

North Georgia News

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Deal declares state of emergency

Sleet, ice and frigid temperatures expected throughout the week

By Charles Duncan
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Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for North Georgia Sunday evening to prepare for what appears to be an imminent winter storm for much of the upper half of Georgia.

"I am issuing this order out of an abundance of caution, so the state can make all preparations necessary to quickly and efficiently address any potential winter weather problems," Deal said in a news release.

The counties covered under Deal's declaration include Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Habersham, Lumpkin, Rabun, Towns, Union, and White.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Deputy Emergency Management Agency Director David Dyer met with public safety workers late Sunday night at the county's Emergency Operations Center, preparing for anything and everything.

Commissioner Paris said



Commissioner Paris gets a briefing at the EOC. Photo/Charles Duncan

no one can totally be prepared for ice.

"If we get anything short of ice, that is the best case scenario," Commissioner Paris said. "Sleet or ice will be bad news. We think we are going to get some of both. The weather service isn't calling for snow, and that is the worry. If we get a quarter-inch or better,

nothing you do on the roads is going to help. We recommend staying off the roads once this starts.

"Ice is something we don't want to see, but, we must prepare for the worst," Commissioner Paris said. "When there's ice, you have to be

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STARS align at Union County Community Center

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County's two STAR Students and their STAR Teachers were honored at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce's "An Evening with the STARS" event at the Union County Community Center last week.

Chamber members attended in order to recognize seniors Rachel Todd of Union County High School and Victoria Nguyen of the Union site of Mountain Education Charter High School.

The event was sponsored by Chamber Chairman Joey Swanson of Woodmen of the World.

Attendees were treated to dinner and dessert from Copperhead Lodge, as well as live music from former Mount Idol winner Shannon York and Rob Harper.

Chamber President Cindy Williams introduced the guests of honor, explaining briefly to the audience

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Tim Hunter and Rachel Todd, above, Victoria Nguyen and Carrie Tim Hunter, the STARS for Union County High and Mountain Education Center Charter High School, respectively.

No Greater Love Run raises \$11,000

By Shawn Jarrard
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Supporters of the No Greater Love 5K and 1-mile Walk sent Tricia Spear a very special Valentine on Saturday, Feb. 14, by raising more than \$11,000 toward a Recovery Fund in her name.

"The only thing I could really say is I cannot believe everybody and the support that Tricia has," said Darlene Calise, Tricia's mother, to the crowd of supporters following the race. "I know she's a good kid, but I never knew she was loved as much as she is. I really thank everybody for all their support. If we ever can help anybody else, just let us know. Thank you very much."

Tricia recently returned home from her stay in the Neurological ICU of Erlanger Medical Center, and is concentrating on getting stronger so she can start a new treatment protocol.

The race held at Meeks Park was organized by Tricia's friend, Colleen Urbaniuk, who owns the Seasons Inn Motel



Participants in the No Greater Love Run brave the cold to compete for a good cause. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

on the Blairsville square with her husband Chris.

"Everybody loves Tricia," said Urbaniuk. "She's one of those people that volunteered for everything, and if she was feeling good today, she'd be one of the first volunteers out here. And that's why so many people are supporting her, because she always was the first to volunteer to help,

and she always showed up."

And the show of support from her family and friends to those who knew her as a giving member of the community - was tremendous.

Urbaniuk and volunteers supplied hot pink T-shirts bearing the name of the race and its sponsors, and all 172 of the shirts sold out between

pre-registration and the start of the race. Many purchased specially-made Team Tricia bracelets, which stated that "Love Heals All."

All told, more than 150 runners and walkers registered for the race. Each entrant into the 5K race paid \$25 to register, and 1-mile walkers registered for \$20.

Nearly 50 volunteers came aboard to help with the event.

"There really wasn't anybody that we asked that said they couldn't do it or didn't want to help in some way," Urbaniuk said.

When all was said and done and the dust cleared, winners of the race were awarded medals befitting the nature of the event.

"I don't know if any of you guys can see the medals that we got," said Urbaniuk during the awards portion of the race. "Typically, most races have running medals. We did two hands because we felt like it was someone helping someone else, which is why

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EMC membership group seeks interlocutory injunction

By Charles Duncan
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The four Blue Ridge Mountain EMC members suing six sitting directors, and the EMC's general manager are seeking an interlocutory injunction to prevent the directors and general manager from accepting indemnification, expenses, insurance benefits, or expense advancements from the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation unless and until the BRMEMC complies with the requirements for indemnification under O.C.G.A. Section 46-3-306, Towns County Superior Court records show.

Plaintiffs Krista L. Gooch, Larry Williams, Andrew E. Stephens, and Barbara Moss, filed the motion in Towns County Superior Court in the final days of January, court records show.

On Jan. 2, the membership group filed suit in Towns County Superior Court seeking remedy to what they call breaches of fiduciary duty by the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC general manager, and the six directors, according to a copy of the lawsuit obtained by the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*.

According to the 219-



page lawsuit, the group seeks a jury trial to decide the case.

According to the motion for interlocutory injunction, plaintiffs are not asking the Court to determine whether the Director Defendants or Akins should be indemnified, provided with BRMEMC insurance coverage, or have expenses advanced.

"Code Section 46-3-306(e) leaves such a determination to three people: the disinterested directors, legal counsel hired by the disinterested directors, or the BRMEMC members. All plaintiffs are seeking is an interlocutory injunction prohibiting the Director Defendants or Akins from accepting indemnification payments, insurance coverage, or expense

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Hiker rescued from frigid temperatures

By Charles Duncan
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An 18-year-old hiker was rescued Saturday on the Appalachian Trail after he was reported three hours overdue from a hike, Union County Fire Chief/Deputy EMA Director David Deputy said.

The lone hiker, Dexter Padgett, was dropped off at Hightower Gap on a destination by Byron Herbert Reese Trail entrance, where he had a vehicle waiting for him, Chief Dyer said.

"There was no contact after 5 p.m. and he was reported overdue at approximately



Chief David Dyer

8 p.m. Saturday night," Chief Dyer said.

The Union County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated and Union County Search and

Rescue crews and members of the Union County Sheriff's Office were assembled including a dog team, Chief Dyer said.

"The search area was established and contained by information provided from the caller and cell phone pictures of the trail," Chief Dyer said. "Search crews began operations in the bitter cold at approximately 10 p.m. Several crews were involved searching the trail for the man. Temperatures dropped to 19 degrees in Blairsville and estimated at 12 degrees on Blood Mountain with a wind factor of below zero."

The Union County EOC

had left several messages on the hiker's cell phone in an attempt to better locate him, Chief Dyer said.

"At approximately 3:30 a.m., the hiker contacted Union County EOC and his exact location was determined," Chief Dyer said. "The hiker was located at 4:30 a.m. by a search team and he was assisted off the trail. The subject was not injured and was escorted to his vehicle."

Chief Dyer said the search and rescue mission was difficult to say the least.

"This was the seventh

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Two-car crash sends one to Gainesville hospital

By Charles Duncan
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A 25-year-old Jonesboro man was life-flighted to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville following a two-vehicle crash Wednesday on Georgia 515.

The accident happened at 3 p.m. Feb. 11 at the intersection of Georgia 515 and Kiutustia Creek Road, Georgia State Patrol Cpl. Robbie Russell said.

A 2003 Ford Taurus driven

by Jean Benson, of Young Harris, struck a 2004 Ford Windstar van.

Cpl. Russell said Benson was attempting to cross Georgia 515 and return to Young Harris after shopping at Walmart.

The Windstar, driven by Christina Nicole Franklin of Blairsville, was t-boned by the Taurus, Cpl. Russell said.

Witnesses say the van went airborne after the hit. Cpl. Russell said the van overturned several times.

The roadway was covered

in loose groceries and cash, witnesses said.

Passers-by attempted to retrieve the loose cash and return it to the rightful owner.

"In the process, John Thomas Greer, a passenger in the van, was injured," Cpl. Russell said.

"Mr. Greer is from Jonesboro, and he suffered a really bad fractured arm," Cpl. Russell said. "He was taken to the local hospital, and then life-flighted to Gainesville, Northeast Georgia Medical Center."

John Harrison, of Blairsville, was the first person at the wreck and provided aid to Greer.

Harrison took off his t-shirt and made a tourniquet for Greer's arm and stayed with him until paramedics arrived.

Franklin suffered minor injuries as a result of the crash, but was not admitted to the hospital, Cpl. Russell said.

Benson, who was not injured, was charged with failing to yield the right of way, Cpl. Russell said.

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