

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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City, County sign deal on new Energy tax

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Hot topics at the Blairsville City Council meeting included a water main break on Jan. 4th near Cobb Vantress Inc. resulted in a Boil Water Advisory by the City of Blairsville; the expansion of the Blairsville Municipal Airport, and adoption of the county's Energy Excise Tax.

One of the items that impacted city and county residents concluded with the Council agreeing unanimously to an intergovernmental accord with Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris to adopt an Energy Excise Tax ordinance.

The county adopted the tax ordinance at its December meeting. While the explanation of the



Commissioner Lamar Paris

ordinance is fairly complicated, basically, the excise tax replaces revenue that would be lost by the county and city from a sales tax exemption that the state has placed on energy utilized for manufacturing, Paris said.

It is not an additional tax, but simply replaces lost sales tax through energy consumption. Under the ordinance



Mayor Jim Conley

the county adopted, if the city wanted to receive their portion of the revenue, they had to approve an intergovernmental agreement, Paris said.

"I made the presentation to Mayor Jim Conley and the City Council," he said. "By signing the agreement, the city will receive the same amount of revenue collected by the county

as they would from SPLOST and LOST revenues."

According to Paris, who addressed the City Council prior to the Council's intergovernmental accord with the county, Georgia House Bill 36 passed by during the last session of the Georgia General Assembly allows an exemption for industry from the sales tax paid on energy used in the process of manufacturing.

"In our area, it is a relatively small amount, but in counties that have lots of large manufacturing plants and carpet mills, the lost revenue by the counties and cities could be dramatic," Paris said.

The new law allows any county to protect their own sales tax losses from the exemption.

The sales tax exemption

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The first baby is here!

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

One of these days, Bailey Grace Brown will realize that back in 2013, there really was a big fuss when she was born.

Well, it took seven days but the first baby of the new year in Union County finally arrived and Shane and Alexis Brown are now the proud parents of adorable Bailey Grace Brown.

And the fussing part, well, Bailey Grace is on the front page of the North Georgia News.

Born on Monday, Jan. 7th, Bailey Grace wasn't exactly all smiles when she entered the world. Yes, she came into the world crying thanks to Dr. Cynthia Mercer.

Dr. Mercer did her job and gave Bailey Grace that all



Alexis and Bailey

important welcome into the world.

She may be a basketball star some day for the Lady Panthers. Bailey Grace came into the world at 19.5 inches long and weighing 7 pounds. She's well on her way to playing in the paint.

Shane and Alexis (AKA Daddy and Mommy), the

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Democrats honor J.W. Payne

By Charles Duncan
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If you know J.W. Payne real well, you know he's a dye-in-the-wool Democrat.

If you don't know J.W. real well, you'll know soon enough, he's a Democrat.

On Thursday night last week at the Union County Senior Center, more than 40 friends and fellow Democrats came out to toast J.W. for his 44 years in office as Union County Tax Commissioner.

J.W. didn't seek reelection last May during qualifying for local offices. It's the first time he hasn't qualified for public office in 56 years.

J.W. spent 12 years on the Union County Board of Education prior to running for Tax Commissioner in 1968. And yes, he also was a Democrat then.

Back in the day, it was rare for a member of the Republican party to win an election in Union County. Many tried, few succeeded.

That wasn't the case for J.W. because he never lost a race in seeking 14 terms of office, three on the Board of Education and having served as an 11-time elected tax commis-



Retired Union County Tax Commissioner J.W. Payne gets a warm reception at the Senior Center as Democrats and friends paid tribute to him for his many years of service. Photo/Charles Duncan

sioner. "I was never beat in an election, and I thank y'all for that," J.W. told the crowd. "Running an election is a little different for me than it is for a lot of people. If I wanted a person to vote for me, I always tried to do my best to ask them, whether they were Republican, Democrat or of another party affiliation."

"I just came out and asked them," J.W. said. "And you better believe, I'll never be guilty of campaigning in church."

Union County Democratic Party Chair Nelson Thomas presented J.W. with a plaque honoring his years of service to the Democratic Party and his years of service to Union County.

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Jaycees honored by Chamber

By Todd Forrest
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The Blairsville/Union County Chamber of Commerce had a record turnout for its opening meeting of the new year.

The Union County Community Center played host to Business After Hours, the kick off event for 2013.

The large turnout could be attributed to the honoring of the Blairsville Jaycees as the Business of the Year.

It's crystal clear the amount of respect the local community holds for the Jaycees as they deserve any and all accolades bestowed on their esteemed organization.

And Blairsville/Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Williams was simply ecstatic.

"I know you may think I'm crazy, but I really get a high off of seeing this many people here tonight," she said. "It means the world to me and I know it means a lot to the Jaycees that we're honoring tonight for their contributions in the community."

Williams continued by pointing out that the Blairsville Jaycees and the Sorghum



Chamber President Cindy Williams sings the praises of the Blairsville Jaycees last week at Business After Hours. Photo/Todd Forrest

Festival are as synonymous as homemade biscuits and sorghum syrup.

"You can't say the name Blairsville Jaycees and not think Sorghum Festival," Williams said. "If you didn't know that, then that's one of the first things you need to learn when you move into this community. So much of our history here is based on sorghum."

However, the Jaycees work is never done, nor does it revolve around the month of October.

All proceeds from the festival are poured directly back into community programs. The group is on the front lines when it comes to giving back during the Christ-

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Sheriff unveils department's administration

By Charles Duncan
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Newly elected Union County Sheriff Mack Mason has selected his administration team for the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Mason, a Blairsville Republican, defeated Incumbent Democratic Sheriff Scott Stephens in the November General Election, to become the first Republican sheriff in Union County in 64 years.

Mason's administration will be led by John George, a retired Chief of Police from Davie, Fla.

George will oversee the department's administrative and operational functions,



Sheriff Mack Mason

Sheriff Mason said.

George is a resident of Union County, where he currently lives with his wife of 20 years. He began his law enforcement career in 1977 with the Davie, Florida Police De-

partment, where he served for more than 30 years in a number of law enforcement capacities.

In the latter part of his law enforcement career, George was named chief of police of his department, and was over more than 250 employees while serving a community of more than 90,000 residents.

George served as chief for just under nine years.

The administration under Sheriff Mason also includes Craig Davenport in Courts and Warrants, Tim Derflinger in property crimes investigations, Melanie Harris overseeing GCIC operations, Darren Jones overseeing the School Resource Officers, Mike Ler-

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New heart monitor will save lives in Suches

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
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The sirens and flashing lights of an ambulance are never a welcomed experience.

But for those feeling the early stages of potential heart attack, every second feels like an eternity and the sirens can never arrive soon enough.

Thanks to Union General Hospital, the county is now better equipped to save lives by saving time.

The county recently purchased a new EKG machine for the Suches (Station 5) Rescue Truck, capable of transmitting EKG readings



Station 5 firefighters and paramedics are excited about heart monitoring equipment donated by Union General Hospital. Photo/Todd Forrest

from the field to Union General or any hospital, saving up to 30 minutes of life.

According to Director Wesley Rogers, a half hour is

vital to saving heart muscle, and the more heart muscle saved, the better the outcome.

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Fire leaves family of four homeless

By Charles Duncan
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A mother and father and their two small children are homeless following a fire that destroyed their home on Pat Colwell Road last week.

Union County Fire & Rescue Capt. Richard Jones said the Bingham family had gone shopping to Walmart. When they returned, smoke had already filled the house, Capt. Jones said.



The Bingham home on Pat Colwell Road was destroyed by fire last week. The family of four is homeless and in need. Photo/ Charles Duncan

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UCHS' new art graces the school cafeteria

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County High School cafeteria received a makeover over the Christmas holidays thanks to Union County High School Art Teacher Molly Marsh and her young group of artist-extraordinaires.

Director of the Union County Schools Nutrition Program Courtney Waller went to Marsh with a concept early in the school year and the Union County High



Thank these artists for the beautiful artwork in the UCHS Cafeteria. Photo/Todd Forrest

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January is National Blood Donor Month
Sun., Jan. 13 • 9:30am-2pm
First United Methodist Church
Tues., Jan. 22
12pm-5pm
Haralson Civic Center-Gym
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AARP Driver Safety Class
Thursday, February 7
Blairsville United Community Bank
Register before February 1
See page 5A

Federal Benefit Recipients (SSI)
Sign Up For Electronic Payment Deadline
March 1, 2013
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UCHS Basketball
Fri., Jan. 18 • 6pm vs. Social Circle
Sat., Jan. 19 • 4pm @ Fannin Co.
UCHS Swimming
Saturday, January 19 @ Riverside