

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Multiple indictments handed up in prescription fraud cases

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Dr. David Gowder, Gail Gowder, Virginia Lou Harkins and Jamie Lee Harkins have all been indicted, according to Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley.

The indictments came after more than two hours of testimony last week, during which time a Union County Grand Jury heard evidence regarding the cases of the abovementioned individuals, according to Langley.

Dr. Gowder was indicted on more than 60 counts "involving fraud in obtaining a controlled substance and unauthorized dispensing of narcotic medication," said Langley.

"In addition, he was charged with four counts of forgery, where he had forged

the name of another doctor to obtain narcotic medication," said Langley.

Jamie Lee Harkins was charged with Dr. Gowder as a co-defendant on four additional counts, according to Langley, and Harkins "in at least two instances was involved in retrieving the medications that were being fraudulently obtained."

In related but separate cases, Gail Gowder and Virginia Lou Harkins were each individually indicted on counts involving the retrieval of fraudulently obtained medications, according to Langley.

The court documents spelling out the exact nature of the indictments were not available in the Union County Superior Court Clerk's Office by press time Monday.

"In addition, there



Dr. David Gowder

remains pending investigations regarding Mike Gowder and Dr. (James) Heaton," said Langley. "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."

According to Langley, the cases will likely be presented to grand juries "in one or more of those counties within the next



Gail Gowder

three months." The indictments of Dr. Gowder, Gail Gowder, Lou Harkins and Jamie Lee Harkins come more than a year after their Feb. 4, 2016, arrests following a multiagency investigation into fraudulent prescription drug practices.

"It's a very complex case, covering activities over a span of time and involving actions in several different counties,"



Virginia Lou Harkins

said Langley. "The actions of Mike Gowder involved several states. The charges that were brought against David Gowder are primarily here in Union County. There are other charges that have already been charged in Fannin County."

The Union County Sheriff's Office opened its initial investigation more than two years ago, following Dr. Gowder's April 1, 2015, arrest



Jamie Lee Harkins

in Blue Ridge by the Zell Miller Mountain Drug Task Force, for attempting to fill fraudulent prescriptions, according to authorities at the time.

Dr. Gowder was arrested later in 2015 in Union County on similar charges, according to authorities, and he had been emergency room director at Union General Hospital up until

See Indictments, Page 2A

## National Day of Prayer highlighted in county meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris shared what he said was probably a record number of proclamations in the April county meeting, and invited a number of individuals to speak about the upcoming National Day of Prayer.

In the meeting, Paris proclaimed May 4, 2017, as a "Day of Prayer" in Union County.

"The National Day of Prayer is an opportunity for Americans of all faiths

to join in united prayer to acknowledge our dependence on God, to give thanks for blessings received, to request healing for wounds, and to ask God to guide our leaders and bring wholeness to the United States and her citizens," read a portion of the proclamation.

Always the first Thursday in May, the National Day of Prayer has been a tradition since President Ronald Reagan signed the specially designated day into law in 1988, though the allotment for an annual day of prayer goes back to President Harry S. Truman in 1952.

Churches and residents all over the region will be observing the National Day of Prayer on May 4, with local observances set to take place as in years past, with area preachers leading prayer services.

Union County residents can join in the communal observance of the National Day of Prayer at the First Baptist Church of Blairsville on Thursday, May 4, at 6:30 p.m. in the main sanctuary of the church, located just down the street from the Historic Union County Courthouse.

Area preachers will take See Prayer, Page 2A



Several pastors from the area attended the April county commission meeting, to offer a preview of the upcoming National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 4.

## Commissioner Paris awards grants for addiction recovery programs

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Each year, the Union County Commissioner's Office makes available grant applications to organizations within the county through the Union County Alcohol and Drug Rehab Grant Program.

This program, put into place in 2010, was created to address the problem of alcohol and drug abuse in Union County.

Monies for the grants are set aside from a portion of the county's alcohol license fees and tax receipts, with a goal of better addressing the problem of substance abuse and its effect on the community.

Every year, the Union County Substance Abuse Committee, a set of volunteer community leaders aware of the threats of substance abuse in the area, approve applicants based



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris with Roger Lampert of SMART Recovery.

on the programs presented, how the funds are to be used, and the successes of each program.

Recipients of the grants range from civic organizations and churches to school groups

and individuals who are dedicated to the prevention, education and rehabilitation of substance abuse in Union County.

See Recovery, Page 2A

## School nutrition highlighted in BOE monthly meeting

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The nutrition program at Union County Schools has received recognition on a state level for the various ways nutrition staff has made school meals more enjoyable for students.

To showcase this continuous success, Union County Schools Nutrition Director Courtney presented a school nutrition video to the Union County Board of Education at the regular monthly meeting on



Board Chair Cindy Odum and Board Member Keith Potts during a meeting of the Union County Board of Education on Thursday, April 20.

## K9 Deputy Bodie laid to rest after years of serving county

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For more than a decade, K9 Deputy Bodie and Capt. Chad Deyton worked side by side to fight the illegal drug trade in Union County.

Together, they made nearly 400 arrests, including numerous multiagency drug busts, and seized thousands of dollars in real estate and vehicles as part of the Narcotics Division of the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Bodie's reputation in law enforcement circles is unparalleled in the North Georgia region - if there were drugs to be found, Bodie could sniff them out.

The schoolchildren of Union County even came to know the kindly K9 as Captain Bodie, since he followed his handler's rank.

And while Capt. Deyton continues to this day the ever-constant fight against drugs, sadly, his K9 sidekick cannot.

Bodie retired as a K9 unit at the beginning of this



Capt. Chad Deyton with K9 Deputy Bodie

## Manhunt issued for suspect considered armed and dangerous

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Sheriff's Office was still looking for a man named Jeffrey Dean Cowan, 56, as of press time Monday.

Cowan should be considered armed and dangerous, according to the sheriff's office.

At around 2:30 p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, April 23, Cowan was picked up from Union County Jail by local bondsman Buck Dills, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

Dills was in the process of bonding Cowan out Sunday from a weeks old theft by taking charge, and Cowan told Dills that he needed to be driven to the Booger Hollow Store on Gainesville Highway

to get the bond fee money from his waiting wife, according to Lt. Osborn.

No wife awaited them when the two arrived at the store, and Cowan cut Dills with a knife, then ran over to the neighboring Dollar General, according to Lt. Osborn.

"He went into the Dollar General Store and held a knife to the clerk's throat, and threatened to kill her if she didn't give him the keys to her car," said Lt. Osborn.

That's how Cowan came to be driving an orange 2007 Honda Fit, which authorities were still looking for as of Monday, Georgia tag PLU 4697, according to Lt. Osborn.

It was still an unknown Monday just how Cowan got hold of a knife between the jail and the store, though the sheriff's office said Cowan



Jeffrey Dean Cowan

may have acquired a boxcutter from Dills' truck on the way to the store.

"Warrants have been issued for two counts of Aggravated Assault and Felony Theft by Taking," read a

See Manhunt, Page 6A

Vol. 108 No. 16  
4 Sections 28 Pages  
Weather  
Thurs: T-Storms Hi 71 Lo 58  
Fri: T-Storms Hi 81 Lo 62  
Sat: T-Storms Hi 84 Lo 63

Arrests 6A  
Churches 5C  
Classified 2D  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 4D  
Obits 7C  
Sports 2C

Allegheny Lodge  
Spring BBQ  
April 28th  
See page 5B

"Hillbilly Time"  
Union County Fine Arts Center  
See page 4B

Veterans Appreciation Fishing Rodeo  
See page 3C

PANTHERS GOLF  
Tues Apr 25 Girls Tourn.  
@ Old Union Golf Course  
TRACK  
Apr 29 State Sectionals  
@ Bulloch High School