

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Cook: '3D mammogram saved my life'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Pat Cook has been getting mammograms every year for the past 34 years, as regular as clockwork.

She has undergone procedures to remove benign cysts in the past, though she has never been diagnosed with cancer – never, that is, until earlier this year.

Following her most recent yearly mammogram, Cook was informed that she needed to have a biopsy conducted to investigate some abnormal-looking tissue in one of her breasts.

As it turned out, though she didn't feel sick, Cook's biopsy results showed that she had HER2-positive breast cancer, meaning that her body was producing way too many HER2 proteins.

This type of cancer is especially aggressive, because HER2-positive status means that the cancer grows faster and is more likely to spread and come back than other types of breast cancers.

Fortunately, the medical staff at Union General Hospital were able to catch Cook's cancer in the extreme early stages, thanks in large part to a technology that came to the hospital last summer.

In June of 2015, the hospital's radiology department acquired what is called a Genius 3D mammography machine, which boasts the ability to detect 41 percent more invasive breast cancers and reduce false positives by up to 40 percent.

Such 3D technology allows radiologists and doctors to view many more images of a breast, and in greater detail,



Ed and Pat Cook

than with traditional, 2D mammography, though both technologies have been proven to save lives each and every year, all around the world.

"With the standard, imaging, we do four images – two images of each breast," said Kristi Anderson, director of

radiology at Union General Hospital. "With the 3D images, it uses the same standard four views, plus a stack of images for each, breast in two different views, and each of those stacks are on average of 70 to 75 images. So it literally gives the radiologist almost 300 images of their breast instead of only four."

The drawback to the 3D technology is that it costs \$75 more than the traditional digital mammography, and not all insurance companies cover the extra cost.

But Cook called her company and, fortunately, they did cover the added cost – otherwise, she said, she would not have opted for the 3D mammogram, which she now credits with detecting her cancer early and saving her life.

She had the 3D

mammogram completed shortly after Christmas last year, and when the hospital called her back for more imaging she didn't think anything of it. The machine was still new, after all, and it was Christmastime, which she'd slated to spend with family and doing some traveling around the New Year.

Ultimately, she went in for the follow-up mammogram on Jan. 19, and soon after she was called in for a biopsy.

"I still wasn't concerned at all about it, because I'd done this before," said Cook. "By the time I had done my homework, I realized I wanted an incisional biopsy, which means they actually cut your breast and take the bad tissue out and examine it, and I had that done on Feb. 3."

A week later, her surgeon, See Mammography, Page 2A

Union County 4-H wins big at district

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The North Georgia News would like to congratulate the 32 Union County 4-H'ers who returned from the Northeast District Project Achievement Competition with honors in their project areas, and the eight who will be heading to state competition in July.

Held the first weekend in March, the district meeting at Rock Eagle 4-H Center was attended by 597 competitors from 39 counties in the Northeast District, and this year, Union County will be sending more first place winners than ever before to state competition in July.

"Every kid in the middle school or high school that goes to District Project Achievement



Union County 4-H'ers at the Northeast District Project Achievement Competition during the first weekend in March

has a record book that they have to complete before they go to the district competition,"

explained County Extension Coordinator Timothy Jennings, who heads up the county's

4-H program through UGA Extension.

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Union tops in state at donating life



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris with LifeLink's Cynthia Jenkins

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The people of Union County continue to save lives through organ and tissue donation in the State of Georgia, and their philanthropy hasn't gone unnoticed.

And last week, with

LifeLink's Cynthia Jenkins in attendance, Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris proclaimed April as Donate Life Month, which coincides with the National Donate Life Month.

LifeLink of Georgia is a non-profit community service organization dedicated

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Enotah CASA teams up with mayor, commissioner

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Fewer abused children are in foster homes these days because authorities increasingly have been placing these children in the homes of family members – but that doesn't mean there are fewer abused children.

And there's still a great need for foster homes within the Enotah Judicial Circuit, homes for children who don't have other family members with which to stay.

"There's a high need to have more foster homes in both Union and Towns County," said Linda D'Angelo, executive director of Enotah CASA for Children. "Those children that are in foster care, a majority are placed outside of our community because we don't have enough foster homes."

The problem with placing children outside of their communities, said D'Angelo, is that the children are ripped from



L-R: Jessica Moreland (S.A.F.E.), Molly Cousin (S.A.F.E.), Commissioner Paris, Melissa Ekeberg (Enotah CASA), Kelly Nasha Kreisle (S.A.F.E.), Betsy Ramd (S.A.F.E.), Linda D'Angelo (Enotah CASA) and Natasha Dancis (S.A.F.E.) stand amid 205 blue pinwheels representing children abused within the Enotah Judicial Circuit

See CASA, Page 3A

High speed chase ends in arrests

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Topping out at speeds in excess of 120 miles per hour, Robert Lee Davis in some kind of a hurry the evening of Sunday, March 27.

Following an attempted traffic stop in Polk County, Tenn., the 48-year-old Fannin County man led authorities in a high speed pursuit across state lines and three counties – from Polk into Fannin, and finally Polk – before losing control of his vehicle and running into a guidewire at the intersection of Old Blue Ridge Highway and Georgia 515, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.



Robert Lee Davis

Union County became involved when Sgt. Adam Deyton of the Union County Sheriff's Office received a call to be on the lookout for a silver Toyota Camry at around

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Kiwanis Fair begins Tuesday

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

It's that time of year again, yes, the Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair is here again.

Yes, it's time for the Eighth Annual Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair, scheduled for Tuesday, April 12, through Sunday, April 17 at a new location.

For years, the Kiwanis Club has used the Union County Industrial Park on Airport Road off Highway 515. This year, rain or shine, the Kiwanis Mountain Fair will continue under the big top at Union County Saddle Club Arena.

The fun filled adventure packs a carnival atmosphere,



complete with rides galore. The event features traditional carousels to lots of rides for the kids. Without a doubt, there is something for everyone.

The fair also includes games, cotton candy,

apples, a petting zoo and so much more and also, a new carnival vendor with lots more rides available this year.

The event brings to

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Cynthia Marie Smith indicted

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A Union County Grand Jury has indicted a 39-year-old Blairsville woman on multiple counts of vehicular homicide.

Cynthia Marie Smith faces a 12-count indictment for charges that include homicide by a motor vehicle in the first degree, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

The indictment dates to the May 28, 2015, death of Joni Lynn Clark, 51, of Murphy, NC.

"Georgia State Patrol's Specialized Collision Reconstruction Team, which is their serious accident team, took charges based on the



Cynthia Marie Smith

accident that occurred last year with the fatality on 129 at Davenport's Body Shop," said Lt. Craig Davenport of the Union County Sheriff's Office.

"Warrants were taken Jan. 28, secured by the Trooper

at the Magistrate's Office. I received them Friday, Jan. 29. Knowing where she was at, I went to the residence and took her into custody without incident."

Those charges were followed by a 12-count indictment by Union County grand jurors.

Other charges against Smith include DUI-Less Safe, serious injury by vehicle, and failure to maintain lane, according to the indictment.

At the time of the accident, Smith allegedly was driving under the combined influence of methadone, amphetamine, and methamphetamine, the indictment shows.

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