

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Waldroup of Woody Gap recognized as 2020 STAR Student

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

SUCHES - For scoring highest on the SAT of any of his classmates, high school senior Ernest Waldroup has earned the distinction of being named STAR Student at Woody Gap School.

STAR stands for Student Teacher Achievement Recognition, and it's a program sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators.

For a high school senior to achieve STAR status, he or she must score highest among their peers in any single sitting of the three-part SAT by early November of his or her senior year.

Qualifying students must

also be within the top 10% or Top 10 students of their class based on grade point average.

Furthermore, those nominated as STAR Students must achieve SAT scores equal to or higher than the latest available national averages on the critical reading, math and writing sections.

"It is an honor for me specifically knowing that I have actually worked really hard to get it," he said. "The way I prepared for the SAT is the way I've prepared for every test I've ever taken - I just read books. I'm the kind of person that reads textbooks for fun.

"Whenever I study, if I try too hard to remember everything, I get it mixed up. But if I read it once, it imprints itself on my brain, and then I

can see trigger words."

His advice to those studying for the SAT includes concentrating on "gray" areas, or those parts of a subject that one doesn't fully understand or remember.

Once a student earns STAR status, he or she then names the teacher who most influenced their school career, which is why Waldroup selected longtime Woody Gap teacher Diane Wood.

"She was my kindergarten teacher," he said. "Ms. Diane, she had a real genuine, big smile - laughed easily. She had this really awesome fish tank and her room was colorful."

That was in 2007.

"We had a (fish) tank here in the classroom," concurred Wood as she paged through a

scrapbook containing pictures of Waldroup's kindergarten class. "Ernest and I, we're sort of kindred spirits, because we don't like a lot of attention.

"Edie, his mom, she's always been a very big supporter of me. She's a good person. She's raised some good kids."

Speaking directly to Waldroup, Wood said, "Your being chosen is an honor. It means that you are preparing yourself for leadership. You're going to be a very successful person. I believe that. I want to thank you for choosing me, giving me this honor.

"It's meaningful when your peers and your colleagues recognize you, but it's more meaningful when a student does it. You told me that I



Woody Gap's 2020 STAR Student Ernest Waldroup with STAR Teacher Diane Wood. Photo by Mark Smith

Wood and Waldroup agreed that the atmosphere at Waldroup, Page 6A

## Arby's could open by middle of October following land purchase

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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Roast beef sandwich fans rejoice - the contract between Arby's Restaurant Development and the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority is officially a done deal.

Construction on the restaurant is expected to start the first part of April, as announced after the contract closed last week. The project should be completed by September, with the nationally recognized franchise possibly opening by the middle of October.

After more than a year of back and forth negotiations and a series of contract extensions, the deal closed on Wednesday, Jan. 29, when both parties signed the necessary documents



and money changed hands, resulting in the transfer of the 0.9-acre parcel of land featuring Georgia 515 frontage to GLM Development.

All told, the land sold for \$775,000 and included a \$25,000 credit to the developer for remediation costs associated with weak soil discovered at the site last year.

The money will go toward reimbursing the city

of Blairsville for its payoff of a loan the DDA used to purchase the Haralson Property Development about seven years ago.

As previously reported, the DDA has been paying down its approximate \$1.9 million in initial debt owed to the city by selling off pieces of the Haralson Property to developers.

To date, the DDA has sold three Haralson Property parcels for a total of about \$1.7 million: the Arby's lot; the Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen parcel, also on Georgia 515; and the parcel facing Foodland on Pat Haralson Memorial Drive that will hold the Courthouse View development.

The DDA will be turning See Arby's, Page 2A

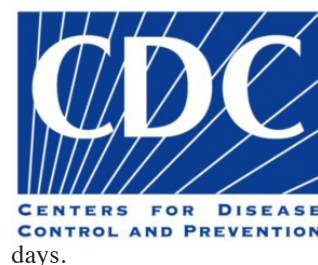
## U.S. Government declares public health emergency over coronavirus

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the U.S. on Friday, Jan. 31, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

This follows a Thursday, Jan. 30, World Health Organization declaration that the novel, or new, coronavirus outbreak is a public health emergency of international concern.

Also on Friday, President Donald Trump signed an order barring entry to foreign nationals, other than immediate family of American citizens or permanent residents, who visited China in the last 14



The new virus is a family of viruses that includes the common cold, SARS and MERS. This novel coronavirus has been temporarily named "2019-nCoV." Chinese health officials were the first to post the full genome of 2019-nCoV on two internet accessible databases, which has facilitated detection of the virus internationally, according to the CDC. As a precautionary step against viral transmission, the CDC and Customs and Border Protection "are continuing to conduct enhanced entry screening of passengers who have been in Wuhan within the past 14 days." See Coronavirus, Page 2A

## American Legion Post 121 hears from members, sets 2020 goals

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

American Legion Post 121 Chaplain Phil Gatlin served as guest speaker in the group's first meeting of 2020 last month, speaking about his childhood growing up during World War II.

"I was 4 years old when the war started and 8 when it ended," Gatlin said, before diving into an account he'd written. "I actually wrote this to hopefully get it to the family of the officer that I'm going to be talking about."

Gatlin detailed a story about a U.S. Navy pilot whom this sister was engaged to before he went off to fight in the See American Legion, Page 3A



American Legion Post 121 Chaplain Phil Gatlin spoke about childhood memories during World War II in the group's first meeting of 2020. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Young Harris teen dies in crash near Vogel State Park

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Alondra Gonzalez, 17, of Young Harris, died tragically in a one-vehicle crash just south of Vogel State Park Sunday night, according to authorities.

The accident occurred around 7 p.m. on Feb. 2, as the girl returned from a trip to Helen via US 129 North, friends who responded to the scene said.

According to the Georgia State Patrol, as Gonzalez negotiated a right curve approaching Vogel heading north, she lost control of her vehicle, a Toyota Scion, causing it to go over the side of the mountain before overturning and fatally striking a tree.

Gonzalez was alone in her car, though witnesses from another vehicle reported that speed may have been a contributing factor in the accident. GSP said.

Emergency agencies on the scene that evening were the Union County Sheriff's Office, Union General EMS and the Georgia State Patrol.

Originally from Puerto Rico, Gonzalez worked as a waitress at Nani's Cuban and Puerto Rican Restaurant in Blairsville, according to a post on the restaurant's Facebook page.

"She was our Blonde, smiley, funny Puerto Rican waitress girl," read a post from Monday expressing sadness over the tragedy.



Alondra Gonzalez Nani's Restaurant has asked people to keep the Gonzalez Family and the Nani's Family in their thoughts and prayers. "In honor to her we will be closed until further notice," the restaurant said.

## S.A.F.E. pledges continued support of abuse victims in 2020



A S.A.F.E. Thrift Store customer in Blairsville attending the recent 20/20 sale. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Support in Abusive Family Enterprises Inc., aka S.A.F.E., continues its decades-long mission in 2020 to help

Towns and Union county families and individuals in abusive situations.

And thankfully, some of the stigma of abuse has lifted in recent years, allowing people to open up about such serious

issues in the home.

"It's definitely become something that is talked about more," S.A.F.E. Executive Director Molly Cousin said. "It's in the media more and people are recognizing it, which influences victims to go get help, because it's not as much of a stigma to reach out and get that help anymore.

"It's being spoken out about more, and that's only going to help, as people and friends and families are more open to reaching out and seeing what they can do.

"We are also seeing more and more friends and family members recognize these issues and calling us to see what to do to help those that are in these violent abusive relationships."

S.A.F.E. offers shelter for domestic and sexual abuse victims, who, unfortunately, are See S.A.F.E., Page 2A

## UCFD purchases airway training mannequin with Vulcan donation



Representatives with Vulcan Materials met with the Union County Fire Department and Commissioner Lamar Paris to present a donation check last week. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Vulcan Materials Company has stepped up once again to support Union County Fire Rescue with a generous

donation. The \$1,000 donation, from the company that supplies crushed rock for so many local construction projects, has allowed the Fire Department to acquire a valuable training tool

- an airway training mannequin - at no expense to taxpayers. Carol Landrum and Johnny Smith of Vulcan officially presented the donation at Fire Station No. 1 on Jan. 28. See UC Fire Dept., Page 3A

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**Woody Gap School Fruit Fundraiser**  
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**Daddy Daughter Dance**  
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**North Ga Tech**  
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**UCS**  
**UCMS January Students of the Month**  
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