

North Georgia News

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Senior Center Open House on Dec. 9

By Charles Duncan
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Union County Senior Director Kathy Hill had long prayed for money to expand the Union County Senior Center.

The center was at a crossroads. Senior Center workers and volunteers were jammed into the building like sardines in a tin can. Instead of focusing on programs for Union County Seniors, they were spending more time breaking down tables and moving and shuffling from one room to the next.

The Senior Center does programs for Seniors that include exercise, art classes, Wii Bowling, Tai Chi, quilting, yoga and jewelry making. It also hosts an Alzheimer's respite. Hill said.

Along came a \$295,687



Kathy Hill

Community Development Block Grant that provided funding for the physical expansion of the Union County Senior Center, to provide programs, activities, and services to an increased number of Senior Citizens in Union County.

Hill's prayers came to fruition.

"Part of our expansion was for our Alzheimer's

room," Hill said. "Now we can have our Alzheimer's programs on Wednesdays and Fridays. It's like a one-on-one with the Alzheimer's patients. We have music, and an exercise program. We involve them in everything. It's all about getting their minds active again."

On Dec. 9, at 1 p.m., there will be an Open House at the center, off Georgia 515, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Refreshments will be provided.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said many thanks go to Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Mike Beatty for helping prioritizing the grant for Union County.

He also praised local contractor Chad Winkler for his solid work on the center.

"He got numerous letters from the Union County faithful," Paris said. "Those letters

were packed with emotion and touched his heart. He worked with us through the grant process and here we are today."

The funds went towards the renovation and expansion of the Senior Center, Paris said. "It's a great project. This is a hard fought, competitive grant," Paris said. "Every community in the state of Georgia was trying to get this grant. Most of the money comes from our federal tax dollars. Counties and cities all over the state were applying for those dollars."

The Union County Senior Center was a priority project, with overcrowding conditions and lack of floor space for activities, Commissioner Paris said.

"We've had a great Senior Center for many years," he said. "Ruth Murray was over that program for many

See **Seniors**, 3A

Allison: 'election dates are changing in 2014'

By Mason Mitcham
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Georgia's election dates were of prime discussion on Saturday as House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison (R-Blairsville) spoke to the Union County Republican Party at The Lodge at Copperhead.

U.S. District Judge Steve Jones has changed the scope of Georgia elections, with his July ruling that the state's current election calendar, which has traditionally scheduled the primary elections for state and federal offices on the third Tuesday in July, violated the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986.

That law requires states to send absentee ballots to military and overseas voters 45 days before any federal



State Rep. Stephen Allison

election. The Georgia Election Calendar has been reset for federal elections only at this time.

Qualifying for federal elections is set as March 3.

See **Allison**, 2A

Enrichment Center saving lives

By Welch
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Woman's Enrichment Centers held their annual Fall Banquet Thursday evening, Nov. 14, at Antioch Baptist Church's Family Life Center.

The evening was a huge success for the local, nonprofit, and nondenominational organization, whose mission is to promote life in counties that include Union and Towns, by supporting women in need during pregnancy and through childbirth.

After a sit down dinner, served by volunteers of the church, those gathered joined in a prayer to begin the program, and Chris Scoggins, Executive Director of the Enrichment Centers presented several certificates in appreciation,

See **Banquet**, 3A



It was a packed house at Antioch Baptist Church's Family Life Center on Thursday night. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Reece Center Open House is Nov. 30 and Dec. 1

By Charles Duncan
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The doors will be open at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

The occasion is the last chance of the 2013 season to visit the Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

Last year, they came from near and far, and many didn't want to leave as several hundred Byron Herbert Reece fans turned out for the Christmas Open House on Saturday at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

It was the last event at the center until April.

It also was the inaugural Christmas event for the center and one that proved to be a success beyond expectations.

"To be honest, it took our breath away," Reece Society spokesman John Kay said. "We didn't expect this kind of turnout. It was incredible."

The Gift Shop was swamped, as anything Reece



Byron Herbert Reece

flowed off the shelves. Many visitors saw the event as an opportunity to purchase a unique Christmas gift for someone special in their lives.

The Gift Shop Shop feature books by and about Reece and others on subjects pertinent to Appalachia; note cards; homemade and hand-crafted items including jewelry, baskets, soap, scarves, wooden bowls, pottery, or-

naments, quilts, and Reece Farm embroidered towels and pillows.

In celebration of the closing and in anticipation of the seasons of Advent and Christmas, the annual Open House will be observed on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. The hours will be the usual open hours, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

There will be no charge for admission to the exhibits on both of those days.

Drawings for door prizes and others will occur at 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Presence at the drawings is not required, but persons must come to the Welcome Center to receive a ticket and register attendance.

Light refreshments will be served.

Craft activities for children will be available.

Weather permitting, musical presentations and sing-

See **Reece**, 2A

The bids are in for Haralson/Deep South Project

By Charles Duncan
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The City of Blairsville's low bidder on its Haralson Drive water system improvement project is Townley Construction out of Dawsonville.

Three sealed bids were opened last week in the Council Room at City Hall, and Townley Construction came in with a \$1.441 million bid.

The final decision on the bid will be made by the City Council at the Council's December meeting, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley said.

Buckeye Construction out of Canton, NC bid \$1.940 million on the project. The second lowest bidder was Gainsville-based Strickland & Sons Pipeline at \$1.787 million.

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority awarded a \$1,693,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to the city of Blairsville to pay for the improve-



Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley opens sealed bids on the water system improvements project as EMI's Chip McGaughey read the bids aloud. Photo/Charles Duncan

ments. The money will be used for the water system improvement project that includes upgrading undersized and aging waterlines along Pat Haralson Drive and Deep South Farm Road for improved flow and pressure and reduced water leaks.

The city also plans to re-

place its existing water meters with a wireless automatic smart reading system for its 1,310 customers, which will improve meter reading efficiency, reduce labor costs, and provide a more accurate measurement of water usage throughout the system.

See **Bids**, 2A

Gibson indicted in three separate sex crimes

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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A Union County Grand Jury has handed up three indictments against a Blairsville man that include multiple sex crimes.

LaBobby Gibson, 27, of Blairsville, was indicted for what Union County Sheriff Mack Mason called "strong-arm" rape, from an incident that allegedly occurred Aug. 16.

Gibson also was indicted for false imprisonment, aggravated sexual battery, and sexual battery related to the alleged incident that reportedly



LaBobby Delaris Gibson occurred Aug. 16, off Hayfield Road, off Georgia 515.

Grand Jurors also indicted Gibson for an alleged

statutory rape that occurred, between June 2013 and July 31, a separate indictment shows.

That indictment, which involves a second alleged victim, also indicts Gibson for three counts child molestation, enticing a child for indecent purposes, and aggravated child molestation, the indictment shows.

A third indictment alleges that Gibson raped a third victim between June 2012 and July 30, 2012.

That indictment also accuses Gibson of false imprisonment of the third victim between April 2012 and Sept. 30, 2012.

Sheriff's Give-A-Gift program begins in earnest

By Charles Duncan
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Shop With a Cop isn't the only program that makes children smile on Christmas morning.

The Union County Sheriff's Office's Give-a-Gift Christmas meets the needs of children ages 1-12, said Give-a-Gift coorganizer Ginger Carey.

"Yes, the Union County Sheriff's Office once again is proud to sponsor the Give-a-Gift Program," Carey said. "We are actively seeking donations of toys or money. We can assist with picking up donations from you if we need to. We respectfully request that no donations be made of any type of toy weapon."

The program began in 2001, Carey said, and served more than 120 children in 2012 with support from the community.

"We recognize that the economy is still in rough shape," Carey said. "The need for this program is greater than ever because of that."

Union County Chief Deputy John George said that the program works with the community's help.

George said things are indeed tough. A lot of children out there aren't expecting much if anything at all for Christmas this year.

"This program is about the kids, it's about a Merry Christmas," he said. "It's a



The Vogel State Park Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 14 will be a big help to the Sheriff's Give a Gift program. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

tradition here since 2001 and Sheriff Mack Mason wants to make sure that tradition continues during his administration.

"You can't stop a program like this, it's too important to the community," George said.

One of the biggest boosts to the program is the commitment by the Blairsville Cruisers, who work year-round to make Christmas happen in the Blairsville-Union County community.

"We met with the Cruisers this morning," George

said. "They are always a big part of the Christmas season, helping Shop With A Cop and Give-A-Gift. They also have their own Shop With A Cruiser program."

"They are truly a giving organization," George said.

Another event that helps a great deal is the Vogel State Park Christmas Tree Lighting.

Patrons of the free event bring an unwrapped gift for children ages 1-12, Carey

See **Give**, 3A

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