

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Winter storm impact not as severe as expected

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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As late as Saturday afternoon, the National Weather Service was calling for a "major winter storm" the likes of which had not been seen in years, but in many ways, Union County dodged the winter weather bullet.

The worst predictions were calling for more than 8 inches of snow, greater than half an inch of ice on roadways, freezing rain on powerlines and trees, and winds over 50 mph, all potentially coming together to cause massive, prolonged power outages and treacherous driving conditions.

Of course, many people lost power; Blue Ridge Mountain EMC reported Sunday 10 broken poles and 7,006 members without power systemwide, mostly in Shooting Creek, North Carolina; east

of Hiwassee/Hightower in Towns; and the Trackrock, Choestoe and Suches areas of Union.

But the outages, which started occurring around 5 a.m. Sunday morning, were nearly completely restored by noon that day, and the lights stayed on for most people for the remainder of the winter weather event.

That's not to say the storm wasn't significant in other areas, like Habersham County, which had lower temperatures and therefore suffered more ill effects from all the precipitation that dropped Saturday evening through Sunday. But here in Union, most people got between 1 and 2 inches of snow Sunday night, with isolated areas receiving slightly higher totals late Saturday and Sunday.

Areas like Neel's Gap became particularly difficult to pass early Sunday, but

fortunately, temps stayed elevated in Blairsville until Sunday evening, so the formation of black ice was mostly limited to overnight Monday when it did finally get below freezing countywide.

The Georgia Department of Transportation worked around the clock over the weekend to keep main highways clear, and the county Road Department maintained secondary roads as well, though many areas remained unsafe for travel Monday morning due to lower temps and black ice.

In preparation for the storm, Union County Emergency Management Agency Director David Dyer hosted several days of weather briefings at Fire Station 1, attended by Representatives of all major first responder agencies and others last week.

"It certainly wasn't what
See Winter Snow Page 6A



Union County did not get a lot of snow over the weekend, but it was enough to make the county pretty and white Monday morning.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

School Board calls for new ESPLOST referendum in May



Members of the Union County Board of Education voting to put ESPLOST VI on the upcoming General Primary Election Ballot in May.
Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In a Jan. 11 called meeting, the Union County Board of

Education voted unanimously to adopt a resolution placing before voters a sixth Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum, to

appear on the upcoming May 24 General Primary Election Ballot.

ESPLOSTs in Georgia
See ESPLOST, Page 2A

Kurt Hanna gets life in prison for child molestation

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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Kurt Hanna will almost assuredly die in prison.

For his crimes of child molestation, the 80-year-old Blairsville resident has received two life sentences requiring him to serve a minimum of 25 years before becoming eligible for parole over the age of 100.

He has pleaded guilty to two counts of child molestation, one count of aggravated child molestation and a count of aggravated sexual battery. Had he not pleaded guilty, his trial was set to occur next week, and the children would have been called to relive their trauma publicly by testifying in court.

Hanna was arrested last

April after a mother approached the Union County Sheriff's Office with accusations that he had molested her two children under the age of 12. Prior to committing the abuse, he was a trusted family friend with whom the children occasionally spent time alone.

It was not Hanna's first time being charged with child molestation; in 2011, he was accused of sticking his tongue in a young child's ears in a public setting.

That decade-old molestation charge ended up being dropped at court because, given the circumstances, prosecutors did not believe they could prove sexual intent beyond a reasonable doubt, and Hanna instead pleaded guilty to misdemeanor simple battery.

This time, the charges



Kurt Stuart Hanna

stuck, and Hanna pleaded guilty in the Superior Court of Circuit Judge Enotah Court of Union County on Friday, Jan. 7, declining to apologize to the family or make a statement in court.

The negotiated plea entry was originally scheduled for
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Ninth District Opportunity, Food Pantry make a difference

By Jeremy Foster
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Based out of the Haralson Memorial Civic Center, Ninth District Opportunity and the Union County Food Pantry are great programs geared toward finding resources for people who do not have much money, with goals of helping residents pay utility bills, acquire food and more.

Union County Community Resource Coordinator Ann Sullivan has administered the programs for 12 years now following her retirement from AT&T after 36 and a half years.

"We help with low-income heating assistance, housing and rent," Sullivan



Ann Sullivan appreciates all the community support that goes into making the Union County Food Pantry possible for families in need.
Photo by Jeremy Foster

said, "If we do not reach the funds to do it, we refer out to others like Hope House and St. Vincent De Paul (at St. Francis of Assisi Church),

and vice versa. We all reach out and work together to help those struggling in our community."

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152nd Civil Air Patrol wants people to know 'We're here'

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville, Georgia, is one of the fortunate small towns in this state to have a municipal airport. And it is doubly fortunate to have a Civil Air Patrol Composite Squadron based at its airport.

So, what is the Civil Air Patrol?

Today, the Civil Air Patrol is an official member of the United States Air Force's Total Force, joining its regular, guard and reserve elements.

In the past, however, the Civil Air Patrol, or CAP, has done everything from spotting German subs off the Atlantic and Gulf coasts during World War II to modern day emergency services and disaster

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The 152nd North Georgia Composite Squadron Color Guard in the Nov. 11, 2021, Union County Schools Veterans Day Program.
Photo/Submitted

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds excited for events in 2022

By Jeremy Foster
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

HIWASSEE - The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is gearing up for a huge schedule of events throughout the rest of this year after having minimal events in 2021 and none in 2020 due to COVID-19.

It will certainly be an exciting year filled with plenty of new and returning musical acts and event festivals, and, of course, many special food booths, crafts and other vendors for everyone to get out and enjoy.

Christian pop band "for KING & COUNTRY" will

perform at Anderson Music Hall on Jan. 29, as will classic rock's Three Dog Night on Feb. 26.

Chris Janson will travel to town on his "Halfway to Crazy Tour" April 16, and that month will also feature the Mile Long Yard Sale April 22-23, the monthlong Rhododendron Festival starting April 22, the Memory Lane Classic Car Show April 29-30, with a concert by Josh Turner April 30.

A highly anticipated new event in 2022 will be the Hiwassee Highlands Wine Festival to be held on May 7, featuring Crane Creek Winery of Young Harris as well as approximately 30 other wine

vendors from different regions to be represented.

People won't want to miss this new festival, which will include a souvenir wine glass for near unlimited tastings with the purchase of a ticket, plus enjoyment of musical acts such as True Youngblood, Goldpine, Wyatt Espalin, The Murphys, Michael Jones and Austin Coleman.

Shows will be held on the Main Stage and the Sawmill Stage in rotation throughout the course of the event, and guests will have access to arts and crafts, food trucks, and tours of the blooming Hamilton Rhododendron Gardens.

Also in May, country music star Scotty McCreery will take the stage on May 14, and the wildly popular Hiwassee Pro Rodeo will return May 27-29.

The Happy Together Tour starring The Turtles, Chuck Negron (formerly of Three Dog Night), The Association, Gary Puckett & Union Gap, The Vogues and The Cowbills will occur June 4, and the Georgia Mountain Fair Fireworks will take off on the Fourth of July.

August will see the return of the annual nine-day Georgia Mountain Fair Aug. 19-27, with Dailey & Vincent's American
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Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason is excited to show off the new seating that will be installed inside Anderson Music Hall in 2022.
Photo by Jeremy Foster

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ESPLOST ...from Page 1A

feature a hard cap on the amount of money that can be raised within their five-year collections period. If the hard cap is reached prior to ESPLOST expiration, the sales tax is discontinued, and school district collections cease.

The current tax, ESPLOST V, will expire June 30, 2023, but has a hard cap of \$21 million. Given unexpectedly strong tax collections during the pandemic, ESPLOST V is projected to reach its cap possibly a year earlier than anticipated, effectively shortening its lifespan.

Should this occur without ESPLOST VI in place, collections will stop and the total sales tax in the county would decrease to 6%. However, the School Board believes it would maximally benefit students to get a head start on the next ESPLOST.

The collections timetable for the proposed ESPLOST VI would not exceed five years and would have a hard cap of \$42 million in total possible collections, double that of ESPLOST V – an effort to avert the possibility of reaching the cap during its five-year life resulting in a collections gap.

Actual monthly collections are currently far exceeding projected amounts, and looking ahead, the School Board Office feels the new

collections cap will capture the growth in sales tax revenues that has occurred over the pandemic and help to offset inflationary pressures moving forward.

Of course, collections are not guaranteed, so depending on how the economy performs, ESPLOST VI, if passed, might expire before the full \$42 million is collected.

If supported by voters, ESPLOST VI collections would go into effect most likely as ESPLOST V collections ended, with the sales tax remaining at 7%. Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill said the exact date would be up to the Georgia Department of Revenue.

So, why does Union County Schools need ESPLOST VI?

“The focus will definitely be a new elementary school,” said Hill, adding that it has been in the planning stage for the last four years.

Currently, the elementary school is housed in two buildings: one that used to be the high school, which Hill said was first occupied in 1969, and the old middle school, which he said was first occupied in 1992.

Both buildings were designed for children bigger than elementary-age students, Hill said, giving the bathroom facilities as an example. And what used to house the entire high school can now only accommodate just the third

grade.

Also, due to the district’s high performance overall and favorable reputation, Hill said the rate of growth of the entire school system has outpaced state and local predictions starting back years ago.

“We have a lot of the real estate folks tell us they want information on the school because, when it comes down to where a lot of folks choose to live, they want to know about the schools and the schools’ performance and opportunities,” Hill said.

And there is a major safety concern associated with the way things are now, with food service deliveries, garbage pick-up, maintenance calls, and student drop-offs and pick-ups occurring in between the two buildings where children continually pass, Hill said.

Elementary School Principal Gerald Bavero said, with the primary school “busting at the seams,” part of the plan for a new elementary school would be to move the second grade over to the new elementary school to free up space in the soon-to-be-renovated primary school.

“The fact that they have 60 more students (this year) in their building, which is, at that level, like three classrooms’ worth of students – they’re just busting at the seams,” Bavero said, referring to the primary school and the need for a new elementary school.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport said modernization is another

concern, stressing that, given the rate of technological change today, it is incumbent upon the schools to train students such that they will be equipped to be of value in an everchanging work environment.

Hill said if ESPLOST VI expires without ESPLOST VI being approved by voters, school leadership would be looking at renting temporary, mobile buildings that would pose other problems: where would they put them and how would they pay for them and their installation?

Without ESPLOST VI, the other option would be to increase property taxes, which Hill said he really does not want to have to do.

“People don’t realize, 84% of our budget is salary and benefits,” he said. “We can’t fire people; we can’t reduce our workforce. There’s nothing, really, to cut. You have to pay the water and sewer, and that’s about \$15,000 per month. You have to pay the power bill – that’s approximately \$80,000 per month.”

Given the School Board’s pay-as-you-go stance on SLOST projects, no option to issue bonds was written into the ESPLOST VI sales tax referendum, so the district plans to remain debt free.

Superintendent Hill, the school leadership, and the School Board all indicated that they are proud to be a part of a Georgia county that has unfailingly supported its schools, teachers and students through ESPLOST since 1998.

Hanna ...from Page 1A

Jan. 6, but the proceeding was briefly interrupted when two “understandably angry” adult male relatives of the victims began shouting at and approaching the defendant from the gallery, District Attorney Jeff Langley said.

Sheriff’s deputies and a member of the District Attorney’s Office blocked their advance, and the men were escorted from the courtroom. Langley said they later apologized to him, law enforcement and Superior Court Senior Judge James Cornwell for their behavior.

In light of the “understandable high emotions” experienced by the family members, Langley elected not to pursue any possible criminal charges, and the judge did not hold them formally in contempt of court. The plea hearing was completed the following day.

“The children involved will now not have to testify,” Langley said, “and the defendant will effectively serve the remainder of his life in prison.”

“As District Attorney, I want to thank the hard work and diligence of UCSO Inv. Lisa Foos and Assistant District Attorney Buster Landreau in bringing about justice in this case.”

“I also want to thank DA’s Office Victim Assistant Devin Duncan and former victim

assistant Holly McCollum for their work assisting the victims through this long process.”

Likewise, the UCSO Criminal Investigations Division is grateful for the work the District Attorney’s Office put into the case and for securing an outcome that sends such a strong message to other would-be offenders.

And though investigators feel confident Hanna has done this to other unaccounted for children over his lifetime, they rest easier knowing he will never again have access to kids.

This was Sgt. Lisa Foos’ first child molestation case. She came to UCSO from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department in California, where she primarily worked property crimes.

“I never went into that in L.A. County – I didn’t think I could handle it because I have children,” Foos said. “But after going through the process, I feel I can handle it, because someone has got to step up and seek justice for those victims; someone has to put these guys behind bars.”

“And as heartbreaking it is for me as a mother to hear about the abuse the kids suffered from, it’s still more important for me to put those feelings aside and do my job. I had a whole team helping me here – we were all in it together from Day 1.”

Food Pantry ...from Page 1A

The general guidelines for program qualification are income-based and dependent on the number of people in each household.

For low-income heating assistance, people 65 years of age and older are eligible, and as of Dec. 1, a waiting list had been opened up for those under 65, for which the funds have not been fully received yet.

“These are payments made to either their propane vendor or the electric company,” she said. “A typical payment can help to buy one propane tank, or if it is going towards an electric bill, then that can tend to last quite a while.”

“The problem in Union and Towns County is lack of housing. Finding housing for people here is almost impossible. You cannot

find places to live; there are waiting lists everywhere, so housing is a big problem in these mountains, and I think it is because we grew too fast, because people come here all the time from out of state and end up trying to stay here.”

“We also have a weatherization program that is not age-restricted that helps with small repairs on housing such as insulation and making sure windows are caulked around and that heating systems are working properly.”

Sullivan said the food pantry “has been very blessed lately.”

“The food pantry is funded by people in this community – we get no state, federal or any sort of funding from anyone, so it is all donations by the community,” she said. “Every organization

up here just takes it to heart that people need stuff.”

“We have had donations from Union County Middle School, United Community Bank, the Saddle Club, among others. We were very fortunate to give out about 500 food vouchers for Ingles from September until the end of the year, and we aim to give out more around Easter time.”

Sullivan and her Ninth District office are located at 165 Wellborn Street in Blairsville, inside the Civic Center.

People wishing to help others or who need assistance themselves may contact Sullivan to schedule an appointment. She can be reached at 706-745-6596 or ann.sullivan@ndocsbg.org. More information is available at www.ndo.org.

Eric Collins joins River City Bank as Vice President & Branch Manager in Blairsville

River City Bank is pleased to announce the addition of Eric B. Collins as Vice President and Branch Manager of the Bank’s Blairsville location, currently operating as a Mortgage and Loan Office at 215 Blue Ridge Street, Suite A. River City Bank’s full-service Blairsville office is scheduled to open this Spring at 206 Highway 515.

Eric graduated from Shorter University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Management. He holds an Associate of Science degree from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and is also a graduate of the Georgia Banking School sponsored by the Georgia Bankers Associa-



Eric Collins

joined our team of bankers as we continue to strategically expand into Union County. Eric, with his 20 years of retail banking experience and customer following, adds depth and strength to our team that will assist us in carrying out our mission to offer best in class customer service to our clients,” stated Jamie Tallent, President and CEO.

In addition to managing the daily operations of the Blairsville Retail Team, Eric will be responsible for providing financial solutions for clients, to include consumer and small business lending. We invite you to stop by and meet Eric and the rest of Blairsville’s River City Bank team.

Civil Air Patrol...from Page 1A

relief, both in the air and on the ground.

Today's Civil Air Patrol is largely a learning and training opportunity for young men and women, ages 12 to 18, who have an interest in aviation, STEM programs, aerospace programs, the military and first responder training, just to name a few. They are Civil Air Patrol Cadets.

There is also an adult CAP program that supports the cadet program. Adult members must be over the age of 18, and once a cadet turns 18, he or she must become a senior member.

Fewer than 20% of all senior members are pilots or flight crew. Many are professionals – doctors, lawyers, paramedics, teachers and so forth. They are people who have an interest in investing their time and expertise in their community's youth.

Lt. Kenneth "Ken" Stanger is the commander of the 152nd North Georgia Composite Squadron of the CAP, which is based at the Blairsville Airport. He has been in that position for about two and a half years.

"Our main goal (for 2022) at the 152nd is to have our squadron become a 'Ground Team Certified' squadron for search and rescue," Stanger said. "If any of the surrounding states or Georgia requires help to do a search and rescue for a downed aircraft, missing hikers, or (a natural disaster), they usually call on the Civil Air Patrol to come in and assist with that."

"We have qualified drone pilots, and we have qualified

aircraft pilots that they would call on to survey the area. All the cadets could come in and run a base camp, run a radio operation, and be able to assist the paramedics and the emergency services people."

Stanger said for cadets to initially qualify to go on a ground team, they must show proficiency in 11 different areas, such as compass use, field sanitation, ability to treat hot and cold weather injuries, and passing the 116 Emergency Services exam.

Once they pass the exam, they must demonstrate several other proficiencies, such as scanning for people or downed aircraft in the field and radio communications with air and ground assets. Additionally, they must pass three advanced emergency services exams called 117 tests.

Cadets are also required to pass two Federal Emergency Management Agency exams concerning familiarization with, reporting within, and working within chains of command in emergency situations.

"So, that's the main thing for our squadron, is to get as many of the cadets who are interested in it certified so that we can be called up (to help with emergency services)," Stanger said. "That's our primary goal this year."

"Also, for 2022, we just signed up for our rocketry program. That's a six-month long class along with the cadets having the opportunity (to actually launch one and two-stage rockets). Of course, there are a lot of safety classes that are involved."

The squadron plans to

do plenty of fundraising this year as well with car washes, car parking, and dinners, said Stanger, because the squadron is self-funded, and COVID-19 restrictions have taken a major toll on fundraising efforts over the last year.

However, the cadets are taught to extend good will to everyone and are available to help with all sorts of projects on a volunteer basis, though donations are always greatly appreciated.

Those donations are what enable the cadets to train for proficiency in the above-mentioned emergency service areas and to keep the lights on at the squadron billet.

"Blairsville doesn't really know they have a Civil Air Patrol," Stanger said. "Most people we talk to, they don't know who we are, they don't know that we're right here at the airport."

"The main thing I would convey to the Blairsville area would be that we're here. Anything that the community needs from us, anything that can help, we're here to do that. So, I think if more people know about us and communicate with us, we're more than happy to help."

For more information or to find out if the cadets can be of service for any number of community projects, contact Lt. Stanger at 470-955-5970 or via email at ken.stanger@gawg.cap.gov.

Many questions about CAP can be answered at www.ga152.cap.gov, and the Facebook page is "152nd North Georgia Composite Squadron" @152ndngcs.

Fairgrounds...from Page 1A

Made Music Fest coming to town Sept. 15-17, and the 49th Annual Fall Regional Shelby/Mustang & Ford Meet happening Sept. 23-24.

Then, folks will get nine more days of festival fun with the regionally renowned Georgia Mountain Fall Festival Oct. 7-15, plus the Appalachian Brew, Stew & Que Festival and a concert from 38 Special, both Oct. 22.

November will be the start of the holiday favorite "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights" Thanksgiving night, and in December, Dailey & Vincent will be back for their first ever local ChristmasFest for two days of country, bluegrass, gospel "and all the Christmas music you can handle!"

"In 2020, I was not able to have any concert events in the Anderson Music Hall," Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said. "To be able to finally open back up and see people coming here locally and traveling all over makes me very excited for this year, because we are trying to promote tourism and local fun within our community."

"After the onset of the COVID pandemic, I believe we are full steam ahead. We were able to do more events and concerts last year in 2021, and this year we have many more things scheduled compared to last year, and we are continuing to add to that."

"It is hard to pinpoint what we are most excited about promoting this year, because there is always something for everybody to enjoy, and everyone leaves here happier than the last time they came, so the whole process in general is worthwhile."

An interesting update for the fairgrounds this year is the refreshing of seating inside Anderson Music Hall. The plan is to replace the bench seats with cushioned movie-theater type individual seats.

"The project is proposed to begin in mid-April and hopefully finished by the end of June," Thomason said.

The benches will be put up for sale when the project is completed, and funding for the new seats will come from money raised between special

For additional scheduling information or to find out how to volunteer, visit www.georgiamountainfairgrounds.com, check out Facebook or call 706-896-4191. And stay tuned for events that will be added throughout the year.

Valley River Arts Guild upcoming events

Valley River Arts Guild is offering two January classes, Pine Needle Basket Making, Tuesday, January 25, 1-4 PM at Murphy Art Center. Class is open to the public.

The Decorative Snail Mail Mailbox Class will be held on Saturday, January 22,

10:30 AM-12:30 PM at Murphy Art Center. Class is open to children and youth ages 8 to 17.

For details on upcoming classes call 828-360-3038 or visit Murphy Art Center, Valley River Avenue in downtown Murphy.

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution installs new officers for 2022



(L-R): Jack Dugger, Registrar, Richard Hoibraten, Chaplain, Jared Ogden, Treasurer, Doug Jamison, Secretary, Stephen Weaver, Vice President, and Sid Turner, President

Before the installation, outgoing president Jared Ogden addressed the Nationally Award-winning chapter. He stated the goal of the Sons of the American Revolution is to preserve the knowledge of our Nation's history, celebrate acts of patriotism and good citizenship, and pass historical understanding of our Nation's founding to future generations. He mentioned that members today echo the spirits of the Revolutionary War Patriots, many of whom volunteered with just a vision of freedom. "No military skills, no uniforms, no nothing but a vision of freedom." Today, each member of the SAR commits to preserving freedom and passing our heritage to the future.

Dr. David Ludley officiated the induction for the new officers. Dr. Ludley is Professor Emeritus of Art History and English for the University System of Georgia and the current Georgia Society State Historian. Dr. Ludley recently was elected Sr. Vice President for the Georgia Society, SAR. He enthralled the members with a little-known episode during the Revolutionary War. General George Washington led spirited troops within 30 yards



David Ludley (L) receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from new chapter president, Sid Turner (R)

of British muskets, restored troop morale, and ultimately won the skirmish. Washington remained unscathed, but one witness reported that he was so sure Washington would be killed that he covered his eyes with his hat because he did not want to see the General die.

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, SAR meets five times per year; the next meeting is 6 p.m. on March 8th, at Brothers Restaurant in Young Harris. The meetings are open to the public. However, membership in the SAR is only available to male descendants of the patriots who served in

the American Revolutionary War or who contributed to establishing the independence of the United States. The Society seeks to make the dreams of patriot ancestors a reality by preserving the knowledge of our constitutional foundations, celebrating and rewarding acts of patriotism, and educating citizens and youth on the civic responsibilities required to live in and maintain a free, self-governing society.

For additional information, please phone or email Jared Ogden at 770-855-0007 or jaredogden007@gmail.com.

Faron King elected as Vice President of NAR Region 5

Faron W. King, who served as Georgia REALTORS® (GAR) President in 2020, has been elected to serve as the 2024 National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Region 5 Vice President. Region 5 covers Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. Region 5 is the largest of NAR's 13 regions with nearly 300,000 members.

Faron is currently the broker/owner of Coldwell Banker High Country Realty, with five offices in Blue Ridge, Blairsville, Ellijay, Hiwassee and Murphy, NC. The firm specializes in residential, commercial, resort, second home and mountain luxury properties, and has served the North Georgia, western North Carolina, and southeastern Tennessee markets for 40 years.

Faron previously served as President of the Northeast Georgia Board of REALTORS® (NEGBOR) in 2011 and was twice named NEGBOR REALTOR® of the Year. Additionally, he was selected as GAR REALTOR® of the Year in 2013. Faron is currently serving as Region 5 Trustee on the REALTORS®



Faron W. King

Political Action Committee (RPAC) Trustees Fundraising Committee and is a Golden R President's Circle member. He is a RPAC Hall of Fame member for NAR and GAR.

Within his community, Faron has served on the Board of Directors for Towns County Chamber of Commerce, which he chaired in 2001, along with the Licklog Players Theater Group, for which he served as president in 2005. He is a graduate of Leadership Georgia, the Georgia Academy of Economic Development, a graduate of the GAR Leadership Academy, and was named

to Georgia Trend's 40 under 40 in 2004, having been the first individual from Towns County to be selected. In 2008, Faron was commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel by Steven Beshear, Governor of Kentucky. This award recognizes an individual's noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding service to community, state, and nation.

Georgia REALTORS® is a voluntary professional association comprised of approximately 50,000 licensed real estate brokers and salespersons engaged in all aspects of the real estate business throughout the state. Georgia REALTORS® is the leading advocate for the real estate industry in Georgia, committed to protecting private property rights and free enterprise, maintaining ethical and professional standards, and enhancing the public's awareness and confidence in REALTORS®.

The National Association of REALTORS® is America's largest trade association, representing more than 1.5 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

Winter Snow...from Page 1A

we were expecting," Dyer said of the storm Monday morning. "I don't think there was a day in one of those briefings that they did not mention at least 4-6 inches of snow. But no matter what the predictions, we prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

"We had prepared for a major 6 to 8-inch snow event with ice. We had all departments ready, and we had all been meeting and discussing what we were going to do. We opened up the Emergency Operations Center Sunday morning, and we were prepared to do a major event."

"The Road Department and EMC were busy, but as far as the rest of the resources, we didn't have any accidents that I know of that were called out, and we didn't have a lot of calls (generally). So, as far as

emergency services and public safety, we went through this really well.

"Sunday, we got about 2-3 inches in some places in the southeast of the county, and then finally, Sunday night, we got maybe an inch or 2 in some places."

"The wind was about what were told to expect, and that did cause some trees down. And we did have some road conditions that were pretty rough, which the DOT and our Road Department had to work a pretty good bit to handle."

"At one time, we had about 3,000 or so customers in Union County without power, but by Sunday night, they just about had everybody completely back on power. It was pretty impressive."

As of Monday morning, upward of 25 trees were reported

down in roadways, which seems like a lot but could have been worse considering the initial forecast for the storm.

Temperatures Monday were not expected to get above freezing after press time, meaning that black ice conditions likely persisted on some side roads into Tuesday, though temps were predicted to reach into the upper 40s Tuesday to resolve lingering icy conditions.

Dyer advises residents to prepare the best they can any time extreme weather is forecasted.

"No. 1, stay at home if you can, and No. 2, make sure you have enough supplies for three or four days if the power is out," Dyer said. "That goes for any significant weather event. A hurricane could come through here and have the same effect."

As for the county, Commissioner Lamar Paris updated folks via Facebook on

road and weather conditions they would have a pretty snow play day, but we have mostly had rain, and our temp is 39 degrees with most of the snow melted in the valley."

Thankfully, Monday was the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, so students did not have to travel to school in icy conditions. As a bonus, kids did end up getting snow to

play in after all, and it even snowed a little bit more Monday morning.

By press time, Union County Schools was leaving open the possibility of closing schools Tuesday depending on re-freezing around the county. A decision was expected either Monday evening or very early Tuesday morning.



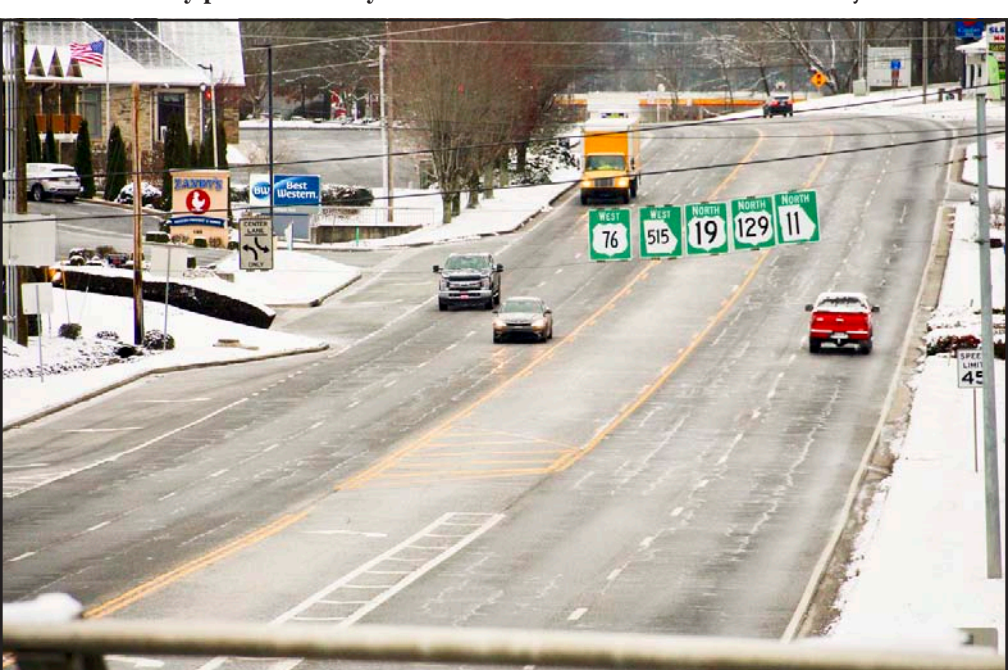
The Georgia Department of Transportation sprayed brine on state highways Friday and Saturday in preparation for the big winter storm. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Local first responders during a National Weather Service briefing at Union County Fire Station No. 1 on Jan. 15. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



The Union County Historical Society's 1861 John Payne Cabin offered folks a glimpse back in time to a snowy past on Monday. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Local highways and roads were not very busy Monday morning due to the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and black ice conditions, though ice was mainly isolated to side roads throughout the county. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



The Union County War Memorial reposed in snow on Monday, Jan. 17, 2022. Photo by Shawn Jarrard