

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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January 25, 2017

## BOE selects Odom to serve as board chair

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

When Cindy Odom won election to the Union County Board of Education in November of 2012, she became the first female Republican candidate to be elected to office in Union County.

This in turn made her the first Republican woman in the county to be elected to the board of education.

When she won reelection this past November, she was in line for another couple of years, as long-time Board Chair Gary Davenport, a lifelong Democrat, had decided last year not to run for another term.

As such, the chair

position was up for grabs, and Odom knew she could apply what she'd learned in her first term to lead the board into the future.

And on Tuesday, Jan. 17, Odom was chosen by her fellow board members to be the next chair of the Union County Board of Education, making her both the first woman and the first Republican ever to chair the board.

"It's important to me to recognize women," said Odom. "What I have found is that Odom gives a slightly different viewpoint, but all viewpoints from every single member of that board are vital. We're only as strong as the

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The Union County Board of Education in the Jan. 17 regular meeting, featuring new Board Chair Cindy Odom and new Board Member Janna Akins. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

## Chamber looks to the future in town hall

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Members of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce gathered at the Union County Community Center on Wednesday, Jan. 18, to discuss the major upcoming events of the year and how to make these days more successful throughout the community.

Chamber Membership Coordinator Linda Lawrence directed the early morning meeting, allowing members to go through each chamber event and determine the success rate, the failures and what could be changed to make each event more prosperous.

Of the many occasions the chamber has been doing for a few years now.

"The Buy Local Program was developed in 2012 here at



Chamber Membership Coordinator Linda Lawrence led an effort to outline the upcoming year for the membership during the Wednesday, Jan. 18, Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce Town Hall Meeting. Photo/Lily Avery

the Chamber of Commerce to encourage just that, people to buy locally," said Lawrence. "We've had three programs

that have come through the Buy Local Program.

"The first was the Business Extravaganza that

was held in May 2016 at North Georgia Technical College. The next two were the Buy Local Weekend in July, and the Hometown Holiday Shopping, which was done in November."

According to many members, the Buy Local Program had great potential but never quite hit the mark due to the lack of customers coming out to the stores to take part in the coupons and specials the stores had to offer.

Many at the meeting attributed the reoccurring low turnout to the calendar placement of the event, just before November. According to members present, holiday shopping does not truly pick up until after November.

After much discussion, it was determined that the date of the event would be better suited for the spring. Several in the membership also suggested extending the length of the

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## Commissioner signs proclamation, contracts in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

In his first regular commission meeting of the new year, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris proclaimed that January 2017 was to be known as National Stalking Awareness Month.

Stalking is a crime everywhere in the U.S. and at all levels of government, according to the proclamation signed by Commissioner Paris, which also noted that three out of four women killed by an intimate partner had been stalked.

"Many stalking victims lose time from work and experience serious psychological distress and lost productivity at a much higher rate than the general population," read Commissioner Paris from the proclamation.



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris

"Many stalking victims are forced to protect themselves by relocating, changing their identities, changing jobs and

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## Blairsville man part of Inaugural Task Force

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON - Union County has always been proud of its veterans, reservists and active duty service men and women.

And it's not every day that one of them is selected to help usher in a new commander-in-chief, which is why Union County can be especially proud of native son Steven Martin.

Martin is a 21-year-old U.S. Navy Seaman of Blairsville who served as part of the 58th Presidential Inauguration Joint Task Force in the nation's capital on Friday, Jan. 20.

"Coming from a small town like Blairsville, I never expected to be doing anything like this," said Martin. "This is



U.S. Navy Seaman Steven Martin of Union County

very much an honor."

So, how did Martin end up playing such an active role in one of the most important

and vital processes in American society, the presidential transition?

Not long after graduating from Union County High School in 2014, Martin decided to follow a family tradition and join the United States Armed Forces.

"My grandfather was in the Marine Corps, I have a lot of family members who were in the Navy, and I just felt like it was my part to serve my country," said Martin.

The Navy considered Martin for the special detail straight out of boot camp, at which point he went through an interview process to get the assignment.

His performance in boot camp, his height of greater than 6 feet and his successful interview process ensured that he was one of a very few to

get the job, as around 100 candidates are selected from a pool of more than 300,000 people in any given year.

Per a statement from the Joint Task Force, the task force is "charged with coordinating all military ceremonial support and Defense Support of Civil Authorities for the inaugural period. As a joint task force, it includes members from all branches of the armed forces of the United States, including Reserve and National Guard components."

For the past year, Martin has trained in preparation for the big day that comes every four years on Jan. 20, preparation that required loads of drills, tons of practice and plenty of rehearsals.

"We get together with the other armed forces honor

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## Sheriff Mason seeks local support for penny sales tax

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason sees a big problem looming on the edge of tomorrow - a potential loss of local law enforcement personnel beyond what it takes to keep the county maximally safe.

Just last year, the Union County Sheriff's Office lost five veteran deputies to higher paying positions elsewhere and even outside law enforcement, a trend that can be seen in sheriffs' offices around the state.

Mason is one of a growing number of voices in law enforcement who has given his full support to the



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason

establishment of a statewide penny sales tax to be used strictly for the salaries of sheriffs' deputies and city police officers, or mandating

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## National Weather Service teaches residents about storms

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Fire Department hosted an introduction to basic storm spotting class at Fire Station No. 1, provided by the National Weather Service, on Wednesday, Jan. 18.

Warning Coordination Meteorologist David J. Nadler with the weather service visited Union County from Atlanta to administer the class, telling all in attendance, both civilians and first responders, how to spot a storm and report it to the weather service.

Nadler and his fellow warning coordination meteorologists offer these storm-spotting classes to 96 other counties in the state, allowing for a class every

three years. Typically, the classes have been limited to first responders, but last week's class was the first in the area to be available to the public, for free, in many years.

"This is one of our first classes that we've done around here in a while," said Nadler. "I think when we can reach out to people and spread the word, it's very important. I'm excited to be here tonight and be able to share this information with all of you here."

Those in attendance sat attentively as Nadler explained the importance of civilian input in the case of any inclement weather, whether it is tornado, hail, flooding or a winter storm.

"We can never emphasize the importance enough of having

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David Nadler drove up from Peachtree City to teach Union County residents about spotting different kinds of storms. Nadler is a warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Photo/Lily Avery

## Sheriff singlehandedly nabs burglary suspect

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

When the Union County Sheriff's Office got a complaint about a burglary in a situation where it looked like the burglar would return, Sheriff Mack Mason knew just what to do.

He called his investigators to set up cameras around the property with perfect line of sight to items removed from and stacked outside the scene of the crime, a vacant house



Kevin Johnson

Parade of Sweethearts Valentine's Special! ♥  
Call Derek for more info.  
706-745-6343

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PANTHERS BASKETBALL  
Tue. Jan. 24 @ North Hall  
6 & 7:30 PM  
Fri. Jan 27 vs. East Hall  
7 & 8:30 PM  
Sat. Jan 28 @ Lumpkin Co.  
5 & 6:30 PM

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