

North Georgia News

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Avis Shaw remembers a career of fulfillment

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Avis Shaw spent more than 50 years as a registered nurse in Union County before retiring Sept. 26, 2014, from Union County Nursing Home.

But she almost started her career by moving to Alaska with her husband, Carlton, instead of to Blairsville in 1960.

"We must have been idiots," Avis said with a laugh. "My husband, he was very adventuresome."

Thankfully, prior to the big move, the Shaws came to Union County to visit their friends Ryan and Polly Seawright.

"I want you to go over and see our new hospital, Avis," Mr. Seawright, who was a Methodist preacher in the community, had said then of Union General Hospital.

"He showed me around, and there was Dr. Charles Little and Dr. George Gowder –



Avis Shaw still stays busy even after her September retirement as a registered nurse at Union County Nursing Home. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

of town, and Avis was busier than ever at the hospital.

"When I moved to the hospital here, probably about a year later, the hospital had a terrible time trying to keep afloat," said Avis. "And this was before Medicare and Medicaid, and there was nothing – people didn't have insurance. So, the board decided to pay the staff in silver dollars."

Ben Carr, a local attorney, was on the hospital board, and he presented Shaw with her monthly \$400 minus taxes in silver dollar coins.

"It said to the community, this money comes back to you, because you spent your silver dollars to buy groceries or to get gas or whatever, and I thought that was really neat," Avis said.

Avis was born in Gwinnett County during the Great Depression. She and her family, like many Americans then,

See Avis, 3A

Christmas Parade on tap for Saturday in Blairsville

By Charles Duncan
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Santa Claus surely has Union County on his NORAD radar screen.

The 2014 Union County Christmas Parade will be held Saturday, Dec. 6 at 4 p.m.

The theme this year is "Frozen on the Square" and is sponsored by the Union County Historical Society. The parade route will be the same as 2013 and will start at First Baptist Church.

Children are invited to open the parade at 3:45 by singing "Let It Go" on the Square. After the parade, patrons are urged to stay for Christmas caroling, refreshments and the Annual Tree Lighting ceremony.

Also, the Jolly Old Elf is said to be the guest of honor this weekend in several places throughout Union County.

On Friday and Saturday, an occasion celebrating the holiday season, Kris Kringle Market is a certain stopping point for Santa and his helpers.

Kris Kringle Mountain Market is scheduled for the Union County Farmers Market on Friday, Dec. 5, from 4



Santa Claus

p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturday, Dec. 6, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

More than 75 vendors are to be on hand for the two-day holiday market. Vendors will have produce, artisan crafts and wonderful, edible treats. On Friday night, Santa is scheduled to greet the children. The event also features live music, delicious food and a bonfire with free S'mores.

On Saturday, children can take a free ride around the Market on the Holiday Mini Train.

See Weekend, 2A

Pearl Harbor: A day that lives in infamy

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Dec. 7, Americans will pay tribute to the brave souls that died that day in 1941.

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is Sunday, Dec. 7, in honor of those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice on that "date which will live in infamy."

This year's observance marks the 73rd anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the event that brought the U.S. directly into the fold of World War II.

Towns County resident and World War II veteran Bud Johnson was aboard the USS Rhind, a destroyer, in the Atlantic Ocean when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

"I went in the Navy in 1939, when I was 17 years old, so I had two and a half years in the Navy," said Johnson. "I had spent all my time up until that point in the Atlantic fleet. I was serving on my second destroyer when we got the word that morning, with the time difference over here in the Atlantic, and we were agast at what happened – we couldn't believe it."

Johnson, who was a petty officer third class aboard the USS Rhind, was on watch



The wreckage of the U.S.S. Cassin and U.S.S. Downes on Dec. 7, 1941 following the Japanese Attack at Pearl Harbor. Photo/Courtesy U.S. Navy.

when his ship and his shipmates were on their way back from a stint in Europe, and their ship was due for upkeep and overhaul.

"All we had, really, was radio and news," said Johnson. "Not like we have complete coverage with television and everything today, minute by minute we get up to date. Of

course, we thought it was a drill when everybody heard it. But then they kept coming through and repeating themselves, 'This is no drill.'"

On that day, more than 2,400 Americans died, and the military on the whole suffered extreme losses to its forces – soldiers, ships and airplanes.

"I was not there, but I made a vow, all of us – us sailor

boys and Army people – that we would never let Pearl Harbor be forgotten," said Johnson. "On December the 7th, we would always let it be recognized. We lost a lot of heroes and a lot of good people out there. Army, Navy, Marines, civilians out there, with that surprise attack."

See Pearl, 2A

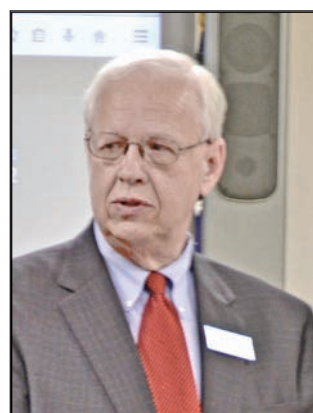
Steppe gets extension; \$15,000 raise from BOE members

By Charles Duncan
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The Union County Board of Education has given Superintendent Gary Steppe a one-year extension and a \$15,000 raise.

Board Chair Gary Davenport said the extension will take Steppe to June 30, 2016.

In addition, the BOE gave Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams the title



Gary Steppe

See Steppe, 2A

CVS robber still on the loose

By Charles Duncan
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Following interviews with Blairsville Police and special agents with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation last week, witnesses who got a good look at the CVS Pharmacy robbery suspect were able to provide enough details for a GBI sketch artist to sketch a picture of the suspect.

The robbery occurred Monday, Nov. 24 around 12:30 p.m., and the suspect escaped on foot. It is believed that he had a vehicle parked at a nearby restaurant and was able to escape via that vehicle.

The robbery happened at CVS Pharmacy at 208 Hwy 515, according to GBI Region 8 Special Agent in Charge Kim Williams.

Williams said the sus-



CVS Robbery Suspect

pect made off with the controlled substance Dilaudid, a pain reliever. Williams released no further details about the suspect or the crime.

Authorities requested anyone with information on the suspect call the GBI at (706) 348-4866 or the Blairsville Police Department at (706) 835-1692 or (706) 439-6038 after business hours.

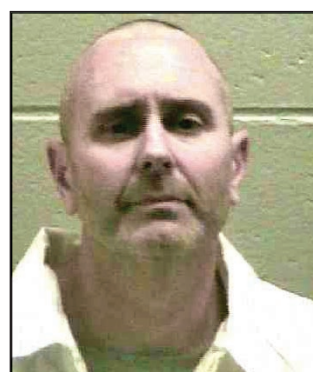
NC man convicted of sex crimes

By Charles Duncan
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A 45-year-old Sylva, NC man has been convicted by a Union County jury of aggravated child molestation, two counts of aggravated sodomy and child molestation from incidents dating back to 1995.

Mikal Snow Mitchell, was found guilty Nov. 20 in Union County Superior Court.

Mitchell was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to 25 years to serve and the rest of his remaining days on probation after his release from state prison, Union County SSgt. Darren Osborn



Mikal Snow Mitchell

said. Mitchell has served time in North Carolina on a statutory rape conviction, Sgt.

See Convicted, 2A

Shoppers find their way to Reece Center

Reece Farm and Heritage Center closes for the season

By Charles Duncan
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Hundreds came to look and shop. The crowd was steady; the rewards were rich.

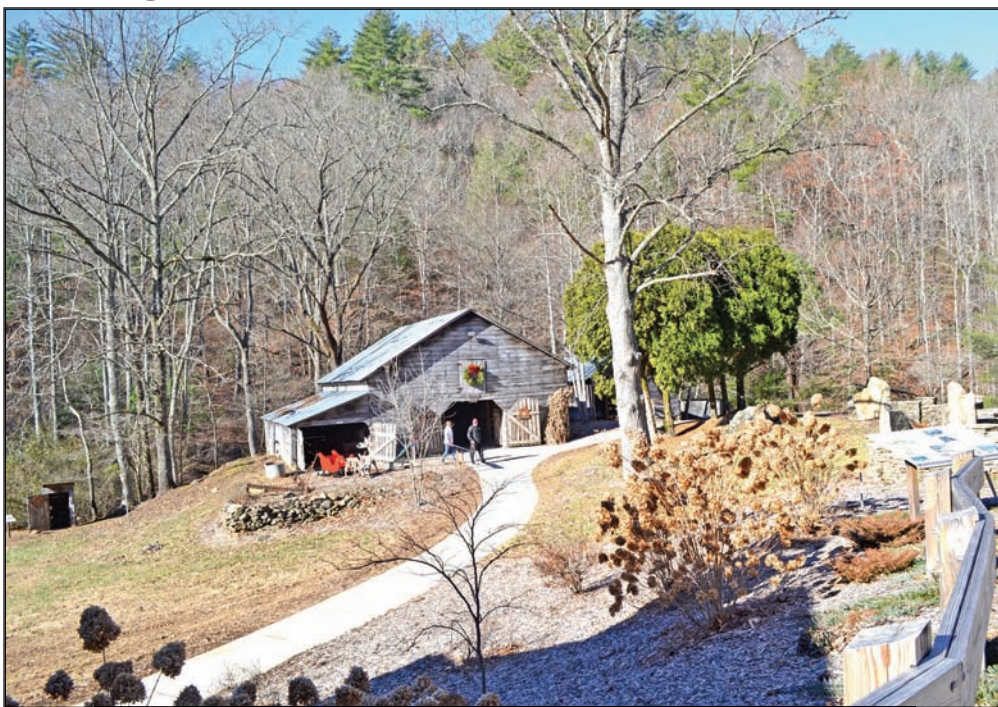
It's the best description of the Third Christmas Open House at the Reece Center on Saturday and Sunday.

Guests were treated to holiday snacks and beverages that included fresh Apple Cider. It was Black Friday at the Reece Center, and customers were obliging to take part in the festivities.

"It was a great weekend," said Reece Society Chair Dr. Jon Kay. "The response to the Center was tremendous. Everybody was impressed with the farm and exhibits."

The Third Christmas Open House brought newcomers, passersby and lots of locals out on Saturday and Sunday.

Scores of people attended the event intent on showcasing one of North Georgia's historic attractions, the literary works and way of life of



Byron Herbert Reece.

The curious came to learn the origins of the words, so eloquent and prolific, that defined the poetry of the Farmer Poet, "Hub" Reece.

Reece, who attended school in rural Union County, was a farmer first, and a self-

made poet second. He read books that would seem strange to locals in those days. The books of choice in Reece's day included manuals on farming and learning how to operate a tractor.

At an early age, Reece had read the Bible and John

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, penned in 1678, books that would often influence his writing. By the age of 15, he was publishing poems in the *North Georgia News*. After high school he attended

See Reece, 3A

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