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Schools celebrate No. 1 RESA ranking; Deyton talks near miss

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill congratulated school principals and the Board of Education in their Nov. 17 regular meeting, sharing news of their Pioneer RESA for graduation rates. "I wanted to bring to everyone's attention that our Pioneer RESA ranking was released last week," Hill said, "and in the 2020 four-year graduation rate, which includes all students in the Union County School District, general education and special education, we were ranked No. 1 at 98.5%." "Mrs. (Carol) Knight and Mr. (C.T.) Hussion, you are both to be applauded as high school principals. Woody Gap has their high school graduates and Union County has their

graduates. "This is a culmination from... primary school teachers, elementary school teachers, middle school teachers through your high school staff." In the work session, School Police Chief Chad Deyton spoke about a close call concerning a student boarding a bus and an oncoming vehicle. "At 6:34 this morning, on the Murphy Highway route, (the) bus had stopped to pick up a child at a residence along 129," Deyton said. "(We) reviewed the video, and it is disturbing, real disturbing. "(The bus driver) clearly puts his reds out, and this car is approaching; you can clearly see the headlights, and of course it is still dark. This car... is 200 to 300 yards down the road and is approaching and not slowing down. "The kid is already started from the house, and the



Union County Schools are deserving of congratulations after having earned the No. 1 graduation rate in the Pioneer RESA. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

UCFD 1st Lt. David Burnette remembered for 'vital leadership'

By Shawn Jarrard
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Longtime Union County Fire 1st Lt. David Burnette died Friday, Nov. 20, following a brief illness. Burnette, 70, was the volunteer lieutenant in command of the Fire Department's District 2, which included Jones Creek Station 2, Pat Colwell Station 6 and Mulkey Gap Station 9. He served the public for nearly two decades as a volunteer and part-time firefighter. The Fire Department said on Facebook Saturday that he was "a dedicated firefighter that he was a dedicated vital leadership over his many years." Fire Chief David Dyer said that the entire Union County Fire Department family was deeply saddened by Burnette's passing. "David had been with the department for 18 years and served as firefighter, first responder and officer over stations 2, 6 and 9," Dyer said. "Everyone in the department could always depend on him responding. "He was extremely dedicated to the department and

the citizens of Union County. David provided leadership to his firefighters, district and entire department. "Many of the advancements seen in the fire department today are the result of his actions. He will be missed. Our prayers and deepest sympathies go out to the family during this difficult time." As the leader of District 2, Burnette was always thankful for the community, remarking after community donations enabled him to purchase eight new life-saving automated external defibrillators in May 2018: "It's with their support that we are able to buy new equipment or get updated equipment for our stations and fire personnel. If it wasn't for that, we wouldn't have the equipment that we've got." According to his obituary, Burnette passed Friday at Piedmont Athens Regional Hospital. A Union County High School Class of 1968 graduate, Burnette attended Truett McConnell College and Brenau University. He served in Vietnam with



David Burnette
the United States Marine Corps, earning a Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and the National Defense Medal. After serving in the military, Burnette became a law enforcement officer with the U.S. Forest Service. He also worked part time at Union County Fire Station 1, and as a volunteer at District 2, where he led until the time of his passing. Burnette was an ordained Deacon at Philadelphia Baptist See Burnette, Page 2A

E-911, Union General team up to provide Telephone CPR

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County E-911 rolled out a new service Friday, Nov. 20, with Telephone CPR, a tried-and-true CPR instruction delivery method that will undoubtedly save lives moving forward. Historically, 911 dispatchers could not offer CPR guidance for liability reasons. Now, the necessary protocols are in place for dispatchers to offer people "just-in-time" training to help them possibly save a life. All E-911 dispatchers have been trained and certified to talk callers through the steps of providing Hands-Only CPR on potential cardiac victims while awaiting emergency medical services. Such measures have been shown to dramatically increase chances of surviving cardiac arrest. "Each year, more than 350,000 EMS-assessed out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the United States," according to

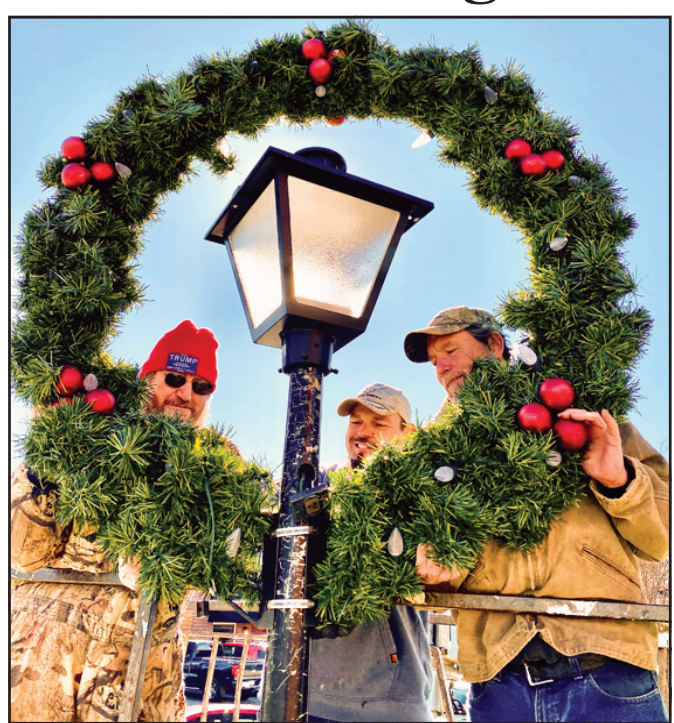


Alycia Blanchard practices CPR on a training mannequin at Fire Station 1 last week. Blanchard is the wife of Fire Lt. Justin Blanchard. Photo/Submitted

Blairsville decorates downtown with annual Christmas lights

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Just in time for the winter holiday season, the City of Blairsville has decided to put up its yearly Christmas decorations and lights to get the city in a festive mood. Mayor Jim Conley has been involved with the project since the '90s and has worked each year to ensure the decorations spread joy throughout the city. "This is something we do every year," Conley said. "Not only on the square but on the streets, like Young Harris Street and Blue Ridge and Cleveland Street. This is nothing new. "Our maintenance staff is the one who puts them up, and Darren Harper with DDA does a lot of extra decorations on the square, like that old Ford pickup that is up there now." The mayor believes the lights play an important role



Bruce Nichols, Shane Hill and Patrick Stancil of the Blairsville Maintenance Department put up Christmas decorations around town last week. Photo by Darren Harper

Hawkins outlines role as county purchasing agent

By Shawn Jarrard
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Perhaps one of the most overlooked departments in local government is purchasing, which in Union County is headed up by Pam Hawkins. A main function of government is providing services for the public in exchange for tax dollars, and Hawkins plays a vital role in helping the county find companies that can fulfill the needs of local departments in providing these public services. Examples of offices that provide public services include the Sheriff's Office, which takes care of local law enforcement needs, and the Commissioner's Office, which oversees the efforts of the Fire Department, Road Department, Recreation Department, Maintenance and more. As county purchasing

agent, Hawkins assists all county departments and elected officials with acquiring quality goods and services "that are in the best interest of all employees and taxpayers." "We rely on each elected official and department head to make regular purchases on their own," Hawkins said, "and they follow their budget through the year for making purchases for their offices. "The state of Georgia has a method of getting 'statewide contract pricing' on many things for state offices and county governments to take advantage of. For example, we have statewide contract pricing with Office Depot so they can get their office supplies at the best price." Items available via statewide contract pricing include everything from patrol cars and lawn mowers to furniture and computer equipment. "When the Sheriff's



Pam Hawkins
Office needs cars, they gather the pricing and info from dealerships, then they will get with us - usually County Manager Larry Garrett, Commissioner Lamar Paris and myself - to discuss how and when the purchases will happen and look at budget info. "The process is the same with the Fire Department, Road Department and Recreation See Hawkins, Page 2A

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