

Klan ...continued from Page 1A

The denial letter by GDOT included:

"Maintaining the safety of our roadways is this Department's foremost mission. Encountering signage and members of the KKK along a roadway would create a definite distraction to motorists. Also, the section of roadway requested is ineligible for adoption due to its posted speed limit exceeding the program maximum of 55 mph. Further, promoting an organization with a history of inciting civil disturbance and social unrest would present a grave concern to the Department. Finally, issuing this permit would have the potential to negatively impact the quality of life, commerce and economic development of Union County and all of Georgia."

According to the suit, the Klan alleges that it was approved for the program through Union County government. The Klan also alleges that officials with Union County gave them safety vests, trash bags and told members that they could proceed with picking up county trash.

The Klan also alleges that officials with Union County and North Georgia Resource Management Authority told them that the goal of Union County and NGRMA was to adopt out the entire stretch of Highway 515 in Union County, according to the suit.

Klan members also allege that they were told that Jack Butler would determine which mile marker the Klan would be assigned, according to the suit.

On May 14, the Klan alleges that Peggy Deyton of Union County government told the members by telephone that they could clean up mile markers, 1 and 2, or 3 and 4 at their discretion, until Jack Butler delegated a mile marker to them, the suit alleges.

The suit then alleges that Harley Hanson and April Chambers, both of Morganton, began picking up trash as part of the Adopt-A-Highway program.

Later, the suit alleges, the Georgia Department of Transportation notified Chambers, who applied for the program as a Klan representative, that Union County government would no longer administer the Adopt-A-Highway

program along Georgia 515 inside the county due to budget cuts.

Allegedly, Chambers and Hanson were advised to contact GDOT and apply for the program through that agency, the suit alleges.

Hanson and Chambers allege that Ronnie Presley, regional coordinator for GDOT, called them and told them their application was complete and that they would receive a sign for their stretch of highway within six to eight weeks, the suit alleges.

The suit alleges that Hanson and Chambers stayed in constant contact with GDOT, and even signed a waiver of liability for the agency. They allege that they were told on June 8 by GDOT's Meg Pirkle that their application was still under review.

On June 12, Chambers received a letter from GDOT Commissioner Keith Golden telling them that due to the assigned 65 mph speed limit on Highway 515, GDOT would have to deny their application.

The reasons: the 65 mph speed limit on Highway 515 violated Adopt-A-Highway regulations, and would be unsafe for volunteers and

the traveling public.

It also stated that the KKK, having a long history of civil disturbance, would cause a significant amount of public concern.

The suit alleges that the KKK has offered to, and continues to offer to adopt another stretch of state roadway if Highway 515 is unavailable.

The suit alleges there were numerous Adopt-A-Highway signs on Highway 515 prior to their application, including one that proclaimed a stretch of roadway adopted by Walmart.

The suit alleges those signs began to disappear on May 14, leading the KKK to believe that the removal was in support of the reasons for GDOT denying their application.

The suit demands an Adopt-A-Highway permit for the Klan, a permanent injunction preventing GDOT from denying an Adopt-A-Highway permit, declaratory judgment and any relief the courts deem appropriate.

No court date for the civil trial has been set by the courts. The newspaper will continue to provide updated details regarding the suit; breaking news about the suit also will be available online.

County

continued from Page 1A

"Mental health and substance abuse disorders affect all communities nationwide," Paris said. "With commitment and support, people with these disorders can achieve healthy lifestyles and lead rewarding lives in recovery."

Paris announced a deal between Union County and the Avita Community Partners' Union Office that as of Sept. 1st, the former Union County Health Department building will be the alternative site for the Avita Community Partners Union office.

Honor

continued from Page 1A

Marchman and Bryant, both members of Blairsville First Baptist Church, spent the day visiting the war memorials and flew back home Tuesday afternoon.

"It's such an honor to be a part of this," Marchman said. "It meant a lot to me to be (in Washington) with Al Bryant. It's a humbling feeling."

The Honor Flight Network gathers donations to provide veterans transportation to Washington D.C. at no cost. Veterans are accompanied by a volunteer guardian, and Marchman generously donated enough money to cover the cost of a trip for the 87-year-old World War II veteran and himself.

"It is truly heartwarming to be able to participate in the Honor Flight Network," Marchman said. "By sponsoring a veteran, I get a sense of pride and honor that is truly irreplaceable, and this trip will be something Al and I will remember for the rest of our lives."

When Marchman first decided to volunteer with Honor Flight his goal was to get the community of Blairsville involved and help provide the opportunity to visit the war memorials to local veterans.

When he sent in his guardian application, he also included a veteran application for Al Bryant. Initially, Marchman was assigned a veteran out of Atlanta; however, he made it clear to the local Honor Flight director that he wanted to help get local veterans on the waiting list for future flights.

As fate would have it, Marchman received a call last Wednesday giving him one hour to confirm that Al could join him for the Honor Flight the following Tuesday.

"The phone call from Honor Flight on Wednesday made my day," said Marchman. "I was ecstatic to be able to help Al get the opportunity to visit the WWII memorial and I'm looking forward to spreading the word in Blairsville and helping other veterans become a part of Honor Flight."

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