

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Shop With A Cop program needs some cash

By Charles Duncan
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Blairsville Police Chief Carroll says the 2014 Shop With A Cop program was \$5,000 in the hole before collections started this year.

That's because a corporate sponsor has pulled out because of conditions beyond their control, Chief Carroll said.

"The community continues to support Shop With A Cop," Chief Carroll said. "And I feel like they will help us make up for the loss of one of our corporate sponsorships."

Shop With A Cop has lit up the faces of almost 700 local youth since the program began in 1999 and Chief Carroll said the need is definitely there to help again in 2014.

The Chief says there are more financially challenged families in Union County than one might think.

"Each year, our list of



Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

names grows. We know who could use some Christmas cheer," Chief Carroll said. "We've had a lot of help over the years, Mom and Pop stores, churches, businesses, individuals and of course the Blairsville Cruisers make a huge difference every year.

"Every year we want to help a few more kids than we did the year before," he

said. "We want to reach 100 or more children this year. We just don't know if we're going to have the funds to do that this year."

Shop With A Cop enters its 15th year with Blairsville Police Department involvement.

"We take the kids shopping, we take them for a meal," said Cindy Neely,

Clerk of Municipal Court and Secretary for Blairsville Police Department. "Each child is allotted a certain amount of money and they shop the way they want to."

Union County Family Connection, teachers and other sources point the department in the direction of prospective shoppers, Neely said.

"These are the kids that fall through the cracks," she said. "It's the kids that are sort of in limbo when it comes to Christmas. Everyone likes to see the eyes of the little ones light up. Well, the tweens (11-17) sort of get left out.

"Yes, they're excited about Shop With A Cop. They've got their bags made out," she said. "You'd be surprised how many are buying for other family members, not for themselves. It really warms your heart to see

See Shop, 2A

Paris approves \$14.42 million county budget for Fiscal 2015

By Charles Duncan
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The 2015 Union County government budget is set at \$14.42 million.

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris explained that the \$405,776 increase over the 2014 Fiscal budget included security for the Union County Courthouse.

"The majority of that increase was for courthouse security since we had to cover the six months of 2014 expense that was out of budget and the upcoming year of 2015," Commissioner Paris said. "We were able to pay for the new required equipment out of SPLOST funds, saving on our budget, but negatively impacting our SPLOST funds.

"In addition, other increased expenses were benefit costs at the library, mandated by the state rate," Paris said. "We increased \$20,000 for the Development Authority to be able to spend more on advertising and job creation, we have gone many years without updating our tax and assessor aerial photos, which we are able to join



Lamar Paris

several other counties and cut the \$50,000 cost basically in half.

"We had a \$35,000 additional cost in our liability and facility insurance, but our largest increase other than security, was more than \$80,000 in Juvenile Court costs," Paris said. "With recent court rulings, the county must pay for those who can not afford to pay themselves) in legal and divorce proceedings where children are involved, use to include providing one attorney for

See Budget, 2A

CVS Pharmacy robbed; suspect sought

By Charles Duncan
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Blairsville Police Department and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation were investigating an armed robbery on Monday at CVS Pharmacy off Georgia 515.

The heist happened during the lunch hour. Details are sketchy, but it appears the robber made off with an undisclosed amount of cash. Witnesses say the robber left on foot.

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll comment about the incident as GBI special agents came to town to assist in the investigation.

Blairsville police, Union County sheriff's deputies and K-9 Deputy Lacey, with handler Jeff McConnell, were at the crime scene, along with GBI special agents.

No further details, including a description of the suspect, were available at press time.

Read next week's edition of the North Georgia News for more details and pay close attention to the newspaper's website.



The scene was hectic as Blairsville police, Union County sheriff's investigators and K-9 Lacey and GBI special agents canvassed the CVS Pharmacy off Georgia 515 searching for a robbery suspect on Monday. The suspect made off with an undisclosed amount of cash. Photo/Frank Uhle

Membership group pursues derivative action against EMC

By Charles Duncan
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Ten members of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC will move forward with a derivative action seeking the dismissal of BRMEMC General Manager Matthew Akins, General Counsel Lawrence Sorgen, six members of the EMC's Board of Directors, and the EMC's Auditor and Certified Public Accountant Gene Allen.

A derivative action demand letter obtained by the North Georgia News, was sent to BRMEMC on Nov. 6, with specific demands that the EMC Board of Directors assert causes of action against Akins and members of the Board of Directors, Ronnie Burch; William Prather; Bob Enslay; Kenneth Lance; Jerry Nichols; and Greg Owenby. The letter's demand was that the Board of Directors terminate Akins, BRMEMC attorney Sorgen, and BRMEMC's auditor and certified public accountant Allen.



In a letter dated Nov. 17, the membership group learned that the BRMEMC Board voted to reject the demands, according to a correspondence sent by BRMEMC legal counsel Sorgen. "The Board has received and reviewed your letter of November 6, 2014 and has taken action in regard to the matters set forth therein that are relevant to the provisions of O.C.G.A. 46-3-272 and matters concerning derivative actions. Be advised that after due consideration

See EMC, 3A

CHAMPS graduates 213 fifth graders from UCES

By Charles Duncan
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More than 210 Union County fifth graders are now graduates of a program that could change their lives forever.

Union County Elementary School and the Union County Sheriff's Office proudly held commencement exercises for the 2014 CHAMPS Graduation.

CHAMPS helps fifth graders deal with peer pressure, bullying issues and provides awareness for drug and alcohol issues. Union County Sheriff's Deputy Sally Tanner said the program allows school resource officers to adapt the program to fit the



SRO Sally Tanner congratulates Essay Contest winner Mollie Arrowood at Friday's CHAMPS graduation ceremony. Sarah Walker, Mollie's role model, read Mollie's Essay. Photo/Lowell Nicholson.

regional environmental issues of each school.

The 2014 Class featured nine essay winners, but only one overall essay champion, Mollie Arrowood, from Ms. Duckworth's Class.

Arrowood's class highlighted the most important things that she had learned during CHAMPS classes with Union County School Resource Officer Tanner.

According to Arrowood, the most important lessons learned from Deputy Tanner, the pitfalls of smoking cigarettes, the dangers of methamphetamine, and the need for hunter safety.

"There are more than

See CHAMPS, 2A

Mistletoe Market thrives



Mike Wilson of Hayesville, NC proudly displays his handcrafted knives at Mistletoe Market. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The holiday season is upon us and the 14th annual Mistletoe Market kicked things off over the weekend at North Georgia Technical College - Blairsville Campus.

The Mistletoe Market, presented by the Mountain

Regional Arts and Crafts Guild is the third and final show of the year, coming on the heels of the Celebrate Autumn show in September and the Mountain Fling in June.

Spaces quickly filled for the November show with more than 50 local artists putting their handiwork on dis-

See Market, 2A

Great Promise Partnership seeks help from businesses

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Area businesses were invited to attend an informational breakfast meeting about getting high school kids involved in the workplace on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at North Georgia Technical College.

There are currently many efforts aimed at helping eligible high school children attain job training and opportunities in the workforce, which in turn bolsters the



business community.

One such effort is the Great Promise Partnership, which is "a cooperative education program designed to help students at risk of not graduating complete their high school education while gaining real-world job experience," according to program literature.

"Great Promise is our promise to these kids that if they stay in school, if they

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