

Baby...from Page 1A

Hospital, it is our mission to partner with women and their families to ensure a joyful birth experience," according

to UnionGeneralHospital.com. "We're an award-winning facility that highly respects the wishes of mothers

for the birth of their child while combining the highest standards of safety in a caring and nurturing environment."

Tallent...from Page 1A

Tallent has greater than 40 years' experience in the banking industry, and he has spent more than three decades of that time with United.

Initially, Tallent served as president of the bank starting in 1984, and later, he oversaw the formation of the bank's holding company in 1989.

In March 2002, United's common stock became listed on the Nasdaq National Market, followed by listing on the Russell 2000 Index in July 2002, according to UCBI.com.

So, it's safe to say that Tallent knows a thing or two about finances, having spent many years performing at such a high level in the financial industry, and he thinks there's good reason to be excited about the state of the economy moving forward.

"Certainly, the economy overall, we're all beginning to see improvement," Tallent said. "I was very pleased to see the corporate tax change that has been made. I think this will help the businesses.

"Any change like that is not perfect, but this one I do think can serve as a real stimulus for growth of businesses. And that's always good, because that typically will trickle down to the employees, with higher wages and higher employment."

Continued Tallent: "Georgia was hit very hard during the recession, one of the hardest hit states in the nation. But I think it is rebounding very nicely."

Tallent views all the growth in population and construction in the Atlanta market – one he considers to be

the strongest in the Southeast – as an indicator of just how well the economy is doing.

"What does that mean to North Georgia?" said Tallent. "Again, it's the trickle-down effect, and I think, through this growth that we see and the expansion that we see, that certainly will continue to improve the economy."

"The truth is that real estate and tourism have become pretty much the economy to lots of the North Georgia region. Tourism is coming back, and we've seen in the last year some rebound in real estate. I don't think we'll see anything like it was in '05, '06 and '07.

"North Georgia still has its challenges and struggles, but overall, I'm very optimistic about the state, and certainly in the area that we all live in."

Chandler...from Page 1A

many wonderful opportunities for fun and adventure awaiting visitors to Union County and the North Georgia mountains.

One of Chandler's most important tasks is marketing her community to out-of-towners in search of a destination, and in 2018, she looks forward to using her outreach expertise to help the chamber attract new businesses and entrepreneurs to Blairsville-Union County.

Chandler, who also serves as president of the Northeast Georgia Mountain Travel Association, commands a variety of skills that are useful in the pursuit of tourism dollars and long-term community investment by businesses and individuals, and she's become particularly adept at social media.

A single Facebook post shared by Chandler in December snowballed into 80,400 unique views, and was subsequently shared over 1,000 times.

"We've increased our social media presence by 38.64 percent in 2017, and we have nearly 12,000 Facebook followers," said Chandler. "We're focused on making our website more informative and user friendly, and have added maps for lodging, dining and shopping, plus specific

pages for Vogel State Park, Brasstown Bald, wineries and distilleries, parks, lakes and more."

In her almost seven years at the chamber, Chandler has served a variety of roles in the service of Blairsville-Union County, and she is excited to embrace whatever challenges lie ahead in 2018.

Moving forward, Chandler and the rest of the chamber will continue to champion the community's Brand Positioning Statement, which sprung forth from the 2015 Community Rebranding Initiative.

"The growing

entrepreneur can escape to a thriving community surrounded by natural beauty," goes the statement. "Blairsville-Union County offers everything you need to grow your business and your family – delivering business speed and support services, a Top 5 school system, and endless community and recreational amenities. Escape. Discover. Thrive."

Former chamber president Regina Allison resigned at the end of 2017, and Al Harper has been named interim president of the chamber until a qualified candidate is selected to fill the position.



The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is located inside the Union County Community Center. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Curley...from Page 1A

somebody, a stranger most times, somebody that I don't know, come – sometimes in the middle of the night – and take me out of my home? All my stuff is there. Now, I'm living with somebody else. They're really nice to me and everything, but I don't understand.

"The court process can be so overwhelming for people, and it's really overwhelming for children, too. They don't understand why it takes so long."

One of the many reasons Curley was such a standout candidate for the award is her apparent dedication to the work. Most CASA volunteers carry only one or two caseloads at a time – Curley typically advocates for seven children concurrently.

"You displayed high standards of dedication to make the child welfare system responsive to the needs of the children for whom you advocate," said Georgia CASA Executive Director Duaine Hathaway, addressing Curley. "In doing so, you inspire others to follow your lead and put the child's future first.

"Out of all the CASA volunteers in Georgia, the advocacy you provide is considered to be of the highest quality."

Gary Greene is the Enotah CASA Volunteer Supervisor for Towns and Union counties, and he nominated Curley for the 2018 award.

Greene also nominated Enotah CASA Volunteer Diana Smith back in 2017, and Smith went on to become the 2017 recipient of both the Georgia Volunteer of the Year Award and the National CASA Association G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year Award.

Considering that there are much larger CASA districts in Georgia, some with hundreds more volunteers, the fact that two Enotah CASA volunteers received back to back Georgia Volunteer of the Year awards speaks volumes to the level of care being delivered by the Enotah CASA.

"All of us at Enotah CASA have known for years that Pam is the ideal CASA volunteer, and we are thrilled she is being recognized by Georgia CASA as the Karen N. Sibley CASA Volunteer of the Year," said Enotah CASA Executive Director Linda



Pam Curley with fellow volunteers with the Foster Children's Christmas Program in December. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

D'Angelo. "She exemplifies compassion, tenacity, trust, team building and consistently goes beyond the expected duties of a CASA."

Curley will travel in March to National CASA's annual conference, where she will stand with other CASAs from around the country in receiving recognition for her state-level award.

She will also be attending the Georgia CASA Conference in August to be officially honored for her accomplishment in front of her fellow Georgia CASA volunteers.

Her selection as Georgia CASA Volunteer of the Year qualifies her for national recognition, and that award

will be decided and announced at a later date.

Humane Society's Board meeting

The Humane Society's Mountain Shelter Board of Directors will meet at the Blairsville Thrift Store at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 16.

NT(Jan10,22)CA

S.A.F.E. Board meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Directors of S.A.F.E. (Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc.) will be January 16, 2018 at 5:30 PM. Call 706-379-1901 for location. NT(Jan10,M1)SH