

# Patrick...from Page 1A

has already applied to and been accepted by Kennesaw State University and the Georgia Institute of Technology, but he has not made a decision on where he wants to go.

"I want to look into scholarships and costs before I make my decision," said Patrick.

Patrick initially wanted to pursue biomedical engineering, where he would be involved with advanced prosthetics or genetic sequencing, but he found that his true passion for the field lie in its computer science components.

So, why did Patrick pick Dr. Hale as his STAR teacher?

"She has had a profound impact on my life and my education," said Patrick. "The qualities she's exemplified is what I strive to be, with things like work ethic.

"I remember when I had her in eighth grade for English, she was teaching both eighth and ninth grade curriculum, working a second job as a waitress, raising her granddaughter, and getting her doctorate at the same time. All that left an impression on me, and I want to work hard like that."

Dr. Hale has taught in Union County for 14 years and has been an instructor for 34 years, though she has not always been an English teacher.

"I love Union County," said Dr. Hale. "I love the clientele of students, they're a pleasure to work with, and they are incredible young people that, once you give them a spark, they are going to go with it, as Matthew did.

"I also had a teacher who

impacted me when I was in middle school. I grew up in a foster home, and she basically told me that I was able to do anything I wanted to in life, and that I wasn't confined to anything. I strive to make sure that each and every student, regardless of their home and background, can do anything they want to."

Dr. Hale took her selection as STAR Teacher as an honor, and she was honored to have so impacted a student like Patrick during their time at the Middle School.

"Matthew has a strong work ethic and is always striving for perfection," said Dr. Hale. "He always wants to find what's wrong and how to make it better, and he accepts criticism, which is huge in the path to becoming mature."

Added Dr. Hale, "I see

great things for him. He's going to make an impact not only on our area here, but perhaps the state, and perhaps the whole country with his abilities and

his computer science love."

Patrick and other students will be honored by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce for

their achievements in high school on Thursday, Feb. 21, during the annual Evening with the STARS event.

# Mark Rogers...from Page 1A

times you find yourself having to wait one to two years to even get a call from these guys," said Rogers. "And I just got to thinking that, you know, I ought to try (making) my own.

"Believe it or not, the duck call making community is a bunch of good guys, and they're willing to help you get started. But it took me about three years to come up with the sound that I was looking for."

As it turned out, the sound he was looking for was a World Championship sound, as Rogers went on to win the 2018 Waterfowl Call Makers Championship held in Easton, Maryland, last November.

Rogers said he competed against hundreds of contestants from all over the world, and he now makes his award-winning duck calls to order.

They are handmade in the color and material of each customer's choice, and Rogers takes orders through his "M.R. Calls" Facebook page.

Rogers has been into duck hunting since he was a kid, and he credits Dale Stanley and Jeff Underwood, both of Blairsville, as being "the first ones that ever took me duck hunting, and that was in North Dakota."

"I want to thank my mom and dad for giving me the drive to want to be better," he said of Terry and Jerri Rogers of Blairsville.

He also wanted to give a shoutout to his uncle Milton Bradley, "who goes with me to Arkansas to duck hunt whenever he can."

The Waterfowl Call Makers contest was held at the Waterfowl Festival, which hosts the World Waterfowl Calling Championship every year just before Thanksgiving.

The event hosts junior and senior classes of duck and goose calling, including team calling, where contestants



Mark Rogers with his award for winning the 2018 Waterfowl Call Makers Championship.

strut around on stage while performing waterfowl calls.

Videos of the contests can be found online at [www.waterfowlfestival.org](http://www.waterfowlfestival.org), where there's a link to the Facebook page.

A wealth of information on waterfowl can be found at [www.DeltaWaterfowl.org](http://www.DeltaWaterfowl.org).

"Delta Waterfowl

Foundation is The Duck Hunters Organization, a leading conservation group working to produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowling in North America," according to the website.

Delta has even coined the term "duckology," which is the study of ducks, or waterfowl, and their habitats.

# EMC...from Page 1A

Based on the updated cost of service study, Nelms said in January that the fixed charge portion of each customer's bill should actually be in the \$38 to \$40 a month range, with offsetting adjustments to the energy charge.

Furthermore, Nelms stressed that moving the customer charge in that direction – which would take place over several years and not all at once – was necessary to keep the EMC financially sound.

Excluding the cost of power, fixed costs make up 76 percent of all costs associated with operating the EMC, according to Nelms.

For decades, many of the fixed costs associated with running the EMC have been built into the per kilowatt-hour rate, meaning the EMC has historically relied upon power sales to meet those costs.

Due to changing consumer habits and higher adoption of energy efficient technologies in homes, however, power sales have steadily declined in recent years, even though fixed costs for things like power poles, powerlines, transformers, etc., have continued to increase.

In light of persistent lower residential power usage, Nelms has argued that, in order to maintain operations for a growing EMC, the board needs to look at redesigning the EMC's power rate to better cover fixed costs.

This means moving the needle on the customer charge, which would require the EMC to increasingly shift fixed costs from the kWh side of member bills to the customer charge over time, according to Nelms.

Another concern in the member's letter to the editor was how increasing the customer charge might adversely affect members with low and fixed incomes.

"I do not believe there is a strong correlation between income levels and energy usage," said Nelms in the meeting. "In fact, lower income users often reside in homes that are less energy efficient."

According to a review of recent payments to the EMC via charitable organizations, Nelms said most households receiving help experienced power bills "typically in the \$200 to \$300 range."

Bills in that range demonstrate that power usage among families struggling to pay their bills is well above average, said Nelms, so that



Carson Chambers, Danny Reagan and Kara Dudley in front of the White House during the 2018 Washington Youth Tour.

Photo by Byron McCombs

a rate redesign would likely lower the cost of these families' power bills.

Finally, Nelms pointed out that the member was correct in his letter to the editor concerning the customer charge increasing from \$14.69 in 2012 to \$21.37 in 2018, though he clarified that this was largely due to increases passed on by TVA and not the EMC.

"The rest of the story is, our cost for 1,000 kWh in 2012 was \$123.61 and in 2018 was \$128.84," said Nelms. "That is a price increase of 4.23 percent during that six-year period."

"This can be attributed to TVA increases during that time, which were passed through to our members. These are not BRMEMC rate increases. An additional positive point is we are \$2.24 less than Georgia Power at the 1,000 kWh usage level."

Board President Ray Cook asked if Nelms would prepare some customer charge comparison charts to better demonstrate to the membership how increasing the customer charge to more accurately reflect fixed costs could benefit many members by reducing kWh charges, especially in cold and hot months.

Also in the meeting, the EMC Board welcomed three local youths who attended the 2018 Washington Youth Tour – with the EMC's Byron McCombs as chaperone – last summer through the EMC: Carson Chambers of Union County High, Danny Reagan of Towns County High, and Kara Dudley of Clay County (North Carolina) High.

The Washington Youth Tour is a weeklong adventure sponsored by local EMCs across the state in which more

than a hundred Georgia high school students travel to the nation's capital to partake in leadership development, civic engagement and community service.

For her part, Chambers said she had been to D.C. several times before, but that this time surpassed all of her other visits there. Overall, she greatly appreciated the freedom to share her ideas with others on the trip, and she called the entire experience "life changing."

Reagan said that the trip forced everyone out of their comfort zones, which helped him to make many new friends. In fact, he said he was amazed at the number of friends he had made, many of whom he still speaks with on a daily basis.

Dudley loved meeting with lawmakers and sitting in to watch the day-to-day activities of Congress. She also enjoyed the endless history on display in D.C., and thanks to the trip, she has changed her career interests following high school from biomedical sciences to political science.

# Stephens Lodge yard sale

Inside yard sale on February 23, 2019, at Stephens Masonic Lodge #414 located on Hwy. 66 in Young Harris, GA from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Tables are for rent for \$10 per table for anyone interested in participating in the yard sale. Please contact Melvin Silvey 678-429-0610 if you are interested. Tables are on a first come, first serve basis and as of now 6 remain.

All table rent is for our scholarship fund for deserving Towns and Union County High School seniors. NTFeb20.F31SH