

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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November 11, 2015

## Superintendent Gary Steppe to retire

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

After diligently serving the Union County School System for five years, Superintendent Gary Steppe will retire at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

Steppe turned in his letter of retirement in a called meeting of the Union County Board of Education on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

"I wish to inform you that I plan to retire at the end of this school year," read Steppe's letter. "I want to thank you for the opportunity I have had to work in Union County Schools. I will miss the relationships I have worked with here. They are a great group of educators. I will also miss the students whose values and commitment to excellence stands out from

the ordinary.

"It has truly been a blessing to be a part of this school system. I am honored to finish my career in such a wonderful place. I wish nothing but the best for you, the system, and your search for a new superintendent."

In an email sent out last Thursday morning to his faculty and staff, Steppe explained that when he was hired in 2011, the board asked him how long he would stay in the position, given that, at age 63, he was older than most applicants at that time.

His response to the board was that he planned to stay at least five years, and Steppe has been true to his word.

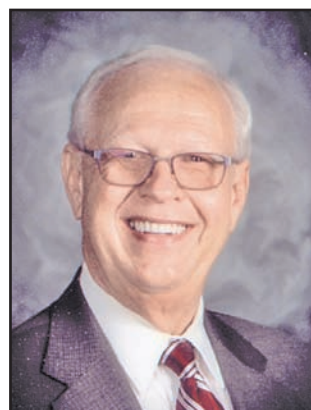
"That five-year period ends this spring," wrote Steppe to his staff. "It has gone by quickly for me, but has been one of the most enjoyable and

rewarding things I have been blessed to do. I have always thought it was God's will for me to work in the education of our youth, and He has blessed me beyond my imagination.

"I have worked in four wonderful school systems in two states, and with the Georgia Department of Education. Over my 46 years in education, I have been blessed to work with some wonderful people and some of the finest here in Union County. I believe educators are some of the best people in the world."

Over the course of his 46-year career, Steppe has done everything from driving school buses to teaching classes in physical education and U.S. history.

He has been the superintendent of three school systems, one in his home state of North Carolina, and then two in Georgia, at Stephens County



Gary Steppe

and here, in Union, where he will finish up his career in education.

Stephens and Union counties are both in the Pioneer RESA, and prior to taking the job here, Steppe was familiar with the level of academic excellence with which students

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## Carlyn Turner meets actor Chris Pratt, Miss America



Carlyn Turner with actor Chris Pratt

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

It's not every day that you get to meet a celebrity – and recently, 8-year-old Carlyn Turner of Blairsville met two of them.

During her stay at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston over the weekend of Oct. 24, Carlyn got a chance to hang out with actor Chris Pratt of *Jurassic World* and *Guardians of the Galaxy* fame, as well as Betty Cantrell, who was crowned Miss America 2016 in September after having won in the Miss Georgia pageant

in June.

Carlyn is one of the Turner Triplets. She and her sisters Ava and Jillian were born on Aug. 14, 2007.

The triplets' mother, Jennifer Turner, teaches kindergarten at Union County Primary School, and their father, Dr. John-Mark Turner, owns and operates Mountain Eye Care on Georgia 515 across from the post office in Blairsville.

Rounding out the immediate family is 19-year-old Amelia Turner, Dr. Turner's daughter from a previous

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## 9-win Panthers host first round of State

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County football continues to ride a wave of momentum that began at the end of the 2013 season when the Panthers reached the State playoffs for the first time in 12 years.

A year later and coming off a 9-1 season, Union suffered heavy losses to graduation and expectations weren't as lofty entering 2015.

But don't tell that to this year's crop of seniors. With First Team All State



Panthers defeat Washington Wilkes to advance to State

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## Remembering our veterans: six brothers serve, six return home



Barnes Brothers

Special to the  
North Georgia News

In honor of Veterans Day, the *North Georgia News* is printing this composite picture provided by Blairsville resident Vivian Martin, whose father, Homer Barnes, was one of six brothers who served in and returned safely home from World War II.

The Barnes Family lived in Union County. There were eight boys and one girl, and the girl died in early childhood when her clothing caught fire. Martin's grandmother, devastated by her loss, decided

to relocate the family to North Carolina, and they moved near Bryson City.

When Martin's father became an adult, he returned to Georgia to visit his childhood friend, a woman who would become his wife and Martin's mother. After the two married he remained in Union County, while his siblings continued to live in North Carolina.

Barnes was drafted at the age of 28 into the Army, and five of his brothers soon followed his induction. The oldest and youngest Barnes brothers did not serve, and all

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## Veterans Day 2015 Program & Lunch

Special to the  
North Georgia News

American Legion Ira T. Weaver Post 121 & Auxiliary, Disabled American Veterans Woodrow Wilson Chapter 11, Veterans of Foreign Wars Brown-Davis-Elliott-Woody Post 7394, and Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1101 are directing a Veterans Day program and luncheon on Wednesday, November 11, 2015 in the Methodist Activities Center of the First United Methodist Church of Union County located at 938 Highway 515, Blairsville, GA.

Our guest speaker will be Brigadier General (Retired) Bernie Fontaine. The program will include a Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony to pay tribute to our missing beloved comrades; recognition of honored guests and attending POW's; recap of the great service provided by the North Georgia Honor Guard; presentation of "I Am a Veteran"

by the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Commander's Award. The Commander's Award is presented annually to recognize a worthy veteran for outstanding contributions to the community and veteran organizations throughout the year.

Starting at 11 a.m., the program will run concurrently with a luncheon and should be over by 1 p.m. Lunch will be \$6 per person and is being catered by Jim's Smokin' Que. Everyone is welcome but seating is limited. For tickets or to RSVP, stop by Earlybird Antiques / The Book Cellar (706-835-9534) at 112 Welborn St. in Blairsville, GA to let us know you want to attend.

Thank you for your support and please plan to attend this event honoring service in the past and the present with opportunity for service in the future.

## Fall FFA Blue & Gold Auction bigger than ever



By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County FFA students have outdone themselves, nearly doubling the amount of sales from the Spring Blue & Gold Auction with the year's fall event that took place on Friday, Nov. 6, and Saturday, Nov. 7.

The FFA Blue & Gold Auction kicks off twice each

year, once in the spring and once in the fall, and each auction spans two days, with one evening set aside for a livestock sale at the Union County Ag Barn, followed by a farm equipment sale the very next day at the Union County Farmers Market.

"I always try to remain cautious about expectations," said John Clark Pettit, FFA

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## Farmers Market closed until Kris Kringle

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Staff Writer

Thanks to the Union County FFA Blue & Gold Auction, the Union County Farmers Market enjoyed one last day following the official close of the season.

The market's last full day was Saturday, Oct. 31, but about 30 vendors came out on Saturday, Nov. 7, to take advantage of the crowds drawn by the auction's record-

breaking equipment sale.

"When they did this FFA equipment auction in the spring, they had invited our vendors to be here, and when they decided to do the auction again in the fall, they wanted our vendors back if they wanted to, so we offered for any of our vendors who were interested to come set up today," said Market Assistant Manager Kristy Penney.

The next event at the Farmers Market will be the Kris Kringle Mountain Market,



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## Goodbye BI-LO, hello Food City



By Shawn Jarrard  
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Staff Writer

Food City celebrated its Grand Opening with the

Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and guests on Wednesday, Nov. 4.

The grocery store, which

many will know as the former BI-LO off Blue Ridge Street, actually finished enough of its Food City transition to open on Oct. 9 ahead of its public

Grand Opening with ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Food City, which holds its corporate headquarters

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SPORTS FOOTBALL STATE PLAY OFFS VS. BOWDON 7:30 PM BASKETBALL TUES. NOV. 10TH - SCRIMMAGE @ HAYESVILLE 5:30 & 7:30 PM