

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Fire Chief: Propane truck accident could have been worse

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

On Dec. 18, 2017, a propane truck hauling thousands of gallons of propane turned over on its side on Bowling Gap off Georgia 515.

The back wheels of the large tanker went off the road and into the ditch as the driver attempted a right-hand turn, causing the tanker to tip.

Fortunately, apart from some damage to the trailer, the tanker itself made it through the accident unscathed, and authorities rescinded the situation without further incident.

The Union County Fire Department and Union County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene, determined there was no immediate danger, and called a wrecker service to help

right the tanker. Towner's 24-Hour Towing & Recovery brought in two heavy duty wreckers – a 30-ton truck and a 35-ton truck – and pulled the tanker back onto the road in under an hour, allowing it to complete its delivery only a little behind schedule.

"When we got there, there was no leak and no danger of a leak, so it was just pretty much stabilize it until they could get it back up on its wheels," said David Dyer, Union County's EMA director, 911 director and fire chief.

All around, the accident was a best-case scenario, as the tanker never received damage, and those who responded to the call were able to handle the situation with little fanfare.

"As little as the propane stays in that container, and there's no fire, there's no leak,

there's no public danger, then it's a regular call," said Dyer. "Turning it back up, that can get a little dicey, but most of the time it's a normal accident with some hazardous materials potential there."

When a call like this one comes in to 911, Dyer said they have to assume the worst initially and treat it like a hazmat scenario.

Of course, the Dec. 18 accident wasn't a hazmat scenario, but if it had been, first responders were equipped to follow specific emergency guidelines addressing any number of hazardous materials spills, which in this case would have been propane.

"When propane leaks, you can tell it," said Dyer. "You'll smell it, first of all, and you'll see it. If it's pure liquid, it'll come out liquid and then

See Propane Truck, Page 6A



Union County first responders helped to get this propane tanker back on the road on Dec. 18, 2017. Photo/Facebook

Paris: Union County budget up 5.8 percent with growing economy

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

Union County's Fiscal Year 2018 Tentative Budget is \$16,614,592, up nearly \$1 million from recent finalized figures, as revenues continue to track with the increased costs of conducting county business.

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris' office has chosen to compare the 2018 tentative budget to 2016 amended figures because the 2017 tentative budget has yet to be audited and finalized, which will occur about midyear 2018.

The 2017 tentative budget is expected to be

amended to reflect significant underbudgeting, and balances to \$15,468,886.

"The 2018 budget is increasing from the (2016) amended budget by \$910,941, or about 5 percent," said Paris in a Dec. 21 budget public hearing. "The amended budget was \$15,703,651."

Following the public hearing that evening, Commissioner Paris adopted the FY18 Tentative Budget in the Dec. 21 regular meeting.

"I'm proud of our staff and all the county staff that work so hard to keep our operation costs under control, and to maximize our revenues," said Paris in the

See Budget, Page 2A



Union County Sole Manager Lamar Paris with County Manager Larry Garrett. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Jarrard named assistant editor of Union, Towns papers

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

North Georgia News and Towns County Herald Publisher Kenneth West and Editor Charles Duncan are pleased to announce the promotion of staff writer Shawn Jarrard to assistant editor.

Jarrard, 33, a native of Gainesville, has worked for the newspapers since August 2014, and has written more than 1,500 news articles in that time.

He is a graduate of the See Jarrard, Page 2A



Shawn Jarrard Assistant Editor North Georgia News and Towns County Herald

Senior Center celebrates New Year's 2018 with a possum drop



The Union County Senior Center rang the New Year in early on Friday, Dec. 29. Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

While many people travel to nearby Brasstown,

North Carolina to experience the popular eccentric New Year's Eve event of watching the annual Possum Drop at Clay's Corner, those at the

Union County Senior Center did not have far to travel to see Union County's very own possum drop. See Possum drop, Page 6A

Conley voted 2017 GMRC Council Member of the Year

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley has been awarded 2017 Council Member of the Year by his peers on the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Council.

Conley received the award in the GMRC Annual Meeting on Dec. 1, 2017, at the Dillard House Restaurant in nearby Rabun County.

Each of the 44 members of the GMRC Council votes for his or her choice of Council Member of the Year ahead of the annual meeting, and Conley said it was an honor to have been chosen as the 2017 recipient by his fellow council members.

"The GMRC that represents these 13 Northeast Georgia counties is so important," said Mayor Conley. "Our Regional Commission is one of the more active regional



L-R: GMRC Chairman Dean Scarborough, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and GMRC Executive Director Heather Feldman.

commissions in the state."

Many resources are made available to Northeast Georgia cities and counties through the GMRC, such as professional grant-writing assistance, staff-to-staff with U.S. Census address updates,

assistance with state-mandated comprehensive planning, mobile career coaching and educational opportunities through WorkSource Georgia Mountains, and more.

The Commission's See Conley, Page 3A

A Year in Review: Remembering the Top Stories of 2017

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

There wasn't a dull moment in 2017.

From natural disasters, to record drug busts, the news rolled in 2017.

That news included weather, presenting much to worry about in 2017, with significant storms moving through the community at different times of the year causing more than one bread and milk shortage.

January 2017 kicked off with Winter Storm Helena, which dropped more than six inches of snow before heading out of town. Winter Storm Benji doubled that amount in December 2017, and kids got

to miss school because of both storms.

Tropical Storm Irma – at one point a Category 5 hurricane – made its way swiftly through the mountains in September 2017, causing significant damage to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC power lines, poles and other infrastructure.

November amounted to significant change in the local community administration. Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Regina Allison announced she would be stepping down from her post at the end of the year to spend more time with family.

A permanent replacement for Allison, who announced her departure in late November, has

yet to be determined. Al Harper has been named as interim president until a permanent decision can be reached.

Human Resource specialist John Hill is set to become the next superintendent of Union County Schools, after Dr. Fred Rayfield announced in November his decision to retire at the end of the school year.

The Union County Board of Education voted unanimously in its Dec. 12 board meeting to name Hill the sole finalist for the position.

Hill earned his current position as Human Resource specialist this school year following his time spent as principal of Union County High School.

Not quite a disaster See 2017 Review, Page 3A



The Total Solar Eclipse of Aug. 21, 2017, will be a day long remembered in Union County and the North Georgia mountains. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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PANTHERS

Jan 2 vs. East Hall 6 PM

Jan 5 vs. Lumpkin Co. 7 PM

Jan 6 @ Andrews, NC 2 PM

Batter Up!

Baseball and Softball

Registration begins **January 8th**

Union County Recreation Dept.

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RELAY FOR LIFE

American Cancer Society

2018 Relay For Life Kick Off

January 18th

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Union County Homestead Exemption Filing Deadline

April 1, 2018

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