

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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EMC board could name new GM later this month

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE - Roy Perren, secretary of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors and head of the General Manager Search Committee, announced that the board expects to name a new general manager by either late June or early July, to be hired by August, the month before the annual meeting in September.

Dan Brewer has served as interim general manager since September of last year, following the August 2015 resignation of Matthew Akins from the GM position.

This announcement came in the Hiawassee Town Hall Meeting that took place in the Towns County Civic

Center on Monday, June 6. The meeting was held in order to update the public on what's been going on at the EMC, and to answer questions put to the board by the public.

This was the third Town Hall Meeting of its kind, one of the many efforts by the board aimed at transparency over the past two election cycles.

"We did a request for proposals to find a search firm back in December of 2015," said Perren in the meeting. "We reviewed those proposals in January, and we selected the search firm in February of this year."

"It was Joe Goodwin of the Goodwin Group who is the search firm that we selected. There were over 100 contacts made to the search firm of interest in the position

- narrowed it down to those qualified for the position, and the search committee reviewed the list, selected the candidates for interviews.

The search committee held our initial interviews in May, and the board of directors



interviewed just last week. We anticipate that we'll name the new general manager either later this month or early July, but the new general manager should be in place sometime in

August of 2016."

Board Vice President Mickey Cummings updated those present on several of the policy changes that have taken effect over the last two years, including not allowing directors and the board attorney to have access to company health care, preventing directors from receiving zero interest loans to purchase central heating units, the creation of a "Whistleblower Policy," a strengthening of the board's Conflict of Interest Policy, and more.

Director Chris Logan also gave an update on the company's financials year-to-date through April of 2016, featuring total revenue of

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Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board Vice President Mickey Cummings talks policy changes at the Hiawassee Town Hall Meeting on Monday, June 6, at the Towns County Civic Center.

Alan Kay talks survival in Young Harris; Costello Banks talks Talking Books Program

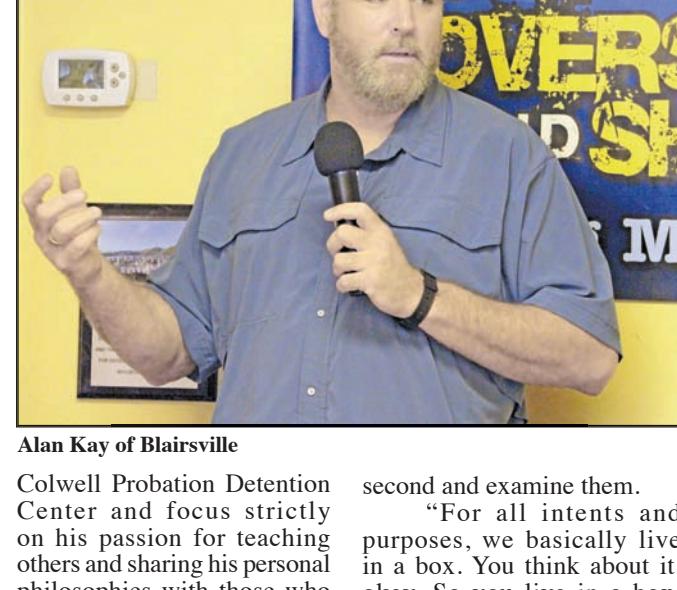
By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - Survival expert and teacher Alan Kay spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers, a conservative group concerned with education, on Friday, June 10.

Kay - renowned for his training classes in wilderness survival, preparedness and self-defense - became a local legend and national celebrity last year after spending 56 days completely isolated in remote Canadian wilderness, his survival depending solely on his wits, a few carefully chosen tools, and whatever he could find near his makeshift camp.

Countless numbers of Americans consumed the experiences of Kay and his fellow survivalists on the "Alone" TV show, which aired on the History channel. And it all boiled down to Kay, who outlasted nine other men to become the show's winning contestant.

Since then, Kay has been able to quit his job at the



Alan Kay of Blairsville

Colwell Probation Detention Center and focus strictly on his passion for teaching others and sharing his personal philosophies with those who would learn from him.

"A lot of what I see out there is really about mindset," said Kay on Friday. "So humor me for a minute, I want to take you through your average day. Let's just look at our lives for a

second and examine them. "For all intents and purposes, we basically live in a box. You think about it, okay. So you live in a box, and then you wake up in the morning - for those of us who have somewhere to be there's a little box just beeping and it tells us to get up.

"And then we get into

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Blairsville City Council prepares for busy summer; Ken Smith retiring

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

At the regular Blairsville City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 7, the city welcomed presentations from department heads, overviewed yearly audits and began preparations for the busy summer months ahead.

Pastor Bill Honaker began the meeting with a word of prayer before Mayor Jim Conley called the meeting to order.

Lee Jennings, managing partner of RL Jennings & Associates, presented the 2015 fiscal year audit for the city.

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Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley listens to Kaye McCann, the city accounting clerk, as she talks about the most recent audit in the June 7 meeting of the mayor and city council.

Thousands attend Scottish Festival

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Despite the hottest temperatures of the year over the weekend, the 13th Annual Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games filled Meeks Park to near capacity prior to Saturday's Opening Ceremonies.

Parking was already at a premium when the ceremonies kicked off at high noon with the Massed Bands and the Parade of Tartans, which were accompanied by Dr. Michele Thompson's powerful renditions of "God Save the Queen," "Oh Canada" and the "Star Spangled Banner," after which the Rev. Travis Adams summed up what had to be on everyone's minds when he opened the invocation.

"Oh, Lord, it's hot," he said. "But we do not complain, for you have brought us here with blessings. Blessings of heritage. Blessings of kith and kin. Blessings of clan and athletics."

"We give thanks to our Massed Bands and ask that you watch over them and they



A young visitor to the 13th Annual Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games borrows some heavy equipment from a member of the MacLaren Clan on Saturday, June 11, in order to pose for a picture taken by his family.

do not faint, unless it be a faint of heart."

The 2016 Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games were officially opened by Terry Haynes of Cumming, who was representing Clan Hay, the 2016 Honored Clan.

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Community gets to Pet-a-Pet

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Humane Society Mountain Shelter celebrated its Fifth Annual Pet-a-Pet on Saturday, June 11.

"Pet-a-Pet is an open house that we do to get people who wouldn't come up here before the renovations to come up here and see that this isn't a sad place anymore," said Mountain Shelter Director Lisa McConnell. "We're not a kill shelter. This is a happy place and the animals are great."

"They're so well cared for and the staff loves them. They guard them like their personal pets. We try to make

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A young animal lover shows Cheree the Therapy Dog some love at the Pet-a-Pet event on Saturday, June 11. Cheree volunteers at Kidz Camp with the Humane Society Mountain Shelter in Blairsville.

Farmers Market drawing big crowds

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Gorgeous flowers are always in great supply during the spring and summer months in the Georgia Mountains, and this past weekend, the Union County Farmers Market was no exception, as it promoted its Ornamental Plant Exhibit.

"Ornamental Plant Exhibit is just a way for us to showcase what we call the green industry," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "The green industry is nurseries, landscaping, green houses, that sort of thing."

"Our green industry, just in this county, is worth around \$20 million a year, and it is the second biggest



Michael Clark of English Country Gardens in Hiawassee sells some of his lovely geraniums at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, June 11. The event for that Saturday was Ornamental Plant Day. Photo/Lily Avery

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Mail order marijuana leads to couple's arrest

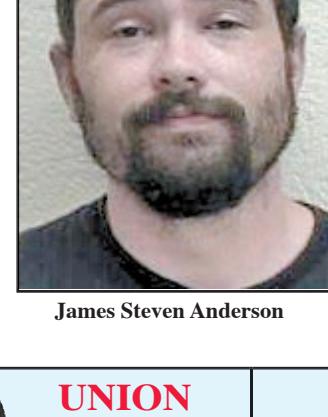
By Shawn Jarrard
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A California couple living in Blairsville was arrested on Thursday, June 9, following an eight-month investigation conducted jointly by the Union County Sheriff's Office and investigators from the U.S. Postal Service, according to UCSO Lt. Darren Osborn.

Steven Anderson, 36, and Levi Anderson, 35, are each facing charges of felony possession of more than one ounce of marijuana and



Levi Lynne Anderson



James Steven Anderson

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UNION COUNTY SCRAP TIRE ROUNDUP

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