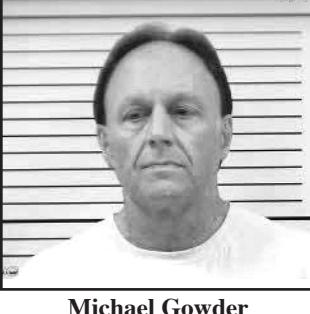


Documents... Page 1A



Michael Gowder

of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, one count of conspiracy; his sister, Virginia Lou Harkins, on two counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, and one count of conspiracy.

Mike Gowder and Dr. Heaton were indicted by a Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five counts of trafficking in opium or heroin, and five counts of obtaining a controlled substance by forgery, according to Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff Derrick Palmer.

Gowder and Dr. Heaton were arrested Wednesday, March 2, Sheriff Palmer said.

Gowder is free on \$500,000 bond; Dr. Heaton's bond was set at \$500,000 also, Sheriff Palmer said.

Both are required to appear at an April 4 hearing in Cherokee County, NC, Superior Court, Sheriff Palmer said.

Both now are no longer associated with Union General Hospital in any capacity.

The board hired Lewis Kelley as the CEO of both Union General Hospital and Chatuge Regional Hospital, said Board Chair Patsy Efird.

Likewise, Dr. David Gowder no longer has any association with Union General Hospital, according to Efird.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said that the investigation remains ongoing, and that he's proud of being able to partner with so many agencies during the course of this continuing investigation.

The nine-month investigation began after Dr. David Gowder was arrested on April 1 in Blue Ridge by the Zell Miller Mountain Drug Task Force for attempting to fill fraudulent prescriptions for oxycodone 50 mg, and oxycodone 60 mg at an Ingles Pharmacy in Fannin County.

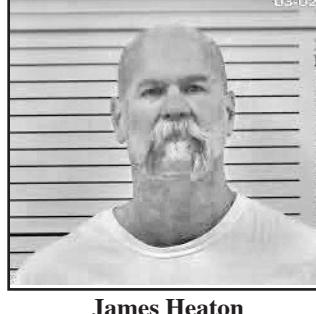
Dr. David Gowder admitted to authorities that he had written fraudulent prescriptions for pain medicine, also admitting that he suffered from a back injury a year prior and eventually became addicted to oxycodone, according to the affidavits.

That arrest led to an in-depth investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff's Office.

A significant part of that investigation included using search warrants at Blairsville Rite Aid, CVS, Ingles Pharmacy, Walmart Pharmacy, and Brasstown Professional Pharmacy, according to the affidavits.

The return from the search of pharmacy records led to the discovery of numerous bogus prescriptions being passed at all of the pharmacies, the affidavits show. The investigation also revealed that Mike Gowder had been getting prescriptions filled. Those prescriptions were for large doses of pain killers.

The affidavits show that Dr. David Gowder wrote prescriptions for a fictitious Albanian missionary named Cathy Bebout. The prescription was for 200 hydrocodone



James Heaton

10 mg pills, and was filled at Brasstown Pharmacy. Dr. David Gowder's sister, Lou Harkins, picked up the prescription, the affidavits show.

The address used for Bebout was 1902 Meeks Road, and investigators learned that that address belonged to Dr. David Gowder.

According to the affidavits, Harkins admitted picking up the prescription. She said she had been asked to pick up the prescription by her brother Dr. David Gowder. She paid \$139.98 for the prescription.

On Aug. 8, 2015, following his Blairsville arrest – his second arrest for passing bogus prescriptions – Dr. David Gowder voluntarily surrendered his DEA registration form, which allowed him to write prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

On Sept. 1, 2015, DEA investigators, Union County Sheriff's Capt. Chad Deyton, and Georgia Composite Medical Board officials interviewed Dr. Heaton regarding the large amount of prescriptions he'd been writing for Mike Gowder, according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton acknowledged that most of the prescriptions he wrote for Mike Gowder were not recorded in Mike Gowder's patient file. Dr. Heaton also prescribed pain medication for Mike Gowder's wife Gail, and his son Blake, according to the affidavits.

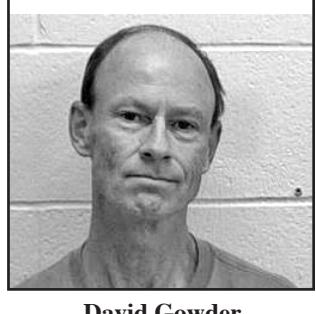
Dr. Heaton told investigators that he knew it looked bad that he didn't have the appropriate required records of prescribing to Mike Gowder, but added that he prescribed to all his other patients "by the book," according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton explained that Mike Gowder suffered from back pain that warranted the prescriptions he issued, and that Mike Gowder often came by his clinic after it was closed to get prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

Dr. Heaton explained to the investigators that Mike Gowder was the CEO of Union General Hospital, and that he had known him for 25 years, so he didn't think it was necessary to document Mike Gowder's visits and prescriptions, according to the affidavits.

Investigators say that from Aug. 14, 2014, to June 18, 2015, Dr. Heaton wrote 20 prescriptions for 150 oxycodone tablets per prescription, and one prescription for 40 oxycodone tablets, for a total of 3,040 doses, or pills. That's an average of 304 doses a month – later to be discovered as 319 doses per month, according to the affidavits.

DEA Diversion Agents attempted to interview Mike Gowder at Union General Hospital on Sept. 1, 2015, regarding numerous oxycodone prescriptions filled in his name that were prescribed by Dr. Heaton. Mike Gowder declined to speak with investigators without speaking to his attorney, according to the affidavits.



David Gowder

DEA Diversion Investigator Jason Allen gave Mike Gowder his card and told him to contact him when he was ready to talk. On Sept. 2, 2015, Allen received an e-mail from Mike Gowder requesting that Allen call him at a number provided. Allen called Mike Gowder and spoke with him for approximately 15 minutes, according to the affidavits.

Mike Gowder told Allen that all of the prescriptions were for a legitimate medical purpose, and that none of the pills had been diverted, meaning sold or given away. He told Allen that he knew that that was a lot of pills, but that he needed all of them for back pain, and that he had never given any to anyone, according to the affidavits.

Allen pointed out that in October 2014, Mike Gowder had filled three prescriptions for what amounted to 490 doses. Mike Gowder admitted filling those prescriptions, but insisted they were legitimate, according to the affidavits.

Allen pointed out that Mike Gowder frequently filled prescriptions in three different states. Mike Gowder told Allen that he frequently travels to Murphy, NC, and Nashville, Tenn., according to the affidavits.

Mike Gowder then told Allen that he had stopped taking opioids; he told Allen he stopped "cold turkey," adding that he had withdrawal symptoms for about a week, and that he was able to stop without taking time off from work, according to the affidavits.

From December 2011 to June 2015, Heaton prescribed 15,170 doses of opioids to Mike Gowder, the affidavits show.

Investigators say Dr. Heaton prescribed multiple prescriptions for the same or similar drugs several times a month. Investigators add that there was a pattern of Mike Gowder filling three prescriptions in three different states on a monthly basis.

Investigators say that Mike Gowder frequently had numerous lethal and toxic amount of opioids.

Investigators say they learned that Dr. Heaton received monthly checks from Union General Hospital for unknown reasons. The checks for Dr. Heaton were either hand delivered by Mike Gowder or Mike's wife, Gail Gowder.

Investigators believe Mike Gowder used Union General Hospital funds to compensate Dr. Heaton for providing illegitimate prescriptions for controlled substances, according to the affidavits.

They also believe that Mike Gowder and Dr. David Gowder conspired to use their positions and authority as administrators and board members of Union General Hospital to prescribe and obtain controlled substances outside the normal course of practice, and without a legitimate medical purpose prescribed and obtained controlled substances using fraudulent prescriptions, according to affidavits.

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This seminar will be held at the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center on Friday, March 25, from 10 AM until noon. The GMRE Center is located three miles south of Blairsville, on Hwy 19/129. No pre-registration is necessary; however, seating is limited to the first 100 in attendance.

This seminar is sponsored by the Community Council. Since 2004, more than 8,500 adults have benefited from these seminars. The operating budget of the Community Council is funded by gifts from friends through an annual campaign. If you would like to receive seminar notices by email, send your online request, name and phone number to: gmrec@uga.edu. For questions about this seminar, call 706-745-2655. (NMar23Z11CA)

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Two more communities are Firewise

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, March 15, The Towns County Fire Coalition met to present certifications to communities that have become "Firewise."

The Firewise moniker is given to communities that have taken steps to prepare for a wildfire threat.

Some coalition members who ordinarily attend the meetings were away on business or personal matters. Those who did come represented a cross-section of those interested in protecting their community from fire.

"We have about six citizens of Towns County and then some representatives of all of the various agencies of Towns County, including the fire department, gathered with one purpose in mind. And that is that, as a citizens group, we do what we can to educate the citizens in our county as to what being Firewise is, in our neighborhood and in our home," said Coalition President Marsha Elliot.

"That's the whole purpose of the Firewise coalition, to provide education and support to communities in the hopes that those communities in turn will do the necessary things to achieve the status of being nationally recognized as a Firewise community," she said.

Representatives of two communities were present to accept their certifications.

"We have two communities today, which now makes us a total of 20 in the county that are certified nationally as Firewise communities, and so we wanted to present them with their official signs today and so use it as an opportunity to get communities who are on the fringes of becoming Firewise," said Elliot.

Representatives of two communities were present to accept their certifications.

"We have 40 lots in our neighborhood and we have about 20 residents. We started in 2008 to have residents in the community, and it's up against a mountain, and there's trees all around us, and we want to make sure, if and when the fire does hit us, for whatever reason, then we won't suffer



At the regularly scheduled meeting on March 15, Towns County Fire Coalition presented Bell Creek Estates with an official Firewise sign.

"According to some of the statistics, there are as many as 195 communities in the county."

The definition of a community, I think, is like three or more houses that are gathered together, so this definition of a community is very broad. But there are 195 communities in Towns County. But soon we're going to be up to hopefully 25 of those larger communities. Having gone through the steps that it takes to submit all the paperwork to be Firewise communities," she said.

Jim Roberts, president of the Bell Creek Homeowners Association, accepted the Firewise sign as acknowledgment that his community has become Firewise.

Michael Courey accepted for Ridgeview Mountain community.

"We have 40 lots in our neighborhood and we have about 20 residents. We started in 2008 to have residents in the community, and it's up against a mountain, and there's trees all around us, and we want to make sure, if and when the fire does hit us, for whatever reason, then we won't suffer

the consequences of lost homes," Courey explained.

Becoming Firewise is only step one for these communities. Next on the agenda is to become Ready, Set, Go! certified. The idea is to help residents be Ready with preparedness understanding, be Set with situational awareness when fire threatens, and to Go acting early when a fire starts.

"Our focus this year is to take these existing communities and bring them up to the next level which is a program called – Ready, Set, Go! Firewise is a program that you're looking at the exterior around your house and your neighborhood and identifying those factors within your community that might be hazardous should there be a fire. So the next level is, after we've taken care of the outside and you've taken care of the community needs, and then let's look inside. Do we have smoke detectors? Do we have a plan, should there be an emergency? That's the component called Ready, Set, Go!, and that's what we're going to be offering this year to the existing Firewise communities," said Elliot.

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who researched the Spanish Civil War. "I really appreciate Dr. Stearns, and the History Department, for giving us the opportunity to participate in the conference."

Bridges analyzed Ernest Hemingway's novel "For

Whom the Bell Tolls," while

Googer researched the 1943 film adaptation of the same novel.

"Participating in the conference was a wonderful experience," said Googer.

"Not only was I able to research and produce work that I was interested in, but I also gained valuable practice in collaborating with others to form a cohesive panel. I am thankful for this opportunity and all that I learned; I know this experience will go on to benefit my work in graduate school and my future career as an educator."

Scholars from across disciplines were encouraged to submit proposals that explored the aftermath theme with a particular focus on global reactions to the many conflicts of the 20th and 21st Centuries and how the world responded.

For the one-day conference, YHC students joined master's and Ph.D. candidates from Clemson University, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, Morgan State University, University of Buffalo, University of West Georgia, Yerevan State University and East Tennessee State University.

"It was a wonderful chance to see exactly how a



Four Young Harris College students recently presented at the graduate conference "Aftermath: European Reactions to War, Genocide and Catastrophe in the 20th Century" at Clemson University.

"I was able to discuss Picasso's 'Guernica' and art in general with a history professor who was in charge of moderating our panel," said Bennett. "Overall, the experience was insightful and prepared us for presentations in future academic settings."

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On Saint Patrick's Day, Thursday, March 17, three and one half tables

played a Howell movement

at All Saints Lutheran Church

in