

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Relay For Life almost reaches goal

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The fight against cancer is real, and thanks to the support of the many volunteers, cancer survivors and caregivers in the community, it's a fight that cancer is losing.

On Saturday, May 30, more than 100 survivors and caregivers participated in the American Cancer Society's 2015 Relay For Life at the Union County Farmers Market, with hundreds from the surrounding area turning out to lend support.

Relay is now in its 30th year, and Union County has been hosting the event for the past 21. Relay Co-Chairs Sue Upchurch and Allyson McGraw, along with Head of



A celebration of life at the Annual Relay For Life. Photo/Lowell Nicholson Entertainment Vee Laffoon, have been involved since the beginning.

"It's truly a community event, and we live in a great

community," said Relay For Life Co-Chair Sue Upchurch. "To me, it's being able to do something - I may not find the cure, but I can help find the

cure."

The Relay Season started in January, and event organizers were able to raise \$58,000 leading up to the day of the Relay, with support coming in the form of corporate sponsorships and donations from area churches and individuals.

Preliminary figures from the Relay itself showed that the one-day event garnered more than \$7,000 to go toward the fight against cancer. That puts the total amount raised at around \$65,000, which is just shy of the \$70,000 fundraising goal.

It's not too late to make monetary contributions, as the fiscal year for donations runs from September through

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Economy on the rebound

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce held its annual Power Lunch at the Union County Community Center on Thursday, May 28.

In the lunch, Tommy Howard of the Norton Agency delivered the 2015 Norton Native Intelligence Report, which featured an economic overview of the region.

The big takeaway from Howard's presentation was that economic growth factors are trending upward - population and birthrates are on the rise, foreclosure rates are down and tax digests all around the state are coming back up compared to the years immediate following the beginning of the recession.



Tommy Howard

According to Howard's report, Union County is zoned as 51 percent residential, 48 percent agricultural, 1.9 percent commercial and 0.1 percent industrial.

For Howard, this particular mix of land use gives Union County a diverse economic base. See *Power*, Page 3A

Two-vehicle crash claims one life

By Charles Duncan
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A 51-year-old Murphy, NC woman died from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle head-on collision on U.S. 129 North, near the North Carolina line in Union County.

Joni Lynn Clark, 51, of Murphy, NC died at the scene of the crash that occurred at approximately 4:49 p.m., Thursday, May 28, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Clark was a backseat passenger in a blue 2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee driven by Laurie Catherine Nicotra, 63, of Murphy, NC, according to the State Patrol.

Nicotra's Jeep was struck by a black 1997 Subaru Legacy Outback, driven by Cynthia Marie Smith, 39, of Blairsville.



A 51-year-old Murphy, NC woman died in a two-vehicle crash on U.S. 129 North on Thursday afternoon. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

According to the State Patrol, Smith was under the influence of medications/drugs/alcohol at the time of

the crash.

According to the Patrol, Smith was traveling in the left southbound lane, headed toward Blairsville. Nicotra was traveling north in the single northbound lane headed toward Murphy.

While attempting to negotiate a right curve, Smith's Subaru traveled into the northbound lane, directly in the path of the Jeep Cherokee, according to the State Patrol.

The left front of the Subaru struck the right front of the Jeep Cherokee, according to the State Patrol. A secondary impact occurred as the Subaru rotated clockwise and the Jeep Cherokee rotated counter clockwise, according to GSP.

The left rear of the Sub-

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Betty Sellers honored at annual Byron Herbert Reece Meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Byron Herbert Reece is a local literary legend, having been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and won various awards during writing career, and his torch is carried to this day by the society that bears his namesake.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society held its 12th Annual Meeting at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday, May 30.

Chairman John Kay has been involved with the society since its beginning, and has headed up each meeting for the last 12 years. This



Betty Sellers

year, however, he retired from the top spot of the society.

"It really feels good," said Kay on his involvement as chairman. "I think the time

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More than 100 break bread with Station 4

By Charles Duncan
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Brad Hutson fights all about volunteer firefighters, his father was one at Union County Station 3.

He also knows the meaning of community support for those volunteer fire stations.

That's why he was all in when it came to visiting Fire Station 4 in the Ivy Log Community during Open House on Saturday.

"In this part of the world, there aren't many paid firefighters," Hutson said. "In this neck of the woods, it's all about volunteers. My Daddy was a volunteer firefighter at Station 3 for years. These volunteer stations are all about getting out in your community and helping make a difference."



"If your neighbor's house is on fire, you pitch in and help put the fire out," he said. "These open houses mean a lot to the volunteers. Because they're volunteers, they depend on help from

within the community to help buy equipment. They need better equipment to be able to respond to fires, afford their training and have up-to-date equipment to help with

a life."

Hutson said that volunteers saved lives just last week when a two-vehicle head-on collision happened just a few miles away from Station 4.

"Anywhere in this county, there's a volunteer station close by that responds to tragic accidents," he said. "When something like that happens, time is of the essence. If you're trapped in a vehicle, they'll get you out. The volunteers that respond, the only thing on their minds is getting you to safety."

More than 100 people turned out Saturday for fun, food and fellowship at the fire station off Moccasin Road in the Ivy Log Community.

People of all ages turned out to enjoy hotdogs, hamburgers and all the fixings. And to go along with

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MECHS grads walk the aisle

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
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More than two-thirds of the seniors from the Mountain Education Charter High School's Union and Fannin County site graduated with Honors or High Honors at last week's Class of 2015 Commencement Exercises at the Performing Arts Center on the campus of Fannin County Schools.

Twenty-seven students graduated with honors (GPA of 80.0-plus) with two of them receiving High Honors for posting the highest Grade Point Average - one at the Union County site, the other at Fannin County. Five of the



Victoria Nguyen

27 were chosen for the President's Award for Educational Excellence, while the other 22 honor graduates received the Presidential Award for Education.

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Lake Levels soon at full pool

By Shawn Jarrard
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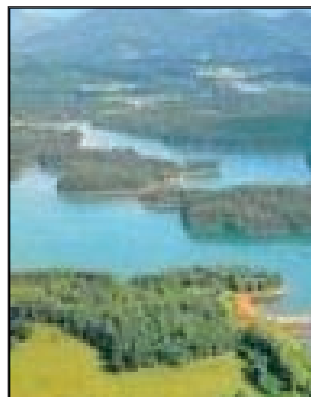
Good news, summer fans, the Tennessee Valley Authority says that area lakes are on track to reach full pool by June 1.

On Wednesday, May 13, TVA conducted its Summer Lake Levels Recreation Webcast for news and media outlets.

"As of today, all of our 10 tributary reservoirs are looking really good," said David Bowling of TVA's River Management Group. "We're on target to reach June 1 target levels for the summer. Rainfall and runoff, as you can tell from your packet, is very close to normal for the first part of the spring."

"We did have good rain in March and April, which positioned us well coming into May to hit those June levels. Right now, of the 10 large tributary reservoirs, the only two that are not at or slightly above their guide levels are Cherokee and Nottely, and with anything like normal rainfall, we fully expect Cherokee and Nottely to be on target at June 1."

The June 1 target for Lake Nottely is 1,777 feet, and based on current lake



levels, normal rainfall should make up the roughly 3 feet of difference needed to get the lake up to full pool.

Lake Chatuge is already close to full pool, with less than a foot to go to reach its June 1 target of 1,926 feet.

Full lake levels bring more recreational opportunities to the area, not to mention better looking lakes.

"In your area, you've got Blue Ridge, Chatuge and Nottely are the three reservoirs that we have," said TVA Recreation Manager Jerry Fouse. "And of course, typical of the work we've done across the system, we've done partnerships there with the U.S. Forest Service, Georgia DNR and the communities in

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Watershed Coalition celebrates 20 years

By Todd Forrest
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The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) is celebrating 20 years of sustaining clean water in streams, lakes, and rivers that flow into the Hiwassee River.

In Union County, the Nottely River, and each of the creeks, and streams that flow into the Nottely are of importance to the HRWC since the Nottely River flows into the Hiwassee River in southern Cherokee County, NC after leaving the Nottely Reservoir in northern Union County.

The HRWC, based in Murphy, NC, began its 20th year with the 11th Annual Trout Dinner Fundraiser at Meeks Park on Thursday evening, May 21.

Locally farmed, smoked rainbow trout were served up along with baked beans, cole-



slaw, potato salad, cornbread, drinks, and homemade desserts.

"This event is a fund raiser for the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition and we work in four counties, Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina and Union and

Towns counties in Georgia," said HRWC Administrative and Outreach Director Amanda Kanack. "Our mission is to improve water quality in the upper Hiwassee River watershed and we work closely with local governments and soil and water districts."

The Coalition also works with local landowners, schools, and businesses to understand and address threats to water resources. It conducts education programs for all ages about water quality concerns and what individuals can do to help.

A Day at the C.R.E.E.K. (Creative and Recreational Environment Education for Kids) is one of the educational programs sponsored by the HRWC.

Students learn to identify fish, native, and invasive plants, they weigh and measure aquatic animals and observe microscopic pond dwellers and learn about aquatic insects. The C.R.E.E.K. Days begin on July 8th in Towns County and will conclude in Union County on July 20th at Meeks Park from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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SATURDAY
7 AM

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