

# Schools Reopening...from Page 1A

will be finalized before the July meeting, the board and Superintendent John Hill looked at closing the school at least one extra day a month for cleaning and sterilization.

To minimize the number of missed school days, the board and Assistant Superintendent David Murphy examined the idea of using some Fridays and Mondays as online learning days to allow extra time to clean the facilities.

Furthermore, the week of Thanksgiving is also being mulled over for an additional online day, Murphy said.

"We want to propose some calendar changes, but we don't want to lose any student days," Murphy said. "They've lost enough time as it is, and we don't want to lose any teacher days."

"Things like possibly (using) the week of Thanksgiving by turning the days prior to the break into online learning days.

"If you recall, every month, we have a long weekend built in for different things, so if we use the day before (the extended weekend) as an online learning day or a teacher workday, that allows us a long weekend to re-sanitize the buildings in a deep-clean fashion.

"The governor's orders keep changing, and there is the possibility of a (COVID-19) resurgence, so we would like to wait until July when we'll have more information to review and give you better options."

In other custodial news, Facilities Director Mike Patton is tossing around additional concepts to keep Union County Schools on the cutting edge of

the sanitary sciences. According to Patton, his department is studying the use of mobile UV lighting in classrooms and its effectiveness in air filtration and circulation.

Patton also remarked that, with the early release of students, his staff has been able to get a head start on building cleanliness, maintenance and sanitation without hiring outside contractors.

Hill added that Union County would keep the online classroom option available this fall for parents and students with lingering health and safety concerns.

Moreover, the extra time has allowed Patton and staff to complete all of the E-SPLOST projects on-time and under budget.

On the financial front, Union County was one of 23 districts pegged for the second round of Literacy for Learning, Living, and Leading in Georgia grants in the amount of \$3.2 million over five years for use in literacy programs, e.g., textbooks, novels, computers, Lexile reading tools, etc.

Hill notified the board that Union County was in the running, but no decision would come until later in the week. On Thursday, however, State School Superintendent Richard Woods announced that Union County was among the districts chosen.

"School districts selected for the first round of L4GA funding made great strides in student literacy learning," Woods said via email. "I'm eager to see the progress made by our new grant recipients in the coming years."

"Making sure students

are reading on grade level remains mission-critical, top priority work for the Georgia Department of Education, and we continue to seek all possible opportunities to support that work at the school and district level."

Hill provided more positive news, offering high praise for the School Nutrition staff, the School Police Department and everyone participating in the meal delivery program that has been responsible for providing local students with more than 130,000 meals since mid-March. According to Hill, once the board can resume regular meetings without social distancing, he plans on recognizing everyone involved in the school meal program.

"We're going to have to hold that meeting in the Fine Arts Center, I'm just telling you," Hill said. "(Everyone) went so far above-and-beyond their eight-hour days. (For some), their day didn't stop until 10 or 11 at night."

In still more good news from Hill, the UCHS Class of 2020's graduation exercises were a hit with everyone, according to recent input.

"I've had so many people tell us that, 'I don't want to go sit in the sun for four hours again,'" Hill said, relaying comments from the families of outgoing seniors. "I got to sit there with my kid, we got to eat pizza, we got to have fun. I got to go to the Fine Arts Center and get right up front to watch my son or daughter get their diploma."

As sports resume across Georgia, the BOE, Hill and Union County High School Principal C.T. Hussion announced the in-house hiring of Mandy Hunter

as Union County Schools Athletic Director following the resignation of Banks Bitterman, who stepped down for family and personal reasons after one year.

For the complete story on Hunter, see this week's Sports Section.

In other items on the agenda, the board approved

a renewal of contracts with Towns County for Alternative Education Services and Union County Family Connection. Also, the board accepted a spending resolution for July and August as they await the upcoming Georgia Department of Education spending cuts before approving a new budget.

The board will be allowed to spend one-twelfth of the FY20 budget per month, prompting a reply from Hill to remain frugal during that period.

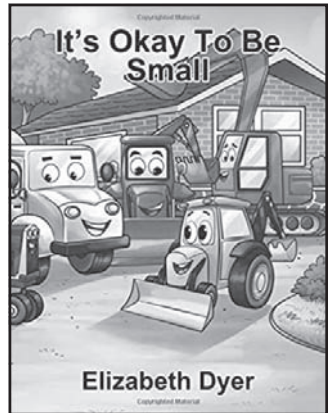
"With the uncertainty of the state budget cuts heading our way, our goal during this time is to be as lean as possible and keep our expenditures as low as possible," he said.

## Blairsville residents book, "It's Okay to Be Small", nominated for Global Award

"It's Okay to Be Small" written by Blairsville, GA resident, Elizabeth Dyer has been nominated for a 2020 Author Academy Award, an honor bestowed for literary merit and publishing excellence in the writing and publishing industry.

"It's Okay to Be Small" is up for an award in the Children's and Middle Grade Books category, which tells of the story of Little Bobby the Backhoe who must learn to love himself and see his own personal value. He must challenge his beliefs on what it means to be important in life in order to see himself in a positive light.

"Hundreds of books from authors throughout the world are up for an Author Academy Award," said Kary



Oberbrunner, founder of Author Academy Awards. "Our goal is to help further connect this global community of authors, maintain excellence and integrity of the book publishing industry, and raise awareness that the stories being told and the authors who write them

are worth our attention."

Authors of all kinds - indie, traditional, or collaborative published - are being considered for the award in one of sixteen categories. Entries are being reviewed and evaluated on popular vote, social contribution, and overall presentation by the Academy's voting membership comprised of best-selling authors, literary agents and industry leaders.

If interested in supporting Elizabeth Dyer and participating in the popular vote portion of the award evaluation, go to <http://authoracademyawards.com> and click on the "Vote for 2020" section. Once there, click through to the Children's and Middle Grade Books category (page 3), then find and click on "It's Okay to Be Small".

## Rotary In Motion

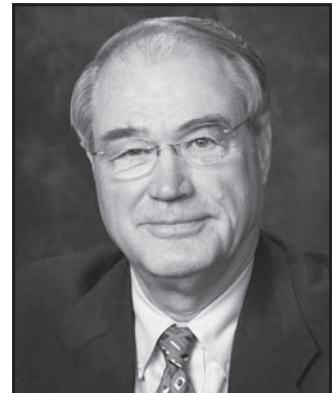
### Gene Windham accepts Top Rotary Honor

Members of the Union County Rotary Club who were attending the computer-generated "District Conference Virtual" on Saturday evening, June 13, got a very pleasant surprise.

Their own Gene Windham, long-time local entrepreneur, hobby farmer and Rotarian was presented with the "Rotary International Service Above Self Award." This annual award recognizes just a handful of the organization's 1.2 million members who demonstrate their commitment to helping others by volunteer-

ing their time and talents with exemplary humanitarian service, in any form and at any level, with an emphasis on personal volunteer efforts and active involvement in helping others through Rotary.

Gene's Rotary career began in 1986 when he was invited to join the Savannah Georgia South Rotary Club. Since then he has been a member of the St. Petersburg Florida Rotary Club and the Union County Georgia Rotary Club, his current home club. Gene was District Governor of Rotary 6910 in 2010-2011, he



Gene Windham

has been District Vice Chair of the Caribbean Partnership and served as Assistant District Governor twice. He is the a past district chair of the Rotary Leadership Institute and Rotary Disaster Relief, and for two record breaking years he chaired CART (Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust). Since 2019 he has been co-chair of Rotary's Peach State PETS (President Elect Training Seminar). Gene is a member of the Paul Harris Society and is a multiple Paul Harris Fellow. Current District Governor, Don Martin, who proposed Gene for the award described him as a "friend, mentor and leader with a servant's heart."

Gene is an Elder and Bible Study Leader in his church and a long-time member and Vice Chair of the Union County Economic Development Authority.

Gene's wife, Denise is also a Rotarian, a Past Club President, a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and they are enthusiastic members of the Rotary International Wine Appreciation Fellowship. They have a daughter, granddaughter and grandson that they don't get to see nearly often enough. Gene and Denise have hiked the Appalachian Trail through Georgia. They breed and show dogs and raise other critters on their mini farm in the Blairsville.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about Rotary, it has never been easier. For the next several months, the Rotary Club of Union County is meeting on-line via Zoom every other Thursday at Noon. For an invitation to a meeting contact Harvey at (706) 379-3905.