

Arby's to open Jan. 25



Arby's builder Jim Green and Union County Development Authority Director Mitch Griggs struck up a friendship during construction of the restaurant, which opens Jan. 25 at 10 a.m.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's official – come Jan. 25, the Arby's Restaurant in Blairsville will “Have The Meats” when it opens for drive-thru service and begins selling its famous roast beef sandwiches.

Of course, there's plenty more to eat at Arby's, like the new Market Fresh Wraps and classic Curly Fries, as well as the \$1 Happy Hour for discounted food items midday, so patrons will want to check out the fast-casual selection starting Monday.

The Blairsville location is actually more than a decade in the making, though it came together quickly in recent months thanks to cooperation between the Union County Development Authority, local city and county governments, and corporate development team.

For a little background, Development Authority Director Mitch Griggs first approached Arby's about 12 years ago hoping to woo them to Union County. He was able to get them here ultimately, but not before several promising starts fell through in the intervening years.

The stars aligned last

January, however, when the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority sold a 0.9-acre Haralson Property parcel to GLM Development, which contracted to build the restaurant for lease as an Arby's corporate-run store.

As a new business, Griggs said the addition of Arby's is a win-win for everyone and speaks well for the community that another national brand is willing to locate in Blairsville, Georgia. It also offers more variety to the local restaurant scene, which has plenty of chicken and other options.

And even though the store will be run by Arby's corporate, pretty much all of the staff will be locally based, including several dozen people from nearby communities making all the food people know and love.

“It brings new investment, brings new jobs, brings sales taxes,” Griggs said. “And there's the quality-of-life aspect, as this is something that people will enjoy.”

Facilitating the process was Jim Green with U.S. General Construction, whom GLM contracted to build the restaurant that features a sleek prototype design that's all new to Arby's.

Green spent several months here, with site prep beginning in August and construction in November. He's become so impressed with Union County – from the local Building Department to the City of Blairsville and everyday residents – that he plans to make a second home here.

He and Griggs are excited for the reception they believe the restaurant will receive, especially when guests get to see the warm, welcoming interior that, with the new design, is more upscale than other Arby's Restaurants folks may be used to visiting.

Katie Petrik is an associate manager of marketing for Arby's Restaurant Group, and she said new locations typically feature celebrations at opening. Due to COVID-19, however, there won't be a celebration when the Blairsville Arby's opens at 32 Bob Head Street on Jan. 25.

Still, residents are encouraged to stop in Monday and thereafter, where they will be greeted by friendly local staff members eager to take their orders via drive-thru for the time being – all while wearing masks in the interests of employee and customer safety.

“Come visit the new restaurant and grab lunch or dinner,” Petrik said. “The restaurant will open at 10 a.m. The restaurant employs about 30 team members, and they will be providing delicious experiences to Blairsville.”

Mayor Jim Conley said he would be going down to Arby's soon to snag himself a bite, and he's thankful for the new business making its way to town.

“I'm tickled pink that Arby's is going to open up the 25th of this month,” Conley said. “Quite naturally, I'll have to try out some of their food. They've got a wide enough selection, and I love the Arby's Sandwich.”

DDA Board Chair Paul



Arby's Blairsville will be drive-thru only for the time being, and staff will be wearing masks for COVID-19.

Thompson is also happy about Arby's arrival, as the restaurant inhabits one of the Haralson Property parcels, which the board has been working to sell for development purposes for years now.

“I am glad to see Arby's come into the area, because it does offer us some variety that we haven't had, and we are looking forward to that,” Thompson said. “I commend them on the fact that they got on the job and got it finished in

pretty record time.”

As far as the Downtown Development Authority and City of Blairsville, they gratefully accepted about 200 truckloads of dirt from the Arby's site to shore up the parking area behind City Hall, and moving forward, the city plans to start work soon on paved parking and public restrooms.

Additionally, Griggs has been working on several development projects in the

county, including other national brands that are having an easier time deciding to open stores here after seeing places like Chick-fil-A, LongHorn Steakhouse, and now Arby's successfully doing so also.

For more information on applying for a job at Arby's, which was founded in Ohio in 1964 and is the first nationally franchised sandwich restaurant brand with more than 3,300 locations worldwide, visit <https://careers.arbys.com>.

Coroner ...from Page 1A

to serve Towns County, and I aim to remain the constant person in the Towns County Coroner's Office, as this office has seen turnover in recent years.”

Also sworn in as deputy coroners to assist Tamela were Sarah Brown, returning after having served three years under the former coroner, and newly

hired Ken Nicholson, who previously worked in the jail for over 17 years.

Tamela is committed to determining complete and accurate answers for decedents while compassionately assisting their survivors.

Understanding that her duties as coroner may not be understood, Tamela

aims to be accessible to local citizens and groups, who may reach her at 678-936-1315 or townscountycoroner@gmail.com.

She can also be reached at her family owned and operated Banister-Cooper Funeral Home in Downtown Hiwassee by calling 706-896-2218.

Indictments ...from Page 1A

methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance (benzodiazepine); possession of drug-related objects.

Mark Woodrow Green, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects; failure to maintain lane.

Richard Landon Davis, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of a Schedule II controlled substance; driving without a license.

Michael Wayne McKinney, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; obstruction of an officer.

Levi James Peterson, possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects.

Dianna Lynn Foster, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Elliot Oryan Cothren, driving while license suspended.

Rory Taylorgeer Scott, two counts obstruction of an officer.

Sonia Renee Taylor, trafficking methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; two counts possession of drug-related objects.

Andrew Richard Arndt, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Jordan Wayne Campbell, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Michelle Lynn Edwards, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Duane Alan Stamps, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Jazmine Danelle Whitaker, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Joseph Levi Farist, trafficking methamphetamine; crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Michael Vernon Davis, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of

methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Mark Chester Wright, three counts terroristic threats.

Stephanie Marie Anderson, exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; battery.

Matthew Ryan Duchanois, exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; battery.

Dylan Fred Gray White, burglary in the first degree; four counts home invasion; two counts aggravated assault; aggravated assault, Family Violence; simple battery, Family Violence.

Dylan Scott Chastain, possession of methamphetamine; crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of drug-related objects.

Victor Terez Beverly, possession of a Schedule I substance; possession of a firearm during commission of a felony; driving without a license; failure to maintain brake lights in good working condition.

Alexis Rodriguez, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; driving under the influence; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); reckless driving; improper passing; speeding.

Michael Thomas Patrick, exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; battery, Family Violence; hindering emergency telephone call.

Marlena Ballard Garrett, two counts theft by deception; two counts forgery in the fourth degree; two counts exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; two counts theft by taking.

Owen Jerome Garrett, forgery in the third degree; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; theft by deception; theft by taking.

Teddie Francis Holbrooks Jr., three counts obstruction of an officer; public indecency; criminal trespass; disorderly conduct.

Donna Gail Hall, two counts cruelty to children in the first degree; six counts violation of Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Myron Lee Hall, two counts cruelty to children in the first degree; six counts violation of Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Scottie Ken Wade, aka Scotty Ken Wade, six counts violation of Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Charles Caffus Abernathy III, aggravated child molestation; child molestation; trafficking of persons for sexual servitude.

Christy Marie Beasley, aka Cristy Marie Beasley, three counts burglary in the second degree.

Kevin Dewayne Cornwell, three counts burglary in the second degree.

Brandon Michael McDonald, burglary in the first degree.

Michelle Danielle Singleton, burglary in the first degree.

James Sanders Willimon, burglary in the first degree.

Wallace Anderson, two

counts child molestation; two counts sexual battery against a child under 16.

Cody Stewart Dockery, burglary in the first degree; criminal attempt to commit a misdemeanor.

Christopher Ray Bryson, two counts aggravated child molestation; two counts sodomy; statutory rape.

Calvin Stroud, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; two counts possession of methamphetamine; possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance; two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; driving while license suspended; reckless driving; failure to maintain lane.

Hailey Rae Ann Akins, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Charles Edwin Robinson, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Melinda Ann Christiansen, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of a Schedule II controlled substance; possession of drug-related objects; improper use of central lane.

Joshua Leon Brinson, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of a firearm by convicted felon.

Elizabeth Ann Brinson, aka Elizabeth McEvoy Brinson, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce.

Madison Taylor Brinson, possession of marijuana, less than an ounce.

Tammy Lee Gallaher, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Chaz McKinley Stewart, aggravated battery, Family Violence; aggravated battery; false imprisonment; three counts criminal damage to property in the second degree; battery, Family Violence.

Daniel Lee Keys, aggravated assault; criminal damage to property in the second degree; two counts simple assault; public drunkenness; disorderly conduct.

Joshua Emmett Robertson, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects; driving without a license; defective windshield; theft by taking.

Brandy Michelle Martin, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Bobby Justin Kitchens, criminal damage to property in the second degree.

Melissa Lauren Smith, criminal damage to property in the second degree.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Life after COVID-19 ...from Page 1A

about it. It is very contagious, but it is nowhere near as bad as people have made it out to be.

“I had it a few months ago and I didn't even know that I had it. I ran a fever and had a cough, and I was quarantined for a couple of weeks. It was all nonsense. I felt fine after three days, and I had to stay in my house losing money.

“Look, if you are sick or older, then maybe just be more cautious about this virus. But we shouldn't have to go out of

our way to avoid these people; they can avoid us.”

Bryan Landry was in town from Florida last week, and he wants people to wear a mask and follow guidelines posted by businesses, which have the right to enforce such guidelines as they choose.

“I haven't had a problem with wearing a mask,” Landry said at the Chevron in Hiwassee Jan. 15. “It is just a piece of fabric across your face, and then nobody says anything

to you about it.

“I do a lot of traveling for work, and everywhere I go basically requires a mask, so I don't see a big deal in wearing it. People just don't like being told what to do, and those same people are the ones that are getting sick and are saying that they want to protect others.

“Masks or no masks, businesses are saying that you have to wear them, so why not just wear them? It takes a little bit of effort.”

Heaton ...from Page 1A

At the heart of his case are prescriptions written to three of his many patients, which a jury found him guilty of filling out illegally, or more specifically, “outside the usual course of professional practice or not for a legitimate medical purpose.”

Regarding this either/or standard for illegality, Heaton's attorneys refute the second half of the standard by arguing that this conduct was legal in that each of his patients received medication “for a legitimate medical purpose: chronic pain management.”

In terms of the other element of the jury instructions, this legal team says there is “no clear definition of ‘outside the course of medical practice,’” making the standard “unconstitutionally vague” such that even trial judge Richard W. Story is on record admitting it isn't clear.

“With no definable standard of what it means to prescribe medication ‘outside the scope of medical professional practice,’ Dr. Heaton was given no notice as to whether or not he was violating a rule of professional conduct or committing a federal crime,” his attorneys write.

The appeals document admits that the case against Heaton paints a picture of a man who sometimes flouts

the rules of his profession, but his attorneys point out that breaking the rules of a profession is not necessarily a violation of the law.

“Taken in the light most favorable to the government,” the document reads, “the evidence against Dr. Heaton showed that he was a sloppy doctor who consistently failed to chart his patients' visits.

“He often met with patients after hours and, on two occasions, he had a sexual relationship with a patient while he was prescribing medication – clearly a violation of the rules of medical professionalism.”

But, his attorneys argue, the government failed to prove that his prescribing pain killers to these patients “lacked a legitimate medical purpose,” thereby justifying the reversal of his convictions due to lack of illegality in his actions.

Overall, the appellate brief is 38 pages long and relies on highly specific legal argumentation in making the appeal, much of which appears to hang on the uses of the words “and” and “or” in standards applied in Heaton's case.

The indictment enumerating charges against Heaton, for instance, says his activities were conducted “outside the scope of professional practice and not for a legitimate medical purpose.”

while the jury, for the purposes of reaching a verdict, was instructed to consider whether his conduct was “outside the scope of professional practice or not for a legitimate medical purpose.”

This “and” versus “or” distinction is important, as Heaton's attorneys argue that the second standard is not only “a misstatement of the law” but also overly broad, with the effect of blurring the lines on “what makes a doctor a drug dealer.”

“Cases throughout the country require that the government prove both of the two elements beyond a reasonable doubt,” the legal team writes. “Omitting an element of the offense – stating that ‘outside the usual course of medical practice’ is sufficient to convict the defendant – misled the jury and misstated the law, and Dr. Heaton's convictions must be overturned.”

Ultimately, it seems the jury may have reached a verdict without having to consider if Heaton's conduct was both “outside the scope” and “without legitimate purpose,” which his attorneys believe constitutes serious problems warranting a new trial or the vacating of his convictions.

A hearing date for the appeal had yet to be scheduled by press time Monday.

Wilkinson ...from Page 1A

Prior to being elected State Senator, Wilkinson was a program manager at the Georgia Department of Education, where he oversaw the state's agricultural education programs.

He also worked as the executive secretary for the Georgia Future Farmers of America Association.

“I am truly honored to be chosen to lead North Georgia Technical College,” Wilkinson said. “Technical education is near and dear to my heart, as I have seen how it transforms the lives of students.

“It is my goal to continue

in the footsteps left by Dr. Mark Ivester by providing business and industry with a skilled workforce and by helping more students realize their full potential through postsecondary education.”

In 2017, Sen. Wilkinson was presented the Outstanding Service Award by the Georgia Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association and was later named the Region V national award winner by the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

honored Sen. Wilkinson with an Award of Excellence in 2009.

He is a member of the Georgia Agricultural Education Hall of Fame and was recognized as the Outstanding Member of the National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education in 2006.

A lifelong advocate of CTAE, Wilkinson began his career teaching Agriculture and serving as an FFA advisor in Banks County and Forsyth County public high schools. Wilkinson received his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Masters in Education at the University of Georgia.