

Home Depot...from Page 1A

within 30 feet or so from the entrance of the store," Taylor said, noting that the vehicle apparently rolled over her torso and legs.

She was conscious at the scene of the accident, though Taylor said she seemed unaware of what had happened to her in

the parking lot. Her husband was inside the store at the time of the accident.

Union General EMS transported the woman via ambulance to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville that morning. Information regarding her present condition

and extent of injuries was not available at press time.

The driver of the truck, also of Union County, remained on the scene and cooperated fully with investigators, who have determined the incident to be an accident.

Even though the event was an accident, a charge will be forthcoming due to the nature of the accident and the

woman having the right of way in the parking lot.

The exact charge will depend on the medical outcome of the victim, potentially either failure to yield to a pedestrian or vehicular homicide, both misdemeanors, Taylor said.

"We're waiting for the pedestrian to be discharged from the hospital," Taylor said. "At that point, we'll get with the District Attorney's Office to see what charges they deem appropriate to be charged. And ultimately, we're waiting to see if the pedestrian survives this incident."

Cpl. Taylor advises people to take their time when driving and be more aware of their surroundings to avoid accidents like the one that happened Sept. 29.

"These circumstances here, it was a very slow impact, a very low speed, and it occurred on private property," Taylor said. "Accidents happen — people just have to pay more attention."

Dozens of individuals called for prayer over both the victim and the driver in the accident in comments on a North Georgia News Facebook post initially reporting the accident.

"Praying for this lady to be healed and also for the man too," one commenter said. "I have a feeling he is devastated at what happened. May God be with both and comfort them and their families."

Responding to the scene that day were Union General EMS, the Blairsville Police Department, Georgia State Patrol and Union County Fire Department personnel.

Nursing Homes...from Page 1A

associated with this outbreak near 100, or more than 50% of nursing home staff.

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home in Towns picked up an additional 18 resident positives last week, down from 26 new positives the week before; all told, 71 of 92 total residents have tested positive for the virus, or about 77% of the population.

Three residents have died in connection with the outbreak that began toward the beginning of September in the Hiawassee-based facility, with no new deaths occurring last week.

As of Friday, the Towns nursing home also featured 56 positive tests among employees, which is slightly under 50% of staff members there.

Most residents in both facilities have experienced either mild symptoms or were asymptomatic after testing positive for the coronavirus, and only one resident — from Chatuge — was hospitalized as of Friday.

"Chatuge is still early into their outbreak, so anything can happen there, and we do expect more asymptomatic positives there as well, but the patients by and large are doing really well," Union General Chief Nursing Officer Julia Barnett said.

All known-negative nursing home residents are being tested weekly, with negative employees testing twice weekly, based on guidance by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Once someone in the nursing home tests positive for the virus, he or she does not need to take a new test for 90 days following recovery. An outbreak is considered over once no new resident positives occur in a two-week span.

Examining the mortality rates thus far, it appears the outbreak at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home has been less severe compared to the one in Union, and Union General Health System remains vigilant in monitoring resident and employee health in both facilities.

As previously reported,

all nursing home residents who have died with COVID-19 were elderly and/or had significant underlying health conditions, both of which are known to contribute to mortality risks with and without the viral disease.

About 29% of COVID-related deaths in the U.S. have occurred in long-term care facilities, which feature congregate populations of people most vulnerable to the disease.

In a decidedly positive turn of events, both nursing homes began Monday allowing recovered residents and those testing negative for the virus to receive supervised visits from family members who make appointments to see their loved ones, all while following COVID best practices.

The Health System is calling the outdoor visitations "Compassionate Care" visits based on language contained in guidelines issued by Gov. Brian Kemp and the Department of Public Health Sept. 15.

These guidelines enumerate a three-phased approach to relaxing restrictions, and both of Union General's nursing homes are still in the strictest phase of the reopening process, or Phase I.

Compassionate Care visits are important for older members of the community who require long-term care, as people living with various conditions associated with old age can begin to waste away when deprived of contact with friends and family.

"What our Compassionate Care visitation means for our residents is that all residents will be able to participate in Compassionate Care visits if they have a negative COVID status," Union County Nursing Home Director Lisa Bonham said.

The visitations that started Oct. 5 were the first such visitations enabled by the state since mid-March, meaning a joyous end to over half a year of utter isolation for most nursing home residents, and reunions for families who have been missing their loved ones.

"Our staff is very

excited," Bonham said. "We're just overwhelmed, the fact that our residents actually get to start visiting with their families. We've seen the residents' sadness over their families' inability to visit. We've listened to them cry — we've cried with them, and we've cried for them."

And while COVID appears to be on the decline in the area, Barnett said Union General continues to treat patients from around the region in its dedicated COVID unit, "so people have to be cautious and understand that it's not gone." Still, Barnett believes folks should be optimistic.

"I don't think fear is helpful," Barnett said. "We've gotten more and more educated, we're able to treat it more effectively. Our death rates have continued to fall, even for (our counties). We've done a really good job taking care of these patients and have been fortunate that our treatment seems to be working."

"The schools are a success story, and we've been able to get back to some real life knowing what we know and how to prevent spread — people just have to not let their guard down until we get a little bit further in, get a vaccine, prevalence drops more significantly."

"But fear isn't helpful. We just have to use what we have learned and know about it and be smart."

The hospital is utilizing the most up-to-date treatments for all COVID patients, including the antiviral drug remdesivir, which is being used to treat President Donald Trump at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Maryland following his diagnosis late last week.

"The treatments have progressed, and we're able to treat patients more effectively, without a doubt," Barnett said. "Most of our patients are still overwhelmingly 65 and over, especially in the 80 and over population, but we do occasionally have younger people mixed in there with that group."

Homecoming...from Page 1A

an unrelenting preparation involving hair, makeup, dresses and pictures. But it's also been an experience she would never reconsider.

"(The last two weeks) have been very stressful, especially today," Baumeister said. "I feel extremely lucky just to be part of this. I want to congratulate (Runner-Up) Allie Cox and all of the girls that

were nominated. I also want to thank everyone that voted for me."

The Senior Class Runner-Up went to Cox. Tori Tracy was the Junior Class Runner-Up, Micana Wooten was the Sophomore Class Runner-Up, and Georgia Patton was named Freshman Class Runner-Up.

Cydney Rich, Union County's 2019 Homecoming

Queen, was on hand Friday night to crown Baumeister in a symbolic passing of the torch.

The other members of the court were seniors Braydi Burnett, Allison Colwell and Chloe Truex; Juniors Alley Brey, Mia McCombs and Molly Kay West; Sophomores Caroline Karnes and Sophie Truex; and freshman Kyra McKechnie.

Bryan...from Page 1A


barns, organized displays of farm equipment. They have put in a great effort, and to me, these scouts are making a difference in community and learning leadership skills. I see an example of service and kindness in these boys.

"I would like to express


the Historical Society's gratitude for these young men that have donated their time to help us preserve the history of Union County. Evan was just a wonderful young man to work with. He helped us with what we needed and designed his project that he wanted to do.



It is a lot of work."

The Union County Historic Courthouse Museum reopened at the beginning of the month, with tours of the 1906 Grapelle Butt Mock House available upon request.



Blairsville Kiwanis Club



Blairsville Kiwanis Club encourage safe disposal of drugs

More than 100 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose, and millions are addicted to opioids. Unused opioids—such as hydrocodone, morphine, and oxycodone—are dangerous to have in your home when they are no longer needed. Chil-

dren or pets can accidentally take unused opioids or visitors might search for them in your drawers and medicine cabinets. Remove the risk of your unused opioids and help address the devastating opioid crisis affecting so many American families. Proper disposal

of unused prescription opioids can save lives.

On Saturday, October 24, the Kiwanis Club of Blairsville will participate in DEA's Drug Take Back Day. You can bring your pills for safe disposal to any CVS Pharmacy or to 24 hr drop boxes at Union County Sheriff's Office, 378 Beasley Street, Blairsville, and Towns County Sheriff's Office, 48 River Street, Hiawassee.

Sites cannot accept liquids, needles or sharps, only pills or patches. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked.

Additionally, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has launched Remove the Risk, an education and outreach campaign to raise awareness about the serious risks of keeping unused prescription opioids in the home and to provide information about safe disposal of these drugs.

Find Remove the Risk educational resources, including videos, fact sheets, and information at www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal and www.FDA.gov/DeshacerseDeMedicamentos (Spanish).