

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Speaker Ralston, others tour Union schools

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools rolled out the red carpet last week and took Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston (R - Blue Ridge) on a tour of the primary school, high school, and the new Fine Arts Center.

The schools were also on display for North Georgia Technical College Interim President Mark Ivester, Pioneer RESA Director Justin Old, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, and Speaker Ralston's personal security, Blairsville's own Shannon Carroll of the Georgia Patrol.

Young Harris College President Cathy Cox was able to join the group at the Fine Arts Center, where the



Principal Millie Owenby, Blairsville Speaker David Ralston, and Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris sit in on the Portuguese Language class. Photo/Todd Forrest

former Georgia Secretary of State was fascinated with the new facilities, from the architecture to the lighting and sound system. Within minutes of entering the state-of-the-

art building, Union County Steeps and President Cox were already discussing the possibility of YHC using the 1,000-seat auditorium with the

best views on campus, atop Panther overlook.

Guiding the visitors were Superintendent Steppe, Union County Associate Su-

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Brewer takes the reins as EMC general manager

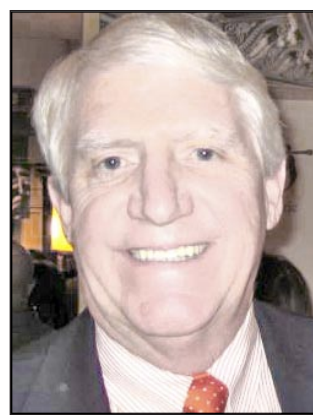
By Charles Duncan
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The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors has formally announced that Dan Brewer has been hired as interim Executive Vice President and General Manager, according to a release from the cooperative.

Brewer replaces Matthew Akins, who resigned as Executive Vice President and General Manager on Aug. 21.

Brewer has 44 years of experience in the electric industry, including more than 27 years managing electric cooperatives across the country.

Brewer has served as interim general manager for three other co-ops located



Dan Brewer

in Colorado, Missouri, and Montana.

An electrical engineer, Brewer began his co-op management career in an extreme-

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Love at first bite - Chick-fil-A is officially open

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

It's official - Blairsville can now "Eat Mor Chikin."

A week ago today, the brand new Blairsville Chick-fil-A opened its doors to the First 100 customers who camped overnight to win free meals for a year, before holding a well-attended ribbon cutting on Wednesday, Aug. 26.

For Owner/Operator Daniel Liberatore and his family, the day couldn't come soon enough for his much-anticipated restaurant.

"One word - finally," said Liberatore to the early morning veterans raised Old Glory at the ribbon cutting. "We've been saying that for



Chick-fil-A owner Daniel Liberatore greets campers who have a claim to fame of being among the 100 winners of a year of Chick-fil-A as the grand opening approached on Wednesday. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

six years plus, almost seven years. We can actually say it's finally open, so thank you. Thank you for all those involved to get this going."

Accompanying Liberatore for the special ceremony were his wife, Irene, and their two young boys, Ethan and Bryce.

"We are super excited and super proud to call Blairsville home now," said Liberatore. "I was telling my team last night that this community has been so welcoming, so friendly, and we thank you for that, for letting us come into your community and join you guys, and now, like I said, call this home."

The ribbon cutting was sponsored by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, after which everyone in attendance joined those behind the ribbon for a First Bite Ceremony featuring original Chick-fil-A sandwiches.

"This is probably the most anticipated and longest awaited opening in the history of Blairsville," said Cham-

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Blairsville-Union County, Believe It

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Blairsville and Union County have a new logo and tagline aimed at revitalizing community-driven and focused, collective advertising efforts - Believe It.

The tagline, "Believe It," below Blairsville-Union County, next to a stylized oak tree in the foreground and an abstract Blue Ridge Mountain range hugging the horizon.

Custom colors were lifted from photographs for use in color schemes involving the logo - blue from a picture of



Lamar Paris, Jim Conley, Mitch Griggs and Cindy Williams pose for a group shot with the Blairsville-Union County slogan Believe It!

Lake Trahlyta in Vogel State Park and red from a barn in Union County.

The Carl Vinson Insti-

tute of Government with the University of Georgia unveiled the new branding in a meeting for community stakeholders on

Tuesday, Aug. 25, in the lower Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse.

Last fall, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, in concert with Blairsville City Hall, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and the Union County Development Authority, commissioned the institute to conduct the new branding campaign at a cost of \$19,000.

Back in 2009, the chamber initiated a branding campaign with the blessing of the city and county, com-

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Union woman faces multiple charges, no bond

By Charles Duncan
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A three-month investigation of a 33-year-old Union County woman, Union County sheriff's Detective Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Julie McPherson, 33, of Blairsville has been charged with three counts distribution of methamphetamine, two counts burglary, two counts possession of stolen property, and was served with three bench warrants for failure to



Julie McPherson

appear in Superior Court, Lt. Osborn said.

"There is no bond for Ms. McPherson, more

charges are coming and the investigation is ongoing," Lt. Osborn said. "Ms. McPherson was due in court in August. Three bench warrants were issued for her failure to appear in court.

"On Aug. 27, the Union County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant at 49 Walter Rogers Lane, where Ms. McPherson lives. "The end result - a lot of jewelry was recovered that had been stolen from several residences in Union County. The Sheriff's Office returned several items that were identified by

the rightful owners to the rightful owners," Lt. Osborn said.

Lt. Osborn said several medication bottles found at the residence could lead to solving other crimes in Hiawassee.

"Hiawassee Police Department on that," Lt. Osborn said. "More charges are pending. A lot of man-hours have been put into this investigation.

"This case has been

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Heritage Festival brings history to life

By Charles Duncan
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History comes to life in Downtown Blairsville on Labor Day Weekend.

For the 14th consecutive year, the Mountain Heritage Festival takes shape on Sept. 5 and Sept. 6. It's all about the traditions of the North Georgia Mountains. The event is held at the Mountain Life Mu-



seum, in Blairsville, one block South of the Historic Union County Courthouse.

The event, part of the Union County Historical Society, features life like it used to be, featuring farm animals, craft exhibits, blacksmithing, bowl turning, butter churning, quilting and other facets of early life of local settlers.

A special occasion happens at the Mountain Life Museum (Mock House) on

Saturday, as furniture owned by Judge Candler will be dedicated in the museum.

The Akins family and the Nolan family donated this antique furniture to the Historical Society and it was placed in the Mock House.

A dedication of the furniture will be on Saturday, Sept. 5, at 2 p.m. at the Mock House.

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County audit gets clean bill of health; County deals with fireworks

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Those in attendance for the August Union County Commission meeting heard a report on the county's 2014 audit, which found the county in better financial shape than in 2012 and 2013.

Clay Pilgrim, a CPA audit partner with Rushton & Company, presented several figures from the audit conducted by his company.

According to Pilgrim, the county's net position can be broken down into three categories: Net Investment in Capital Assets, Restricted Net Position and Unrestricted Net Position.

Taken together, the three categories help the county to see where it stacks up year over year in its net position.

Net investment in capital assets takes into account all buildings and land owned by the county, net of depreciation and any debt related to those assets. For 2014, the county's net investment in capital assets was \$40,028,585, up from \$38,909,657 in 2013, and \$36,849,920 in 2012.

"Then, you've got a category called restricted net position, which is net position that is restricted - this is your equity that we're talking about here," said Pilgrim, noting that this position was also up from 2013. "It's equity that's restricted by enabling legislation or an outside party on how that money or how that equity can be spent. That was \$3,273,694 for 2014."

The unrestricted net position, the third factor in total net position, was also up over 2013, sitting at \$3,927,806 for 2014, and was the remaining balance



Lamar Paris

of equity not tied up in legislation or any other position.

Taken together, the three numbers give a total net position for the county of \$47,230,085, which is up \$1,469,622 from 2013 net position totals.

Also highlighted in the report was an increase in revenue to the General Fund of 2.3 percent, or an increase over 2013 by \$315,471 in 2014, thanks in large part to an increase in motor vehicle taxes, local option sales taxes and intergovernmental revenues.

Expenditures also increased between 2013 and 2014, but only by 1.1 percent, or \$139,692, due to an increase in juvenile court costs for indigent legal expenses and an uptick in sheriff personal services, though sheriff capital outlay was down by \$227,974.

All told, the General Fund balance for 2014 was up to \$14,007,199 from \$13,691,728 in 2013 for revenues, while expenditures were up to \$12,472,795 in 2014 as compared to \$12,333,103 in 2013.

"We always like to bring to your attention the unassigned

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Cancer Awareness Game
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Tues Sept. 1 @ Chestatee 4:30 PM