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through a bedroom window and their mother fled through the door.

The mother and her children both arrived at a neighbor's residence and called 911, sheriff's reports show.

The gunshot victim also escaped from Thomas and fled to the neighbor's residence, sheriff's reports show.

Sheriff Clinton secured the neighbor's residence to prevent Thomas from reaching the family he seemed intent on harming.

Deputies secured a perimeter and two K-9 teams were dispatched to locate Thomas, who had fled on foot after not being able to return to his sister's vehicle parked at a vacant residence, which was secured by deputies, sheriff's reports show.

The victims, traumatized by the event, did not appear to have any life-threatening injuries.

Once the scene was secure, Sheriff Clinton, assisted by deputies who formed a

perimeter, were able to get the victim out of the area and transport the gunshot victim to emergency personnel, who waited at another location free of harm's way.

They helped the mother and her children gather personal belongings from their home after it was secured, and safely escorted them from the area.

The shooting victim was treated and later released from a local hospital, sheriff's reports show.

Deputies were posted at the residence of the neighbor, as well as at the hospital to prevent Thomas from causing any further harm to the family.

Afterwards, Thomas was discovered in the wood line behind the vacant residence, where he had parked his sister's car, and was taken into custody without incident.

Sheriff Clinton said the investigation continues and further details will be available when they become available.

## Tree City...continued from Page 1A

and maintaining a tree inventory of the cities trees and setting up a budget to care for the trees within the city limits.

"The Blairsville Garden Club is to be commended for their effort to keep Blairsville qualified for this honor," said Mayor Conley as he addressed the 50-plus attendees that braved the rain and cold to celebrate Blairsville's continued distinction.

Garden Club Arbor Day Chairperson Kathryn Litton opened the ceremony by giving a history of the efforts it took to get the treasured honor for Blairsville and then welcomed the Rev. Travis Adams of the Mountain Presbyterian Church to give the invocation.

The Junior Blairsville Garden Club then led the Pledge of Allegiance to Old



Local officials and the Blairsville Garden Club celebrate the 2013 Tree City USA designation. Photo/Joe Collins

Glory, followed by their club song the *Hymn of Promise* which pledges by all who sing it, to care for our environment by taking care of and planting trees.

Bud Akins, president of the Union County Historical Society was on hand to give the greetings and he recited something that was taught him when he was in school "a long time ago."

"If everybody would plant one tree a year then we would never run out of trees," he said.

Akins then introduced Blairsville Garden Club President-Elect Kay Bryant who thanked everyone for coming to the ceremony and invited Mayor Conley to come forward and read the proclamation signed by he and Paris last week.

Conley finished by ask-

ing Harkins to come forward to present Union County and Blairsville with the Tree City USA flag.

Harkins was passionate about the forest land here in Union County and reminded everyone that trees are a sustainable resource. Georgia, he said, has a very large amount of acreage covered in forest.

"Georgia has a little over 37 million acres of which 28.4 million are covered in forest," Harkins said. "Most of this forest is privately owned with only 2 percent belonging to the state and federal government."

"We have worked hard in the past to create a good relationship with private owners and when trees are harvested, corporations respond by replanting 138 percent of the harvested forest," Harkins said. "This really helps Georgia

maintain clean air and timber as a resource.

"Water quality and quantity is one of our biggest concerns and drought hurts Georgia trees tremendously," Harkins said. "You can look at it this way, for every three-rain drops that fall in Georgia, two of those drops land on a tree somewhere. That is pretty amazing."

It was not by chance that the ceremony took place the same week as Arbor Day in Union County and Blairsville.

The Garden Club donated 10-foot tall hybrid Aurora Dogwood that was planted on the grounds at the Mock House.

It was a fitting end to a wonderful celebration which should make all of the residents of Union County extremely proud.

## Gooch...continued from Page 1A

state. The bonds weren't an obligation on us, but, it sends the wrong message to taxpayers that we're borrowing money to build a football stadium when we can't fund teacher salaries and we have teacher furloughs."

Sen. Gooch said that Gov. Nathan Deal took that message back to the Falcons and told them that there wasn't enough support for the new stadium throughout the General Assembly.

"Arthur Blank (Falcons' owner) started looking for other opportunities," Sen. Gooch said. "It looks like the city of Atlanta is going to try to help them out. If the city doesn't do it, he'll explore other options."

"The city of Atlanta wants to keep the Falcons in Downtown to drive its economy, and that makes sense," he said. "If I were mayor of Atlanta, I would probably feel the same way."

"However, living in North Georgia, I feel like we shouldn't be asked to pay for it," he said. "There's no way I would vote to burden the state with this venture. So far, in my district, I haven't had anyone stand up and say 'man, we need to build that Falcons Stadium.' There's no support for it in North Georgia."

Arthur Blank issued a statement on the Falcons' Web site over the weekend saying he intended to work with the

city of Atlanta on keeping the new stadium in Downtown.

"We are focusing all of our time and resources on finalizing an agreement for the new stadium in Downtown Atlanta," Blank said. "We appreciate Mayor (Kasim) Reed's strong support in helping us stay downtown, which is the right place for us to be."

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed says that he is confident that a "world class" stadium will be built in Downtown to house the Falcons.

The Falcons' current home, the Georgia Dome, would be demolished following the completion of the \$1 billion stadium complex.

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