

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Iraq War vet seeks memorial at Veterans Memorial Park

By Charles Duncan  
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Chuck Honaker glances down at the silver band clasped on his right wrist.

The band is simple, nothing fancy. It has an inscription on it. If you know Chuck Honaker, you know what the words on the band mean.

"SSG Bobby C. Franklin, Aug. 20, 2003." That's all that is inscribed on the extraordinarily plain band.

His thoughts drift back to the present. All he can think of today is the need for an Iraq War Memorial at Veterans Memorial Park on School Street.

Approximately 4,409

veterans died in the war from March 20, 2003 to Dec. 15, 2011. Honaker and former local Veterans Affairs director Roy Hamby have done their homework. It will cost \$3,890 to construct such a monument.

"No one from Blairsville died in that war," Honaker said. "We did lose a county employee who lived in Fannin County. I was wounded, and I'm lucky to be alive. We need that memorial; it's only honorable to honor the fallen in one of the most significant wars in our lifetime."

Honaker also is active in the effort to get the city of Blairsville to rename School Street to Veterans Memorial Drive.

On this day, Hon-

aker stares at the shiny metal band, then drifts off into deep thought again. The simple question "what happened that day?" leads Honaker down a path that forever links him with Franklin.

Both were members of the 210th Military Police Company, U.S. Army National Guard, Murphy NC. Honaker didn't have to be there. He had served 11 years active duty from 1981 to 1992.

After the attacks on Sept. 11, 2011, Honaker re-upped, this time with the National Guard unit out of Murphy, NC.

It's been nine years, and Honaker still remembers a sweltering evening in Baghdad when he and Staff Sgt. Franklin went on the evening patrol. It was Aug. 20, 2003.

The day before, the United Nations Building had been bombed. Tensions were high, and as members of the Military Police patrol unit, it was the duty of Franklin and Honaker to be on the streets, patrolling, looking for anything out of the ordinary.

"It was Baghdad 2003, there were no law enforcement, well, there were a few Iraqis on the police force," Honaker said. "We were on night patrol, we had come in for a break inside the Green Zone."

When it was time to return to patrol, a mechanical malfunction forced Franklin and Honaker from the rear of the mechanized patrol to the front.

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Chuck Honaker will always remember Aug. 20, 2003

## Library budget could lead to fewer hours

By Janice Boling  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Mountain Regional Library System appears poised to feel significant system-wide tremors as state budget cuts and a lack of local funding figure into the system's Fiscal 2013 funding situation.

Without help from local funding sources, the system is likely to be forced to cut back hours of operation, system director Donna Howell said.

The primary increases come from a rise in health insurance costs, which are slated to jump significantly on July 1 as Fiscal Year 2013 begins based on current fiscal decisions by the Department of Community Health.

Health insurance costs have risen dramatically for



Donna Howell

several reasons. One of them is that during former Gov. Roy Barnes' administration when accounting rules were changed, indigent care costs were added to the Department of Community Health's

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## Union County plays host to bomb dog trials

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

If you were at Meeks Park, the airport, North Georgia Technical College and the local schools last week, you might have thought that Union County had gone to the dogs.

In a way, it had as more than 90 bomb K-9s from around the state came to Union County for quarterly training exercises. No, the president wasn't in town, although the motorcade of black, government vehicles might have indicated otherwise.

It was all part of the ever-increasing attempt to combat improvised explosive devices (IED). Because of the threat, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Homeland Security have teamed up for quarterly training sessions across the state.

Last week, Meeks Park, the airport, and our schools hosted a three-day training seminar for K9, bomb detection units from all across the state. Bomb-like materials were hidden inside the Primary School, Elementary School,

in and around Meeks Park and the Blairsville Municipal Airport before the K9 units were called in to clear the area. The exercise at the airport was designed to check for explosives on planes and vehicles. The schools were used as a training exercise to detect bombs inside buildings. The areas used were the cafeteria, library, classrooms, and hallways.

Rob Turner, from Georgia Tech, one of the instructors of the exercises, said during the first day their focus was geared towards homemade peroxide explosives that were brought in by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Turner also said that there were so many dog teams that it took two days to get everyone through the schools because of the numerous scenarios set out for the teams.

Most of the dogs are part of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency Dog Grant program.

Tod Keys, director of Georgia's K9 explosive ordnance detection program which is funded by the state along with the Department of Homeland Security has praised



Cobb County K9 handler's shepherd reacts excitedly to suspected bomb materials. Photo/Todd Forrest

the success of the sessions. Keys said that dogs, under the guidance of human handlers, are more effective in detecting explosives than humans since dogs can find bombs without contaminat-

ing evidence at crime scenes because they rely exclusively on their senses of smell. Union County Sheriff's Office Investigator Patrick Martin

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Station 4 members use the jaws of life to demonstrate the hazards firefighters face. Photo/Charles Duncan

## Open House a hit at Station 4

By Charles Duncan  
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More than 100 people turned out to celebrate their favorite volunteer firefighters on Saturday as Fire Station 4 on Moccasin Road held its annual Open House.

Children filed out of the Fire Safety House like ants coming out of an ant hill. They learned what to do in the event of a house fire.

The Fire Safety house is a mobile educational trailer used to educate young chil-

dren about fire safety and allows them to practice escaping from a simulated house fire. The Fire Safety House uses electronically operated smoke detectors and a non-toxic smoke in a simulated bedroom to create a realistic environment where children can practice escaping from a house in the event of a fire.

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## Farmers Market phenomenon continues

By Charles Duncan  
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The Union County Farmers Market was bustling with activity on Saturday. Several vendors were sold out by 10 a.m., others weren't far behind as patrons came in droves to the community phenomena on Old Smokey Road.

"It's like a festival every Saturday, said vendor Britt Turner. "There are people all over the place. They're buying local and we're loving it. It's like a weekly community collection of souls who believe in spending their money at home. It helps everyone here."

Union County Extension Agent Mickey Cummings

says things are only going to get better as the summer harvest months arrive.

The idea is for each week to have a theme, like tomato festival, corn festival, squash and cucumber festival and of course, the Second Annual Green Bean Festival. You get the picture.

Farmers Market spokeswoman JoAnne Leone added that every Saturday through the remainder of the harvest season, the Market will celebrate with a special themed event. On Saturday, the Market will kick off the summer season with its grand season opener. Between 10 a.m. and noon, there will be live music, free

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Flowers were a hot item at the Market on Saturday. Overflow crowds once again came to shop. Photo/Charles Duncan

## Boy Scouts earn merit badges at Commission meeting

By Charles Duncan  
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Thursday's Union County Commission meeting was a special event for 15 members of Boy Scouts Troop 101.

First, it was their opportunity to earn a community service badge by attending and watching the government process unfold. Second, it was a trip back in time for Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, himself once a member of Troop 101 as a young boy.

The meeting schedule was light, lasting all of 19 minutes.

During the process, Commissioner Paris approved a proclamation declaring June 3 through June 9 as Garden Week in Union County.

He followed that with approval of a business license for Poplar Ridge Retreat for vacation rentals, appointments of Tsali Bentley and Gary Davenport to the Development Authority board, Jack Parker to the Board of Assessors, Patsy Efrid and Jim Williams to the Hospital Authority board, Cary Cox to the Department of Family and Children's Service board, and Doris Durbin and Deborah Kendrick to the Library Board.

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Commissioner Paris and Boy Scout Troop 101 on Thursday. Photo/Charles Duncan

## Scott Stephens



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6th Annual Mountain Fling Arts & Crafts Show

Saturday, June 30, 2012 From 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, July 1, 2012 From 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

ArtWorks Artisan Centre

Fireworks

Suches: Wed., July 4	Blairsville: Wed., July 4	Annual Boat Parade: Wed., July 4
Community Gathering at 7 p.m.	Meeks Park Fireworks at dark or approximately 9:30 p.m.	Lake Nottely Marina Judging starts at 11:15 a.m.

Used Book Sale

Blairsville Civic Center Thursday, June 28 11:30a.m. - 4:30 p.m.