

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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February 1, 2017

EMA, 911 director retires after decades in first response

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Charles Worden Sr. spent the last Friday of his career surrounded by friends, family and colleagues, as they gathered to wish him the best in retirement.

The retirement reception took place inside the Union County Community Center on Jan. 27, and Worden worked his last day as Union County EMA/911 director on Tuesday, Jan. 31.

Worden has shouldered many responsibilities over his long career, decades of which have been devoted to first response and leadership in emergency situations.

If there was a common thread among messages shared during Worden's reception,

it was this: his many years of experience and constant stewardship over the safety of Union County residents will be sorely missed.

Employees from every facet of Union County government attended the retirement party to say farewell, including workers from the road department, 911 dispatch and mapping, the fire department, the commissioner's office, the building department, the recreation department, the sheriff's office, as well as the Blairsville Police Department, the superior court clerk's office, the tax commissioner's office, and Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland.

Charles Worden Jr. represented both the Worden family and the Georgia Emergency Management and

Homeland Security Agency. Laquetta Worden, wife of Charles Sr., was unable to attend the reception, though Worden said she has always been by his side in loving support throughout their 38 years of marriage.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris presented Worden with a plaque honoring his commitment to the residents of Union County, and offered an emotional 'thank you' to the man he'd come to know as a friend.

When it came time for Worden to address those in attendance, he reflected on a few of the bigger moments in his career, like the search for Meredith Emerson, which was a long a painful road for many, and the first anniversary of

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Charles Worden offered decades of his life to being a public servant. His last day as EMA/911 director was Tuesday, Jan. 31. Son C.J. Worden in photo background.

'Rescued.' program offers second chance for detainees and dogs

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Group 18 of the RESCUED Program gathered with friends and family to celebrate a graduation milestone on Thursday, Jan. 27, at the Colwell Probation Detention Center.

RESCUED is a dog rescue program within the Georgia Department of Corrections that came to Blairsville in July of 2012.

Started by Colwell PDC Superintendent Diane Hassett and Jan Eaton of Tri-State Pet Rescue, the program's purpose is to help provide useful skills to later aid detainees in job placement after incarceration, as well as assist the dogs in training for better chances of being adopted.

A small group of 10 detainees was selected from the center to participate in the program, during which they worked closely with trainers from Cold Nose College in



Robert Johnson was one of the graduating participants of RESCUED Program Jan. 27, 2017. He was awarded most improved for his group. Photo: Lily Avery

Murphy, North Carolina, to teach basic training skills and provide care for the animals.

The results of the program are heartwarming,

as man and dog alike are changed for the better week after week, which according

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Community leaders ask for help in shaping county future

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Every five years, community stakeholders in Blairsville and Union County come together to work on what's known as the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is something of a living guide to growth in Union County, in that every five years, the previous plan is evaluated to see what has been accomplished, what still needs to be accomplished, and what is no longer a priority.

Ultimately, the Comprehensive Plan is meant to draw a community together around how it sees itself in the future, and plays an important role in acquiring state grant monies to help fund projects around the county while minimizing the impact to local taxpayers.

Helping Union County and Blairsville to complete



Regina Allison, Blairsville-Union County Chamber President

this state-required planning task is the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, specifically GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell.

Hazell kicked off the local planning effort several weeks back by reaching out

to Chamber President Regina Allison, Mitch Griggs of the Union County Development Authority, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and Darren Harper

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Blairsville woman dies in crash

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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A 55-year-old Blairsville woman succumbed to injuries sustained in a two-car crash on Georgia 515 at Kituestia Creek Road, local authorities said Thursday.

Ballard of Towe Road, Blairsville, passed away on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville from injuries sustained in the automobile accident.

According to the Georgia State Patrol, a 2015 Dodge Durango driven by Stacey Ann Hanby, 45, Blairsville, was traveling west in the left turn lane of Georgia 515



Alice Ballard approaching the intersection with Kituestia Creek Road. A 2001 Ford Focus driven by Ballard was traveling east

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Rep. Doug Collins hard at work

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia's 9th Congressional District won re-election last year, which means he's back in D.C., currently taking part in the 115th U.S. Congress.

And since Republicans now control both chambers of Congress and the White House, it's an environment he says is full of energy and momentum.

"From our perspective, from a conservative's perspective, I think there's a definite excitement," said Rep. Collins. "There is a desire to move on the goals and the ideas that we've talked about now for several years."

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U.S. Rep. Doug Collins with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at a retreat on Jan. 26, 2017.

Blairsville Cruisers already revving up for 2017 season



Blairsville Cruisers President Pete Barley, right, with Charlie Brown, the club's vice president, on Thursday, Jan. 26. Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville Cruisers met to discuss this year's cruises and community involvement opportunities on Thursday, Jan. 27, at the Major Leon Davenport Veterans Center.

The group welcomed new members and guests to the meeting that Thursday, one of which was Wes Cook, Restaurant Marketing Director for Blairsville Chick-fil-A.

Cook contacted the

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Commissioner Paris speaks to group in Young Harris

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris spoke on the growth and development of Union County to the Mountain Movers and Shakers of Towns County, during their regular weekly meeting on Friday, Jan. 27.

Since the recent election of new Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, many residents have been seeking development for the

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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris at the weekly meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Jan. 27, in Young Harris. Photo/Lily Avery

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Beginning Beekeeping Class Starts in Feb!

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Union County Kindergarten Registration week of March 13th

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Parade of Sweethearts Valentine's Special!

Call Derek for more info. 706-745-6343

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PANTHERS BASKETBALL

Tue. Jan 31 vs. Lumpkin 6 & 7:30 PM
Fri. Feb 3 @ Dawson 7 & 8:30 PM