David Barrett conducted the informal hearing, calling upon both Loggins and Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Michael Baxter to explain the occurrences of that day to the council, thereafter the city would determine how to react to the violation.

"The state of Georgia conducts routine underage alcohol compliance checks," said Loggins. "On that particular day we were checking Union County. There was one store out of the 20 we checked that did sell alcohol to our underage operative, who was 17.

"He did not have  
*See Alcohol, Page 3A*

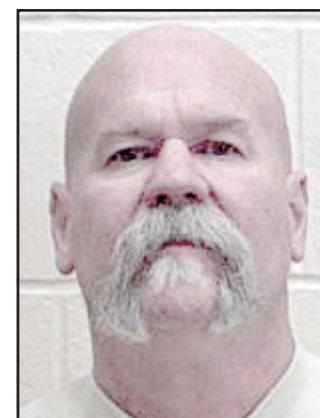
## Heaton granted another continuance in NC

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

MURPHY, NC – Blairsville physician Dr. James Heaton appeared before North Carolina Superior Court Judge William H. Coward in Murphy on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

Dr. Heaton received a continuance in his case to Feb. 27, which is the same continuance date previously granted to former Union General Hospital Inc. CEO Mike Gowder back in November, according to the Cherokee County (NC) Clerk of Courts Office.

Heaton and Gowder were arrested in North Carolina on Wednesday, March 2, 2016, following indictment by a



Dr. James Lanier Heaton

Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five counts of trafficking in opium or heroin, and five counts of obtaining a

*See Heaton, Page 3A*

Vol. 108 No. 2  
4 Sections 24 Pages  
Weather  
Thurs: Cloudy Hi 62 Lo 49  
Fri: Cloudy Hi 65 Lo 47  
Sat: Cloudy Hi 58 Lo 44

Arrests 5B  
Church 3C  
Classifieds 3D  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 4D  
Obits 4C  
Sports 1C

**Skywarn Storm Spotter Training Class**  
*See page 5B*

**Fruit Tree Seminar GA Mtn Research Ctr**  
*See page 4B*

**Blood Drive Civic Center Jan 17th**  
*See page 2B*

**PANTHERS BASKETBALL**  
Tues. January 10th vs. Dawson Co. 6 & 7:30 PM  
Fri. January 13th @ Fannin County 7 & 8:30 PM