

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Knight: 'Tax Digest takes a \$461,400 dip'

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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The 2013 Tax Digest for Union County remains virtually unchanged from a year ago, Tax Commissioner Lee Knight said.

Overall, the tax digest is down \$461,400, Commissioner Knight said.

"Property consolidation and evaluation of the Tax Digest remains practically the same for 2013 as they were last year in 2012 for Union County," Commissioner Knight said. "Total taxable net property value for the school this year are \$1,203,269,963 at the 40 percent assessed value after the Homestead and property exemptions.

"Last year, 2012, the tax digest value was \$1,203,731,363," he said. "That's down \$461,400 in property values for the whole



Lee Knight

county of more than \$1 billion of taxable property for Union County property owners."

Property values at the 40 percent assessed values dropped only about 1/20th of one percent for school valuation this year from last year, Commissioner Knight said.

"The County taxable

property at 40 percent assessed value actually increased slightly in the amount of \$172,000," he said.

The total on the tax digest numbers from last year generated \$19,566,948 for the school and the county in property taxes.

If the millage rates remain the same for 2013, the digest numbers would bring in about \$75,537 less in 2013 for both the school system and the county, Commissioner Knight said.

"We are all hoping that the millage rates for the school and the county will not increase this year," Commissioner Knight said. "There are still a lot of folks that are struggling to pay their property taxes.

"Also many people feel that their property is still over valued for the property taxes and what they could get for their house or land in today's

marketplace," he said. "Union County Tax Assessors raised land and home values in 2006 in a re-appraisal of the whole county.

"Since that time, land and housing values have declined. That decline started in 2007, and the county has lowered values only about 15 percent."

Because of lower valuations, the Union County School Board unfortunately had to raise the school millage rate at that time, Commissioner Knight said.

"It takes a certain amount of money to maintain all the county and school operations and the money has to come from somewhere," Commissioner Knight said. "Hopefully we can all continue to be good stewards of the taxpayer's dollar and try

See *Digest*, 2A

## County and City to keep taxes lower; BOE to decide soon

By Charles Duncan  
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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris is proposing a slight break in property taxes.

Commissioner Paris is proposing a drop in the county's millage rate from 5.410 mills to 5.408 mills, according to the county's Five-Year Tax History, advertised this week in the *North Georgia News*.

The commissioner will make it official on Thursday at the County Commission Meeting at the County Commission Courthouse at 6 p.m.

"We won't adopt our budget until the end of the year," Paris said. "It's a feat not to raise taxes and continue to provide the services that we're providing.

See *Taxes*, 2A



Lamar Paris



Mayor Jim Conley

## Station 2 serves up a lesson

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County Fire Station 2 at Jones Creek held its open house last Saturday morning with educating the community on fire safety as the number one priority.

First Lt. David Burnette and Second Lt. David Ueltzen were on hand, firefighter Leonard Zeh manning the grill, and plenty of activities for children.

Fire Station 2 may have been the last to hold its open house, but according to Lt. Ueltzen, that was how they planned it.

"We used to hold it during the summer, the only prob-



Leonard Zeh flips burgers at Saturday's open house at Station 2, Jones Creek. Photo/Todd Forrest

lem is, everyone else is doing weekend after weekend so we get a different group coming out," Ueltzen said. "This is the

third year that we've been doing it in September. The main focus is fire safety and we'll be doing

See *Open House*, 2A

## Vogel celebrates the season in style

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

It was a cool September on the shores of Lake Trahlyta, 2,300 feet above sea level, as Vogel State Park hosted its annual Mountain Music and Arts Day Festival.

Arts and crafts, and live music by local artists were on display.

A silent auction was held by the Vogel Volunteers, the driving force behind the park, as well as the first viewer's choice Photo Contest, allowing each visitor to vote on their favorite picture.

Photos were all mountain-themed, ranging from old

See *Fest*, 3A



Jim Eubanks, the Magic Man, demonstrates feats of magic for children at Vogel State Park on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Two dead in fatal crashes in Union, Towns

By Charles Duncan  
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During a weekend when the Georgia State H.O.G. Rally was happening in Hiawassee, it wasn't a good weekend to ride motorcycles for some.

Two Saturday crashes, one in Union County, the other in Towns County, resulted in fatal injuries for both motorcycle drivers, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

In Union County, Senior Trooper Tony "Bream" Saunders said that around 5:10 p.m., near Helton Creek Falls Road, a Kawasaki 1700 Nomad was traveling south on Georgia 11, when the driver of the motorcycle crossed the centerline in a curve and hit a tractor-trailer carrying goods for Wal-Mart, traveling north, head-on.

The driver, Michael



The scene of a fatal motorcycle crash in Towns County on Saturday. Trooper First Class Cody White said the victim died on impact. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Reid Waddell, age 61, from Ball Ground, died of injuries sustained in the crash. Witnesses say the motor-

cycle exploded on impact, but, Waddell survived the early moments following

See *Crashes*, 3A

## Churches remember 9/11 tragedy

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

As the world stood still on Sept. 11th 2001, the churches of Union County sprang into action.

Those actions are still carried out, 12 years later at House of Prayer Interdenominational Church and Pine Top Baptist Church.

Rev. Jimmy Tanner of Pine Top Baptist Church will never forget what transpired as he sat at Cook's Restaurant watching the television on a typical Tuesday morning in September, that turned into tragedy, that turned into eye.

As Tanner met with other local pastors at Cook's, he noticed something unusual

See *Remember*, 3A



The Pine Top Baptist Church faithful pray for our nation on Sept. 11th during a ceremony at the church. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Whittle candlelight vigil on Wednesday

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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The Second Candlelight Vigil Service in remembrance of fallen Union County sheriff's Deputy Derrick Whittle is scheduled for Sept. 18th, at 8 p.m. at Meadow View Cemetery on Philadelphia Church Road.

Deputy Whittle was the only child of Jim and Sharon Whittle. More than 400 people gathered at Meeks Park last September to celebrate the life of this dedicated officer who was critically injured in a domestic call knowing that shots had reportedly been fired.

Deputy Whittle sustained life-threatening injuries in that Sept. 15, 2011 crash.

Three days after the crash, Deputy Whittle succumbed to his injuries.

He died at Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tenn. Deputy Whittle was respond-



More than 400 people attended last year's Candlelight Vigil at Meeks Park to remember fallen Union County sheriff's Deputy Derrick Whittle. Photo/Charles Duncan

ing to a domestic dispute with weapons involved on Sept. 15, 2011; he died in the line of duty, Enotah Circuit District

Attorney Jeff Langley said. "Deputy Whittle was responding to a domestic disturbance involv-

See *Vigil*, 6A

## Sheriff Mason: 'Drug busts to continue'

By Charles Duncan  
North Georgia News  
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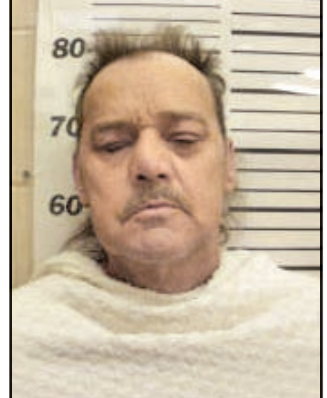
The Union County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division continues to make a clean sweep across the county, Sheriff Mack Mason said.

A Union County couple is behind bars following their arrests on drug charges last week.

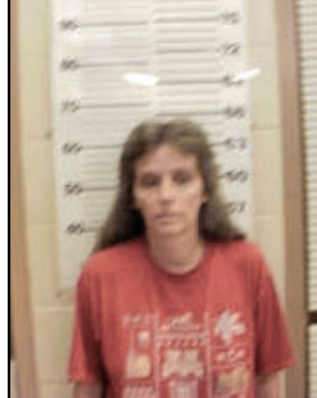
The arrests of Gary and Sherry Dockery were the culmination of an extended investigation into illegal drug activity, Sheriff Mason said.

Gary Dockery, 52, of Dockery Creek Road, was charged with three counts of Violation of Georgia's Controlled Substance Act for manufacturing, distribution, dispensing, sale of a controlled substance.

His wife Sherry Dockery, 48, was charged with distribution of dangerous



Gary Dockery



Sherry Dockery

drugs, Sheriff Mason said. "Our investigators seized \$8,630 in cash, a 2000 Toyota pickup, 68 firearms, and a double-wide trailer and two acres of land," Sheriff Mason said. "As I've said before, our goal is to make drug trafficking a very undesirable business in Union County."

Over the last two

weeks, the Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division has seized almost \$17,000 in cash, and more than \$400,000 in property and vehicles following a series of drug busts, Union County Sheriff's Office records show.

The crackdown on

See *Busts*, 6A

Vol. 104 No. 38  
2 Sections, 28 Pages  
Weather  
Wed: Clouds Hi 74 Lo 53  
Thu: Clouds Hi 79 Lo 54  
Fri: Clouds Hi 80 Lo 57

**Inside**  
Arrests 8A  
Church 9A  
Classified 2B  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 4B  
Obits 11A  
Sports 12A, 13A

**Puttin' on the Dog**  
Benefiting the Towns & Union County Humane Society  
**Sept. 28th**  
Union County Farmer's Market

**LET'S MOVE DAY AT MEEK'S PARK**  
Sunday, September 22nd  
See page 18A

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Meeting  
Saturday, September 21  
Anderson Music Hall ~ Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

**Arts & Crafts**  
Celebrate Autumn  
Arts & Crafts Show  
North Ga Tech  
Sept. 21-22, 2013

**JV FOOTBALL:**  
Thurs. Sept. 19 vs. Gilmer 6:15 PM  
**MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOTBALL:**  
Thurs. Sept. 19 vs. Lumpkin 4:30 PM  
**SOFTBALL:**  
Wed. Sept. 18 vs. Lumpkin  
JV 4:30 PM VARSITY 6 PM  
Thurs. Sept. 19 vs. Washington Wilkes  
Doubleheader 4 & 6 PM (Senior Night)