

North Georgia News

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Alan Kay wins the ultimate survival contest

By Charles Duncan
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Alan Kay was hungry when his adventure on Vancouver Island came to an end after 56 grueling days of survival.

The adventure ended on Day 56 when Kay was informed he was the last man on the island. It meant \$500,000 for the Blairsville man, a guard at Colwell Probation Detention Center.

And today, Alan Kay is no longer alone, as he is back with his wife, three small children and his 16-year-old son in their Blairsville home.

Kay was the last man standing on Vancouver Island in British Columbia to win *The History Channel's* survivor series *Alone*. He was the last of 10 contestants. The other nine tapped out.

"It was a religious experience," Kay said. "There's a lot of spiritual awareness when you get out there and you didn't know you had



Colwell Probation Detention Center Guard Alan Kay, 40, of Blairsville, outlasted nine other men on *The History Channel* survivor series *Alone* to claim the top prize of \$500,000. The series is labeled as the ultimate survival challenge. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

more confidence. You're being put somewhere where you are totally out of your element. You're pushing yourself and finding different reserves that you didn't know you had.

"There is really a lot of self awareness that goes on out there," Kay said.

Kay said the adventure wasn't about the money.

"It was more about see-

ing if I could meet the challenge," he said. "It was the ultimate test."

What was the first thing he had to eat when he didn't have to eat snails to really?

"It wasn't really a meal, but I ate peanut butter," Kay said. "Instead of a spoon, I used a chocolate bar to dip the peanut butter out with. That's the first thing I went after."

Later, his first real meal was steak, baked sweet potato, asparagus in a bleu cheese cream sauce and chocolate torte.

Kay outlasted 22-year-old Sam Larson, of Lincoln, Neb., who tapped out during a brutal storm with hurricane force winds that prevented him from sleeping or gathering food.

Kay, who lost 60 pounds off his 6-foot, 6-inch, 240-pound frame, said the 56 days on Vancouver Island was the test of a lifetime.

"To be dropped off in true wilderness like that, it's

See *Survived*, Page 2A

Matthew Akins resigns as EMC general manager

By Charles Duncan
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Matthew Akins is no longer the general manager at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

The news comes as the BRMEMC board hired Daniel W. Brewer as interim general manager, EMC Director Steven Phillips said Monday.

"Mr. Akins came before the board Tuesday night (Aug. 18) and offered his resignation if he could be demoted to the position of engineer," Phillips said. "The board told him that decision had to be made by the new general manager. Mr. Akins resigned from his position as general manager on Friday."

Akins' resignation comes 16 months after the disclosure of more than \$48,000 in unpaid utility bills by former BRMEMC President Terry Taylor.

News of the debt started a fire storm throughout the membership that led to the defeat of three incumbent EMC board members.

Departed EMC Board Member Danny Henson, who opted to seek the vacant Union County EMC director's seat, said Akins' departure was inevitable.

"If Matthew Akins didn't know about Terry Taylor's debt, he should resign. If he did know about Terry Taylor's debt, he should resign. It is as simple as that," Henson said.

Brewer will remain in the interim, Phillips said.



Matthew Akins

"We're going to search for a new GM, but we'll wait until after the annual meeting and elections in September," Phillips said.

"Daniel Brewer came highly recommended. He's been an interim GM three times before and a GM twice at EMCs," Phillips said.

The EMC Annual Meeting is Sept. 12. Two seats are up for grabs and one has already been decided.

In Union County, Mickey Cummings, Patrick Malone and Charles Rich are on the ballot by petition.

In Towns County, Roy Perren, who got on the ballot by petition, faces Jerry Nichols, who was nominated by the EMC Board of Directors.

In Fannin County, Larry Williams is unopposed on the ballot after gaining admission to the ballot by petition. William Prather, the EMC Board of Directors' president, declined the nomination to seek another term on the board.

Watermelon was the word at the Farmers Market

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Spitting this past Saturday, as the Union County Farmers Market held a seed-spitting contest to cap off its Watermelon Day.

As contestants lined up for their chance to spit the farthest, Market Manager Mickey Cummings advised them on the best strategy.

"The secret to this is, get you a nice seed in your mouth, and take in a breath through your nose, not your mouth," said Cummings. "You don't want to get choked on it. Take it in through your nose, and then rear back and spit as far as you can."

In the men's division, Duke "The Boston Bomber" Pangborn came in first with a spitting distance of 12 feet 4 inches, using a technique he called the "Brooklyn Spit," followed by Bob Kinnie in a close second with 11 feet 6



Watermelon was in abundance at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday. The day included a watermelon seed spitting contest. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

inches. For the women's division, Kristy Peney won first

place handily, spitting a distance of 9 feet 10 inches, with Dot Payne bringing up the rear

having spit a seed 6 feet to cement second place.

The youth division showcased some powerful lungs and fine spitting form, as Lathan Long spit a distance of 10 feet 4 inches, followed closely by Grayson Collins and his distance of 8 feet 8 inches.

There were no third place prizes, but Megan Kerr of Mountain View Farms, who is a freshman this year at Union County High School, was proud of her seed, which traveled 5 feet 2 and a half inches.

"It's kind of awkward spitting in front of people," said Kerr, who usually spits at home in the yard when she does spit, and has her heart set on winning the contest next year after she takes lessons from her dad. "I think I need to practice my spitting more."

Keeping things lively

See *Watermelon*, Page 2A

UGH one of the most wired hospitals in country

North Georgia News
News Special

Union General Hospital has been recognized as one of the country's "most wired" hospitals for 2015 based on survey results recently released by *Hospital and Health Networks Magazine* (HHN).

In partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, HHN conducted a survey of more than 2,213 hospitals of all sizes across the nation to examine how organizations are leveraging information technology (IT) to improve performance for value-based healthcare utilizing four specific "focus" areas.

Though a hospital or organization may have cer-



tain advanced capabilities, if any one or more of the multiple requirements in each of the areas are not met, then an

organization is not eligible to receive this auspicious designation.

Focus specifics include

infrastructure, business and administrative management,

See *UGH*, Page 2A

Open House for Fine Arts Center etched in stone

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Schools would like to invite everyone in the community to attend the Thursday, Sept. 10, Open House to celebrate the brand new Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

The event will open with a ribbon cutting at 5 p.m., to be sponsored by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, followed by an hour of student-guided tours



See *Arts*, Page 3A

Lt. Gov. Cagle gives locals a bright glimpse of future

By Charles Duncan
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Georgia Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle stopped by the Union County Community Center on Tuesday, Aug. 18, to speak on the economy and the importance of education in a world that must constantly embrace newer and better technologies.

The event, a Power Lunch organized by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Park Sterling Bank, featured many local leaders familiar with the lieutenant governor.

State Sen. Steve Gooch, Tate O'Rourke of U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson's office, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason and Associate Superintendent of Union County Schools Dr. Jeremy Williams, all joined Lt. Gov. Cagle for the luncheon, along with a room full of business professionals from around the county.

"You have no bigger



Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle

friend at the state capitol than our lieutenant governor," said Sen. Gooch in his introduction. "I've known him for many, many years. He was my state senator in Dahlonega a few years ago, and then he became the first Republican elected to the lieutenant governor's office in Georgia. He is a small business man. He grew up in

See *Cagle*, Page 3A

9/11 Ride to Remember slated to arrive Sunday, Sept. 6

By Charles Duncan
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Sept. 6 will be a ride to remember through the North Georgia Mountains.

That's when the annual 9/11 Ride to Remember begins in Athens at Cycle World, and concludes in Blairsville at Copperhead Lodge.

The Union County Fire Department and the Ride to Remember are once again asking for the help of locals in welcoming the annual ride to Union County.

The ride begins that Sunday morning in Athens and is expected to arrive in Union County at Copperhead Lodge on Nottely Dam Road at approximately 2 p.m.

"This year's ride is being dedicated to USMC Lance Cpl. Skip Wells, who was



killed in Chattanooga, Tenn., during the shooting at a military recruiting center," said Union County Fire Lt. Jeff Fortenberry. "Skip's mother Cathy Wells will be on the ride and you will be able to meet her and hear how she wants to make the Skip Wells Scholarship Fund a reality."

See *Ride*, Page 2A

Vol. 106 No. 35
3 Sections, 48 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Sunny Hi 82 Lo 61
Fri: Clouds Hi 80 Lo 62
Sat: Clouds Hi 80 Lo 62

Arrests 8A
Church 9A
Classifieds 4B
Opinion 4A
Legals 7B
Obits 11A
Sports 12A

8 0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 4 2

Sorghum Festival
PARADE
October 10th
See page 7A

A Salute to Farmers
2015 Tractor Show
& Parade
See page 8A

OPEN HOUSE
Firestation 2
Sept. 12th 11-3

SPORTS
FOOTBALL
Fri. Aug 28 vs. Towns 7:30 PM
SOFTBALL
Tues Aug 25 vs. White 6 PM
Wed Aug 26 vs. Rabun 5PM
Thurs Aug 27 vs. Greene 4&6 PM
Sat. Aug 29 @ Oglethorpe 1 & 3 PM