

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Montgomery details rescue at 'horrific trucking accident'

By Shawn Jarrard
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A semitruck loaded with plywood experienced a brake failure on Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway June 7, causing the truck to lose control and spill its load onto the roadway before careening off the mountainside and seriously injuring the driver.

Georgia State Patrol investigated the accident that occurred around 7 p.m. that Monday, noting the semitruck was traveling north on the Russell Scenic Highway when trouble occurred.

"(The vehicle) lost the brakes and the driver lost control," according to the Crash Report. "(The semitruck) crossed the centerline, ran off the roadway to the west and struck the embankment, losing

its load.

"(It) then ran off the roadway to the east and off the embankment and overturning (before ejecting the driver). Areas of impact were determined by marks on the roadway and damage to the vehicle."

The lost load of plywood scattered all over the highway was what alerted passing-motorist-turned-good-Samaritan Brandon Montgomery to the fact that an accident had happened.

A local photographer, Montgomery was on his way to a spot to take some pictures of the night sky when he came upon the scene, which he later described in a Facebook post as "a very horrific trucking accident."

While surveying the debris, he heard the driver

calling out in apparent pain for help. When he reached the place where the truck went off the road, he saw a chaotic scene of uprooted trees, a torn-up trailer, strewn-out plywood and a mangled truck cab.

"I was first on scene along with one other passerby," Montgomery wrote online. "We ran down the steep mountainside in an attempt to assist however we could. The driver was thankfully and surprisingly alert and was on the ground mainly just outside of what remained of the cab."

"We managed to carefully move him to a slightly more comfortable position, as he was in great pain, and eventually also got him some water and assessed several gash wounds as well as possible leg fractures."

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A 23-year-old Cordele man suffered serious injuries in this June 7 mountainside trucking accident, though he is expected to recover. Photo by Brandon Montgomery

Kathryn Litton's legacy featured in 'Southern Woman Magazine'

By Allison Youngblood
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville's own Kathryn Litton, is featured in the May/June 2021 issue of "Southern Woman Magazine." The bimonthly magazine covers stories in Coweta and Fayette counties and celebrates Southern ways of life.

Litton was selected by her great-niece Melanie Denney-Haas, publisher and owner of "Southern Woman Magazine," because of the bond the two share, and because of Litton's long list of accomplishments and lifelong determination to succeed.

Denney-Haas purchased See *Litton Legacy*, Page 6A



This fern is 101 years old and once belonged to Kathryn Litton's mother, transplanted from Mississippi by Litton more than 40 years ago. Photo by Allison Youngblood

Construction to begin soon on downtown paved parking lot

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Board has authorized construction to begin paving the gravel parking lot behind City Hall with asphalt.

Board members voted in their June 8 meeting to approve a \$141,638 contract with Colwell Construction Company to complete the work. This is an estimate only, with final costs likely to be higher.

Colwell Construction should be able to begin work on the parking lot sometime in the next month, with completion expected this summer. The local construction company will be working from updated plans drawn up by the DDA years ago featuring 84 parking spaces.

Additional costs will include striping and sidewalks, plus lighting and bathrooms, the latter of which will either be situated adjacent to the Hole in the Wall Restaurant or behind the historic Haralson/Carr Law Office for reasons of visibility and ease of access from the square.

The project is a collaborative effort between the City of Blairsville and DDA and has been in the making for a long time, ever since the DDA committed to purchasing the Haralson Property Development more than a decade ago.

Currently, there are enough spaces in the gravel parking lot to accommodate roughly 50 vehicles, so the paved lot will be an expansion benefitting business owners and

See *Downtown Parking*, Page 2A



DDA Board Member Robert Rogers has been the Development Authority's point man in terms of coordinating parking lot construction. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Air ambulance service extended for another year running

By Shawn Jarrard
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All Union County residents are once again covered for life-saving emergency helicopter transport via the Air Methods Community Partnership Agreement, which Commissioner Lamar Paris re-upped in April and presented in his May county meeting to become effective June 1.

Being an Air Methods Community ultimately means no out-of-pocket expenses for residents having to take medically necessary life flights via the Air Life Georgia 14 helicopter based out of Union General Hospital in Blairsville.

And this blanket agreement for all county residents includes everyone who lives in, or has a home in the county, such as those listing Union as their primary residence, as well as part-time residents who own homes here prior to the June 1



Air Life Georgia 14 is a twin-engine Eurocopter EC-135 based at Union General Hospital in Blairsville. Photo by Mark Smith/2018

effective date.

The life flight program is being paid for jointly by Union General Hospital Inc. and Union County Government, with the county's portion of the cost not to exceed \$76,765.

This agreement only covers residents who are transported via Air Methods

aircraft like the one at Union General, though all regional medical helicopter services respond to emergencies as needed and available.

If the Air Life helicopter is busy life-fighting a patient when another Union County resident requires an air

See *Air Methods*, Page 2A

Blue Ridge EMC Board votes to re-open meetings to members

By Shawn Jarrard
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It's official – for the first time since the onset of the pandemic last spring, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors will be welcoming members back to the monthly meetings.

The 5-4 vote to reinstate Policy No. 228, named "Member Attendance & Petition to Present at Board Meetings," occurred in the directors' June 8 regular meeting, and the breakdown of the vote will be available when the meeting minutes are published online next month.

Members may return to board meetings starting Thursday, July 15, and on every second Tuesday of each month thereafter, with meetings beginning at 6 p.m. inside EMC Headquarters in Young Harris.

Policy No. 228 was originally suspended out of



Ray Cook
BRMEMC Board President

concern over COVID-19, with the decision to reinstate resting largely on the fact that the rationale to keep meetings closed had all but disappeared, considering improved COVID metrics this spring and the lifting of restrictions inside the EMC.

EMC Headquarters opened back to members for the purpose of paying bills and conducting other business in May 2020, and the mask mandate for members and employees inside EMC buildings was lifted last month.

According to brmemc.com, Policy No. 228 establishes "appropriate procedures to accommodate Member requests to attend meetings of the Board of Directors of the Cooperative and/or to present information to the Board of Directors at such meetings."

As such, "members in good standing" are eligible to attend the regular monthly meetings, "except for the portions of said meetings conducted in Executive Session," and they may present information if such presentations do not interfere with the work of the board.

The membership voted See *EMC Meetings*, Page 2A

Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division nets four meth, heroin arrests

By Shawn Jarrard
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Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division arrested four individuals on drug charges last week at a residence off Tate Road.

UCSO Lt. Tyler Miller said several anonymous complaints had come in from the community regarding the residence, which was inhabited by two people from North Carolina who had not lived there long.

An investigation stemming from the tips led the Narcotics Division to suspect illegal drug activity

at the residence, prompting investigators to conduct a "knock and talk" at the Tate Road address on June 1, Miller said.

Additionally, Miller and Det. Jay McCarter were there to serve female tenant Kimberly Tromblay Ivie, 57, of Murphy, felony North Carolina warrants for obtaining property under a false pretense, possession of a firearm by a felon, and possession of a stolen firearm, Miller said.

Upon their arrival, the investigators witnessed Ivie conducting what appeared to be a drug deal, exchanging something with a woman who had parked a vehicle with a



Kimberly Tromblay Ivie passenger in the driveway, Miller said.

When she saw the lawmen, Ivie took off running into the residence, and McCarter gave chase, Miller said. The

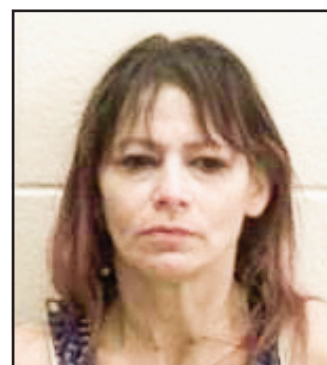


Dexter Dean Hubbard Jr. people who had been parked in the driveway attempted to leave, and Miller stopped them to ascertain the extent of their activities there.

Meanwhile, McCarter



Brian Lee Nothdurft had entered the residence in pursuit of Ivie, where he immediately spotted a man sitting on a living room couch apparently weighing drugs, Miller said. The man, another



Alicia Rita Welborn resident there, grabbed a fistful of something from the coffee table and dashed up the hallway. McCarter grabbed the See *UCSO Narcotics*, Page 2A

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Downtown Parking...from Page 1A

customers alike by providing visitors to and employees of the downtown area with more and nicer places to park.

Downtown parking during construction will be limited, with the city and DDA set to decide on whether to allow people to

park on the vacant Haralson Property parcel across the street from Cook's Country Kitchen on Pat Haralson Memorial Drive.

Unlike the city, the DDA is not required to follow a formal bidding process for construction. However, DDA Board Member Robert Rogers spoke with several local companies and felt confident Colwell Construction was the only one that could commit to the project at this time.

Colwell Construction built Bob Head Street in 2016 to serve as the new on/off-ramp connecting Georgia 515 to Downtown Blairsville, so the company is familiar with both the lay of the land and working with the DDA.

Also discussed in the June 8 DDA meeting was the potential addition of two electric vehicle rapid charging stations, which may be eligible for installation at no cost via the Tennessee Valley Authority. A determination on this particular project will be reached at a later date.

Limited green spaces will be implemented as part of

parking lot construction, with access to a more extensive green area for public use to be located behind City Hall. Proposed sidewalks include one from the parking lot to Pat Haralson Drive and another directly to the square.

The paved parking lot, sidewalks and restrooms will increase downtown walkability, and separately, the City Council has committed to improving walkability by prioritizing sidewalk fixes and additions around the city with SPLOST

monies.

Further, the city is actively pursuing a crosswalk at City Hall over Blue Ridge Street to Merchants Walk, and one has been proposed crossing Pat Haralson Drive at Cook's Country Kitchen.

Air Methods...from Page 1A

ambulance, a competing service may respond, making that flight ineligible for coverage under the county agreement.

An example of a competing air ambulance service is the Life Force 4 helicopter out of Blue Ridge, which offers its own membership plan through the AirMedCare Network.

The two helicopters – Air Life Georgia 14 and Life Force 4 – act as backups for each other should the other be busy or down for maintenance, though only the Air Life Georgia helicopter is covered by the Air Methods agreement.

Being transported via medical helicopter is expensive, ranging in the tens of thousands of dollars. Usually, helicopter services can negotiate some payment through patients' insurance companies, though the out-of-pocket costs left over after applying insurance can

still be thousands of dollars.

Fortunately, the Air Methods contract helps to alleviate those expenses for individual residents, and the odds are in favor of being transported via the locally stationed Air Life helicopter, with Air Life Georgia 14 having been stationed at Union General Hospital since May of 2016.

Due to Union's proximity to the Life Force 4 helicopter in Blue Ridge, some people may receive a letter from the AirMedCare Network about securing an individual membership with that separate service, which residents may choose to or not.

"Union County residents are covered by the Air Methods company," Commissioner Paris recently reiterated. "You may continue to receive mail notices from AirMedCare, another helicopter service provider.

"If during an emergency, the Air Methods helicopter is not available, the AirMedCare helicopter could respond. For this reason, some people do purchase an additional policy as this additional service is not covered by our current contract."

People who receive a medically necessary flight via the helicopter at Union General Hospital can take advantage of the Air Methods partnership, however, by calling the company's billing office following the flight, or upon receipt of a bill, at which time proof of residency will be required.

Even residents without health insurance are covered for Air Methods life flights, with Air Methods promising to work with residents to solve any billing issues.

EMC Meetings...from Page 1A

in 2018 to amend the bylaws to define "member in good standing" as any member who has not lost his or her right to receive electric service from the cooperative.

In order to attend, members must fill out the requisite form titled "Member Notice of Intent to Attend a Board Meeting," which can be found at <https://www.brmemc.com/my-cooperative/board-meetings/>.

This form may be filled out and submitted directly online within 48 hours of the board meeting to be attended. There's also a separate form

called the "Member Petition to Present at Board Meeting" people will need to complete if they wish to address the board during meetings.

EMC Board President Ray Cook raised the issue of member attendance at the end of the June 8 meeting, as outlined in the board meeting summary. Several members had been in touch with Cook and other directors about reopening meetings, including representatives from local press organizations.

"The only reason we voted to close them was because of the COVID," Cook

said. "So, now that everything is back fully open at the EMC for the most part, there's really no need to single that one thing out."

Added Cook, "All the staff at the EMC, their biggest concern through the whole deal was, if we had a storm, would we have our employees healthy enough to cover and keep the lights on? That was the primary goal, and I think that they did that.

"The managers, all the staff and everybody that's been involved have done a great job of doing that balancing act. That was the key thing."

UCSO Narcotics...from Page 1A

man – later identified as Dexter Dean Hubbard Jr., 38, also of North Carolina – who continued to charge up the hallway and into a bathroom. A struggle ensued, during which Hubbard plunged his hand into the toilet and flushed something, Miller said.

Outside, Miller was interviewing the two people from the vehicle when Ivie came running back out of the residence, he said. He told the people in the car to stay put and went after Ivie.

Both Hubbard and Ivie were subsequently placed under arrest and a search warrant was secured and executed on the residence, resulting in the discovery of drugs and paraphernalia.

Ivie and Hubbard both face charges of possession of methamphetamine, heroin and Xanax with intent to distribute, and Hubbard has been charged additionally with obstruction and tampering with evidence.

Also arrested were the people from the car, Brian Lee Nothdurft, 56, of North Carolina, and Alicia Rita Welborn, 42, of a Blairsville address, Miller said, noting he had been given permission to search the vehicle by its owner, which led to the finding of drugs.

Nothdurft and Welborn were discovered with both methamphetamine and heroin in the vehicle and have been charged with possession of methamphetamine with

intent to distribute, as well as possession of heroin.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law. Nothdurft and Hubbard have made bond, Ivie has been transferred out of the Union County Jail, and Welborn remained in custody at press time.

Though Miller said meth remains the biggest drug issue here, heroin may be making a minor comeback, as it is an opioid that's cheaper than pills, which are getting more expensive and harder to come by as doctors rein in prescription practices following the national opioid crisis.

Delegates from Union County Republican Party attend 2021 Georgia State Republican Party Convention



Delegates at the GA GOP State Convention, Jekyll Island Convention Center

On Friday, June 4, Chair Dena Gooch, Union County Republican Party, along with 13 additional Delegates traveled to Jekyll Island, GA, to represent Union County Republican voters at the Georgia State Republican Convention.

Almost 3,000 delegates from across the state attended the convention. The organizers provided an amazing event given only 3 months planning time to bring it together. Thanks to the organizers for their focus and hard work.

Convention activities started Friday night with candidate events and District gatherings.

The primary business conducted on Saturday was to elect officers for the Georgia Republican Party. Incumbent Party Chair David Shafer easily won his race for re-election

without a runoff.

Governor Brian Kemp addressed attendees amid a mix of cheers and jeers. "This state is, I think, still a Republican-leaning state," Kemp said, pointing to Republican 2020 victories in the Georgia General Assembly and the Public Service Commissioner races. "But we've got to stay focused and united to be able to continue to make that happen. We saw in the [Senate] runoff when people get distracted. It is not a good formula for Republicans. And I think we can all learn from that."

Union County Delegates met with many of the candidates that will be facing competition in the primary races in early 2022 for State and National offices. The focus now for our Party is to reach out to Union County residents to ed-

ucate on the critical issues and prepare them to vote in 2022.

Union County GOP meets on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 10 AM at the Skillet Café in Blairsville.

Our next meeting is Saturday, June 19. Our speaker will be Mr. Stan King of GMASS whose company was contracted to do the reevaluation of Union County properties for the Board of Assessors.

Upcoming event: gubernatorial Candidate Vernon Jones will be in Blairsville on Saturday, July 17 at the UC Civic Center. Visit the UC Republican Headquarters at 294 US Hwy 76 in Blairsville, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 AM to 2 PM to learn more.

Submitted by Linda Hill, UCGOP Media Specialist

Litton Legacy...from Page 1A



Litton of Litton Landscaping, Inc., is a strong proponent of native plants, having written a booklet on the subject called "Here Come the Natives."
Photo by Allison Youngblood

the magazine from the previous owner during the COVID-19 pandemic in an effort to turn it back into a profitable venture. Denney-Haas "is a go-getter," according to Litton, just like Litton herself, who claims it's just in the family genes to excel.

She is incredibly honored to be included in a feature titled "Creating Mountain Magic: The Legacy of Kathryn Litton," which highlights some of her long career and can be read at <https://issuu.com/fayettewoman>.

Denney-Haas decided to profile her great aunt, who turns 88 this month, in recognition of all the hard work Litton has committed and the hardships she has overcome in life.

Throughout her 61 years in landscaping, Litton has faced many challenges, including winning over the trust of people unsure of a woman's skills in a typically male-dominated field. However, she persevered, putting in the work and care to earn the trust of and build a rapport with clients.

For Litton, the process of designing a space for her clientele is an emotional,

heartfelt affair in which she matches each client with plants that make them feel happy and peaceful, yet won't be too difficult to take care of.

"I tell people these plants are my heart," said Litton, "and when I do landscape for you, I become a part of your family. And if you don't take care of (the plants), I'm going to cry."

Her work has included countless hours over 41 years volunteering with the Blairsville Garden Club, Road Beautification with the Georgia Department of Transportation, writing a booklet now in its fourth printing called "Here Come the Natives" advocating for the use of native plants in gardens, and many other projects.

One of Litton's numerous accolades includes having received a \$35,000 grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority for her research on cold-hardy plants, with which she built the greenhouses that protect and nurture the plants she raises for her landscaping business.

The Kellogg Foundation also awarded a grant to Litton for her provision of outstanding non-professional education

in the region. She was one of 10 recipients of the award in Georgia.

Alongside these achievements, she has managed the impressive feat of keeping her mother's fern, gifted from a neighbor in 1920, alive for over 100 years. The fern has lived through hurricanes, blizzards, and even relocation from Mississippi to Blairsville in the 1970s.

Litton also discovered, studied, and patented a new type of phlox in her nursery called David's Lavender Phlox, which is resistant to disease.

And these are just a few examples of successes by a woman who experienced humble beginnings as a sharecropper's daughter in Mississippi with 11 siblings. In initial conditions she said certainly did not affect her ability to achieve.

Rain or shine, her philosophy has always been that people determine their own outcomes in life, saying "it's up to the individual" to choose their own destiny, to make what they want out of what's provided for them.

Trucking Accident...from Page 1A



First responders surveying the roadside debris from last week's truck wreck on Richard Russell Scenic Highway.
Photo by Brandon Montgomery

There was no cellphone service available to call for help, so Montgomery ran back up to the road to flag someone down to drive ahead to contact emergency services.

"One of the drivers returned and said they never managed to get service," he

wrote, "so I ran back up to the highway once more and ran to my car to proceed to quickly drive to Hogpen Gap – where I commonly work on editing photos – at the top of the mountain and call 911.

"Thankfully, dispatch informed me that one of the drivers had just gotten through to them and EMS was en route. I gave them further details of the driver's condition and then quickly proceeded back down the mountain and back to the driver."

While awaiting emergency medical services, Montgomery and his fellow civilian responder provided rudimentary first aid in the way of towels and compression to address bleeding, and Union General EMS arrived shortly thereafter "and began their heroic work."

All told, Montgomery reported that it took about an hour and five minutes from the time of accident to the loading of the injured driver into the ambulance, "primarily because of the time it took to attain cell service and the difficult location of the accident scene."

The driver, a 23-year-old Cordele man, was transported by local EMS to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville for treatment, according to GSP.

Fortunately, it appears as though he is going to be OK, having reportedly undergone surgeries for a broken arm and broken leg, according to someone who had spoken with the man's family and commented on Montgomery's Facebook post about the ordeal.

For his part, even though

Montgomery was exhausted and sore from a hike the day before at Panola Mountain State Park in DeKalb County, he stuck around until about 2 a.m. to help clear the road of plywood and get the scene ready for removal of the truck.

Due to the unexpected detour that evening, when he finally finished there, he decided to reschedule his nighttime photography shoot, heading instead to the Waffle House in Blairsville to type up a report of the accident and post some pictures to Facebook.

In his post, he described the stretch of road the truck lost control on as "one of the longest and most constant downhill grades in the area" – an area many commenters pointed out was bad for accidents and should either be avoided by large trucks or feature many more runaway ramps.

Montgomery made sure to thank all the emergency personnel who responded to the scene, which included the Fire Department, EMS, Sheriff's Office, GSP, as well as officials with the Georgia Department of Transportation and Tanner's Towing.

He doesn't see himself as a hero for his actions that evening, saying it was "just the right thing to do." But many people far and wide believe that he is a hero, having shared and commented on his post specifically to thank him for what he and others did to help the driver in need.

In a subsequent post, Montgomery said he hoped something would be done to prevent similar accidents or worse from happening again on that stretch of state highway.