

Burglary suspect nabbed in Clay County, NC

By Shawn Garrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Sheriff's Office has brought charges against a Hayesville, NC, woman for two burglaries that occurred in December, according to UCSCO spokesperson Detective Lt. Daren Osborn.

At the time of her arrest, Socorro Coffey, 27, was in the process of breaking into another residence on Fires Creek Road in Clay County, NC, according to Lt. Osborn.

Investigators with the Clay County Sheriff's Office contacted Lt. Osborn on Saturday, Jan. 2, to inform him that they had recovered a stolen Ruger .22 caliber pistol from Coffey's possession, and that they believed it to belong to a recent Union County burglary victim, according to

Lt. Osborn.

Lt. Osborn traveled to the Clay County Jail to ask Coffey about the stolen weapon, but she failed to give him any information, according to Lt. Osborn.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office took out a search warrant on her residence, enabling them to recover items related to another burglary that occurred in Union County around the same timeframe in December, according to Lt. Osborn.

During the investigation, Lt. Osborn said that he also found some items that turned out to be related to a burglary in Towns County, and he alerted the Towns County Sheriff's Office of the items.

Coffey has since been charged with two felony counts of burglary in Union County, according to Lt. Osborn.

"One of my victims

here did recognize some of the items that I found out of Coffey's house as being his, and he also recognized the vehicle that she was caught in as the vehicle that was prowling around his house the day before his house was burglarized," said Lt. Osborn.

Thanks to her initial arrest in Clay County and the subsequent investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office, several burglaries have been cleared up in Clay County, two in Union County, and at least one in Towns County, according to Lt. Osborn.

Coffey currently resides in the Clay County Jail, where she is being held on \$25,000 bond and facing pending arrest by the Union County Sheriff's Office.

"We go out in the community and try to find families who are living in substandard housing currently, and who are employed and can afford a mortgage," said Thomas. "There's a real misconception that Habitat gives away houses, and that's not the case at all. In order to apply for a Habitat, you have to have lived here, in either Towns or Union County, for over a year, or you had to have worked in one of the two counties for over two years."

For Thomas and everyone at Habitat, including all of its board members, the whole point of Habitat is to provide structured, valuable opportunities for what is most important in any community - families.

Volunteers are always needed, both for builds and working at the ReStore, particularly on the weekends.

Thomas said the board is also seeking fresh faces, and searching locally for community stakeholders and younger people to help out with both volunteering and possibly positions on the board.

Those interested in volunteering in any capacity, or donating either money or lightly used household items or building materials, can call (706) 379-2484 to ask how they can help, and all donations are tax deductible.

The Habitat ReStore is located right around the Towns/Union line at 7693 Hwy 76 West in Young Harris, and hours are Wednesday through Saturday each week, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Habitat...from Page 1

since February of 2015, Kate Scroggs, like Thomas, has a passion for her job, which is a nonprofit.

"Habitat has always seemed to me like a more worthwhile organization, in that everything that we make in this store, with the exception of my pay and Bryan's pay, goes straight to the house," said Scroggs, adding that they also employ two movers on Thursdays to pick up donations. "Not many nonprofits can say that, because they have a lot of overhead costs, but we don't."

The ReStore stocks everything but clothing, mattresses, exercise equipment and televisions, and donations can be called in for pickup on Thursdays.

With a constantly revolving selection of gently used appliances and household items, one never knows what they will find at the ReStore. From refrigerators to washing machines, from books to sinks and fixtures, sofas, doors and windows - the ReStore has it all.

Habitat for Humanity of Towns/Union Counties relies solely on local donations and fundraising for support, as each individual Habitat operates without involvement from the national group.

Beyond donations, the local need for support also includes volunteer hours, both in the ReStore and on build sites.

For the past few home builds, Habitat has counted itself fortunate to have access to Solomon Patrick, who has led construction efforts for four homes at deeply discounted rates.

Also a tremendous help in supplying heavily discounted materials has been Builders FirstSource of Blairsville.

Together with volunteers, Habitat has been able to build 15 homes between Towns and Union counties in the past 19 years, with home No. 16 currently in the works in Union County.

"Homes are paid for through donations, through fundraising that we do here at Habitat," said Thomas. "The houses are built, they are sold to the Partner families at our cost, and they are provided an interest-free mortgage. The money that is brought back in through the payment of that mortgage is also used to build more homes."

In order to secure a Habitat home, a Habitat Partner family must give a down payment, and then contribute 150 hours of "sweat equity" toward building the house, either working on the house, in the ReStore or in the Habitat office.

Finding a family for which to build a Habitat home is a thorough process - Thomas spends much time working in the community and through employers, attempting to find just the right family.

Malone...from Page 1

partner at The PAR Group in Atlanta, a company he's been with since 1989.

"What we do is leadership development in corporate America," said Malone. "Some of the clients that I work with personally are Coca-Cola, Delta Airlines, the Southern Company - those are some of the local companies that I work with, though I work all over the world."

Even though the company is based in Atlanta, Malone said he works mostly from his home office, located right here in Union County, which is why he decided to take on added responsibilities at the chamber.


"I'm still working for my company, but I'm very flexible in my time and my schedule," said Malone. "So when Cindy resigned, I offered myself as the interim, and the executive committee of the board thought that would be a good idea based on - I was just coming off a three-year term on the board, so I had the background to know what was going on. And I've got the management and leadership experience."

Malone thinks that the chamber board's search for a new president could be complete within the next 90 days, including time for advertising the position, taking applications, interviewing applicants and making a decision.

"I've told the board that I'm available beyond that, and that they should take their time and do the right thing for the chamber," said Malone.

Williams decided to leave the chamber after much consideration of her time spent in Blairsville and Union County - almost a decade in the top position - and ultimately decided to accept the greater challenge of serving a population larger than 100,000.

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Superintendent...from Page 1

interviews later in January, and hopes to select the next superintendent by the end of February.

There was a total of 104 responses to the community survey and 213 responses to the employee survey, in which community members and employees ranked the desired characteristics and qualifications of the next superintendent.

Both groups ranked honesty and high ethical and moral standards as the top considerations.

Other qualities ranked high by both groups included the ability to make tough

community at large, Malone said he hopes people will use him as a resource during his time as interim president, where he will be available at the chamber headquarters in the Union County Community Center.

"I've got a pretty much open door policy," said Malone. "I'm willing to talk to anybody and listen to anybody, and do more listening than talking. I hope that continues, and I think that's one of the characteristics they'll be looking for in the person who takes the permanent position."

decisions, a willingness to listen, and the ability to lead improvement of student achievement levels.

In a release, the board announced that it was pleased with the number and quality of the applicant pool for superintendent, and said it feels that the strong interest in the position is due to the quality and reputation of both the community and the school system.

The board expressed its appreciation for the support of the community and system employees during the search process.

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