

North Georgia News

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GEMA honors Worden with Legends Award

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Dillard – Union County Fire Chief, EMA Director and 911 Director Charles Worden was honored last week with the Emergency Management Association of Georgia's Legends Award.

The award honors Chief Worden's career achievements during his more than 20-year career in public safety.

Worden became Union County Fire Chief in early 1993. In May 1993 Worden became the county's second career Fire Chief.

Meanwhile, Worden also attended EMT school at North Georgia Tech in the first class from that institution that began certification through the National Registry. For several years, Worden worked part-time at Union County EMS. In 1997, when EMA Director Hughes Chatham retired, Worden was appointed as Union County's EMA Director.



Union County Fire Chief Charles Worden, front, with daughter-in-law Pam Worden and son C.J. Worden after accepting GEMA's Legends Award in Dillard last week. Charles Worden has spent 20-plus years in Public Safety

rector.

In 2004, after a reorganization of the 911 Center, Worden was tasked with serving as the 911 Director and overseer of Union County 911

Mapping.

During this period, Union County was completely re-mapped for 5.28 scale in order to ensure more efficient response of emergency

services. Additionally, signs were placed at every building in Union County as a part of that effort. Worden was at the head of that operation from start to finish. Additionally, Worden was able to secure funding for an all-inclusive back up mobile 911 Center that he hopes Union County will never need to use.

Union County Fire Department at one time consisted of five stations with seven career employees and a varying number of volunteers. Under Worden's leadership, Union County Fire Department has progressed from having two firefighters on shift to four firefighters on shift with a total now of 14 career employees. There are now 11 total fire stations throughout Union County. About a year ago, the fire department took control of a new Fire Station 1 and Emergency Operations Center that will serve the county proudly for many years to come.

See **Worden, 3A**

New business coming to Downtown Blairsville



By Charles Duncan
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The renovation of Downtown Blairsville continues with the historic Chevron building at 44A Town Square in Downtown Blairsville.

The hope is to bring the building back to life and keep that Downtown feeling on the

square intact. Keeping in theme with renovations made to the historic Kings 5 & 10 building, the business forever known as a service station in Downtown soon will transform into Cabin Coffee Company, owned by Wayne and Judy Jolley.

See **Coffee, 3A**

Veterans honored at FUMC of Union County

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Since 1918 the 11th hour of the 11th month has remained a hallowed time and date for much of the world.

Nov. 11, 1918 marked the end of World War I when major hostilities ended with the Armistice of Germany. One year later, the day was first remembered when President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Nov. 11 as Armistice Day.

Veterans Day, as it is known today in the United States honors those who have served in the armed forces. Since 1926, the day has been the Veterans Day. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill into law officially replacing Armistice Day with Veterans Day and the holiday has been known as Veterans Day ever since.

Locally, Union County has long honored its heroes with a celebration of Veterans Day, and 2014 was no different.

In 2012, Veterans Day was celebrated at the Union County War Memorial where the Blairsville City Council renamed School Street to recognize the county's veterans. The new name, Veterans Memorial Drive, leads directly to the memorial. Last year the Veterans Day service and luncheon was held at Union County Community Center, and in 2014, the honor belonged to First United Methodist Church of Union County.

With the FUMC gymnasium filled with a standing-room only crowd, retired U.S. Army Master Sgt. Bob Spaulding served as moderator for the day's ceremony. Retired U.S. Army



Richard Hoibraten was honored with the Commander's Award at last week's Veterans Day ceremony at FUMC of Union County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Master Sgt. Charles Honaker Sr. and retired CE1 Richard Hoibraten served as Chaplin with Honaker providing the invocation prior to the Missing Man Table and Honors

Ceremony. The program concluded with guest speaker, retired Brigadier General Kevin Turner, and closing with the benediction from Hoibraten.

The Commander's Award

was also presented to Hoibraten.

"This prestigious award is presented annually to a wor-

See **Veterans, 2A**

Woody Gap's Local Studies Class shines at BOE meeting



By Charles Duncan
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The Local Studies program at the Woody Gap School helps juniors and seniors reconnect with the mountain community's historic traditions.

It also will play a part in the celebration of the school's 75th anniversary in 2015.

On Thursday night, Dakota Etheridge, Rebecca Etheridge, Eli Gooch, Holly Harkins, Kaniesha Martin, Kourtney Payne, Nina Sattler, and Konnor Sosebee were on hand as the smallest public school in Georgia – enrollment of 73 K-12 – highlighted its Local Studies program.

Local Studies was jumpstarted following a 1999 trip to Pierre, SD, said Local Studies educator Althea Cantrell. A Woody Gap contingent that included Cantrell, learned of ways to keep students connected with their heritage.

Junior and senior high school students learn about the small community, thus be-

able to understand their foundation or roots. The Local Studies Class provides history, customs, folklore, traditions, and activities to enhance this class.

It's believed that students who know and are proud of their heritage are better prepared to be successful in life.

In Local Studies, students work to document and preserve the history of the area for future generations. The students are using a wide variety of technology and mediums at their disposal to document the history of Woody Gap.

They learn about canning, mountain customs, music and way of life.

"Local Studies is mostly about documenting and preserving our mountain heritage," Cantrell said. "The program encourages the students to be proud of where they come from. It allows them to take a closer look at their roots and teaches them to be proud of their heritage."

See **The Gap, 3A**

Three charged in Ingles' meat heist

By Charles Duncan
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Three North Carolina residents are in legal trouble following a Nov. 12 incident that involved the theft of hundreds of dollars of meat from a local supermarket.

Union County received a 911 call regarding shoplifters leaving Ingles in a blue Isuzu Rodeo, turning right, heading west on Georgia 515, Union County Sheriff's SSgt. Darren Osborn.

Reportedly, the three filled a large grocery cart full of meat. They exited the store without paying for those items, Sgt. Osborn said.

"Sgt. Julio Cruz spot-



Katarina Piliotis

ted the vehicle on Jack Lance Highway, heading toward North Carolina," Sgt. Osborn said. "He spotted them at Hog Mountain Road and Jack Lance Highway. He saw the



Francisco Serrano

vehicle headed north on Highway 129."

Sgt. Cruz fell in behind the suspected vehicle, Sgt. Os-

See **Heist, 2A**

Blairsville woman in hot water with law

By Charles Duncan
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A 44-year-old Union County woman is being held in a Hall County mental health facility following what Union County sheriff's investigators believe was a crime spree that included burglary and arson.

Lena Thompson was living in her parents' basement when investigators believe she left early Wednesday, Nov. 12 and burned down her father's workshop. They then believe she committed more offenses.

Union County Sheriff's Investigator Tom Mangifesta said the building had no power running to it, and Thomp-

son likely intentionally set the blaze.

"She then took her father's hammer, walked next door to her aunt's house," Mangifesta said. "She then broke out a bedroom window with the hammer and entered her aunt's house. The aunt was in the bathroom; she heard a noise – like someone hitting the side of the house.

"When she walked out of the bathroom, Lena confronted her," Mangifesta said. "(Lena) had a hammer in her hand. Her aunt was startled and Lena asked her aunt if she could hide her out. Lena then went to the next room, turned on the stove. She was bleeding; there was a blood trail through the house.

"Also, when she was in the bedroom, she laid some clothes out on the bed, she was acting kind of bizarre," Mangifesta said. "She then asked the aunt for a lighter and the keys to her car. The aunt gave her a lighter, but told her that she didn't have the car keys. The aunt shut off the electric stove and then slipped out of the house.

"The aunt called her sister, who is Lena's mother," Mangifesta said. "She told her sister that Lena was at her house, she was acting strange. The aunt left the house just as Lena's mother was walking towards the house. Lena's mother had Lena's 3-year-

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