

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Georgia 515 right of way acquisitions to start this summer

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Department of Transportation plans to begin its right of way acquisition process for the Georgia 515 widening and relocation project this summer, with construction anticipated to begin in 2020.

And while the department has not yet finalized a right of way plan, GDOT anticipates requiring about 230 parcels of land along the 8.5-mile stretch of GA 515 between Blairsville and Young Harris, which will be widened to four lanes.

Many businesses and buildings inhabit parcels that will need to be acquired by GDOT for the project, including the Food Heaven Convenience Store in Union County and the office building

and parking area of the Habitat for Humanity ReStore just over the Towns County line.

GDOT will host a property owners meeting next month, to which "all the people who own property will be invited to come talk with one of our right of way specialists," according to Katie Strickland, GDOT District One Communications Officer.

"This meeting will help (property owners) understand what land we will want to buy," said Strickland. "No offers are made, just information and dialogue for us and them."

The total cost of the project, including right of way authorization and construction, is an estimated \$90 million, and will consist of federal and state monies with no local match.

According to GDOT,

GA 515 is part of what's known as "Corridor A" of the Appalachian System, or ADHS.

"The ADHS was authorized by Congress in 1965, and was designed to generate economic development in the previously isolated Appalachian region," according to GDOT literature. "SR 515/US 76 is designated as part of the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP).

"The purpose of the GRIP system is to provide transportation infrastructure necessary for economic growth by providing connectivity in rural areas of Georgia. The section of SR 515/US 76 from Young Harris Street in Blairsville to Timberline Drive north of Young Harris is one

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Eric Granados, a transportation engineer with HNTB, points out a feature of one of the proposed roundabouts in Young Harris. Pictured here with Katie Strickland, GDOT Communications Officer.

## Children enjoy annual Easter Egg Hunt at Meeks Park

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Recreation Department hosted its annual Easter Egg Hunt at Meeks Park on Saturday, April 8, with 4,000 eggs placed in and around the upper baseball/softball fields for hundreds of children divided among three separate age groups.

According to Meeks Park Program Director Jennifer Becker, employees of the park began arriving around 9:30 a.m. to hide 1,500 eggs for the children under 4 years old. Another 1,500 were placed for the 5 to 8-year-old children, and 1,000 for the 8 to 12-year-olds.

"The staff puts a lot into this, it takes a lot of work to put out this many eggs," Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said. "They do a great job, and this brings in people from not only Union County, but many from the surrounding counties as well."

Becker also served as



Hundreds of youngsters and parents attended the 2017 Meeks Park Egg Hunt. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

emcee of the event, with the egg hunt for the younger kids (4-and-under) getting underway at 11 a.m. in the area outside of the upper fields and batting cages.

While parents were discouraged from picking up

eggs for their children, most of the younger children still needed assistance from mom or dad - who were also nearby to take plenty of priceless photographs - to keep them pointed in the right direction.

Within a matter of

minutes, all 1,500 eggs were gathered into baskets and it was time for the 5 to 8-year-old children, whose egg hunt would take place on the outfield grass of one of the

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## Kaye McCann sworn in as superintendent of city elections



Blairsville City Attorney David Barrett and City Clerk Kaye McCann

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Blairsville City Attorney David Barrett swore in City Clerk Kaye McCann as the superintendent of city elections

during the Blairsville City Council's monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 4.

"Our city clerk has recently become certified," said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley.

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## Storms caused structure fire, outages

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County experienced a series of thunderstorms last Wednesday, April 5, that caused one house to burn down and around 2,700 residents to lose power.

The thunderstorms, which were responsible for teacup-sized hail and tornadoes in other areas of the Southeast, largely spared Union County, and no one was hurt as a result of the storms.

"It was a busy week for weather," said Union County Fire Chief David Dyer, who is also county EMA director. "We had some storms come through Sunday, Monday, and it wasn't too bad, though it wasn't pleasant, either."

"The National Weather

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The Union County Fire Department responded last Wednesday to this structure fire off Smyrna Road, which was caused by lightning strike.

## Diana Smith named National CASA Advocate of the Year

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

SEATTLE - For some, volunteering is simply a way to pass the time, but for Diana Smith, volunteering is a way of life.

One way in which Smith demonstrates her passion as a volunteer is through her role as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children within the Enotah Judicial Circuit.

In recognition of her accomplishments in this role, Smith was honored on March 12 as the recipient of the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year award during the National CASA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington.

Smith has been lending her time and affections to help

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Judge Darlene Byrne, left, with the National CASA Association, presenting Diana Smith of Blairsville with the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year Award in March.

## Union Students help commemorate 100th anniversary of World War I

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

One hundred years ago, the lives of people around the world changed forever with the beginning battles of the first World War.

In honor of the countless brave who fought for freedom and the pursuit of happiness for all, the Union County Historical Society joined together with students of Union County Schools to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the war on Thursday, April 6.

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Will Woolwine and Daniel Fortenberry of Union County Elementary School giving a presentation

## Mother and son arrested Wednesday, for exploitation of an elderly man

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

A mother and her son posted bond over the weekend after having been arrested for stealing more than \$150,000 from a local elderly man, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Belvalene Torbush, 75, and her son Stacy Waldrip, 48, both of Blairsville, were taken into custody on Wednesday, April 5.

They were arrested

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Belvalene Torbush



Stacy Waldrip

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**Union County Schools Spring Break**  
April 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>

**Comprehensive Plan Public Meeting**  
April 17<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 p.m.  
Union County Community Center

**First Open Horse Show of Season**  
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**PANTHERS BASEBALL**  
Tues vs. Fannin 5:55 PM  
Thurs vs. Robbinsville 5 PM  
Fri @ Fannin (DH) 5 & 6:30 PM