

D.A.R.E. ...from Page 1A

program, before Superintendent John Hill shared his thoughts on the day.

"I'm thankful that we live in Blairsville, Georgia, and I'm so thankful that you children are students in our school system," said Hill. "The future is very bright, like Commissioner Paris talked about.

"You guys, in a few

years – it doesn't seem like it's possible – you're going to be running the show. You're going to be doctors, lawyers, policemen, firefighters, teachers, nurses. You guys are our future, and you are the most important thing that we have in this community."

After the majority of the program, a random drawing

took place to give the kids a chance to win free movies, bowling and Walmart gift cards.

Sponsors for the event included: Chick-fil-A, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Ingles, Total Recovery, Pat's Hallmark, Galaxy Bowling, Walmart, Blairsville Cinema, Bank OZK, Sothern Bank & Trust, Panel Built and United Community Bank.

These sponsors provided awards for the event and supported the students as they worked through the D.A.R.E. program.



The Union County Schools Police Department is comprised of Jeff McConnell, Keith Lockwood, Ginger Carey, Chad Berry and Chief Chad Deyton. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Weather ...from Page 1A

predicted between 2.5 to 3 inches of snow and significant ice accumulations across much of Northeast Georgia.

Fortunately, by Sunday morning, the weather service had declared that "the threat for heavy mixed precipitation has ended," though the Winter Storm Warning remained in effect, at that point calling for the possibility of light accumulations of sleet and/or snow.

As always, residents were better prepared thanks to the winter weather warnings, and even though the storm was nowhere near as severe as it could have been, all county first responders were prepared to take on the winter weather.

From the Road Department to the Fire Department, from law

enforcement and 911 dispatch to crews with the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, first responders knew their jobs and remained at the ready to be called on for help at a moment's notice.

Of course, bad – and worse – weather will strike again, likely in the coming months, and depending on the size of the storm and the extent of the damage, first responders may have a delayed response reaching people's homes.

That's why it is important for people to personally prepare themselves for storms when the weather is fine or at the onset of a storm alert.

The website www.Ready.gov is an excellent resource for emergency disaster preparedness, as it takes into account all kinds of disasters, including extreme winter weather.

"Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning and heart attacks from overexertion," according to Ready.gov. "Winter storms and blizzards can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice and high winds.

"A winter storm can last a few hours or several days; knock out heat, power and communication services; and place older adults, young children and sick individuals at greater risk."

When it comes to being

under a Winter Storm Warning, as happened over the weekend, Ready.gov advises people to do the following:

Find shelter right away, and stay off roads, stay indoors and dress warmly; prepare for power outages, and use generators outside only and away from windows; listen for emergency information and alerts; look for signs of hypothermia and frostbite; and check on neighbors.

The Ready.gov site also teaches people how to build and maintain a basic disaster supplies kit for at least three full days of self-sufficiency, with recommendations such as one gallon of water per person per day, for both drinking and sanitation.

Other items people should build into a basic disaster supplies kit include non-perishable foods to last at least three days, a battery powered or hand-crank radio, a flashlight, a first-aid kit, extra batteries, prescription medications, blankets and more.

Ready.gov takes a deep dive into emergency preparedness, empowering people via a thorough breakdown of how to really dig in and use all resources fully.

People can also learn how to prepare, or winterize, their homes for frigid conditions, and the website offers tips on

keeping safe when heating homes with alternative heating sources, such as gas and firewood.

In addition to winterizing vehicles, i.e. checking all fluid levels and having a mechanic certify that cars are good to go, Ready.gov recommends people create an extra emergency kit with car-specific items.

"In case you are stranded, keep an emergency supply kit in your car with the addition of these automobile extras: jumper cables, flares or reflective triangle, ice scraper, car cellphone charger, blanket, map, (and) cat litter or sand for better tire traction," per the website.

Residents needing to find a local shelter to ride out a storm and/or its aftermath can find one by texting the word "Shelter" and the local ZIP code to 43362, such as "Shelter 30512" or "Shelter 30546."

Check in with Facebook to the first responder agencies in the area, which are good about updating residents concerning what's going on in their communities, especially during weather events.

For tons more information on winter safety and other types of emergency preparedness, please visit Ready.gov and carefully study the life-saving information therein.

Election ...from Page 1A

defeat of Democratic challenger Lindy Miller for the District 3 post on the Georgia Public Service Commission.

Eaton won 753,714 votes (51.83 percent) to Miller's 700,416 votes (48.17 percent) statewide, while here in Union County, Eaton earned 4,154 votes (78.63 percent) to Miller's 1,129 votes (21.37 percent).

With just 22.79 percent of registered Georgia voters showing up to vote in the runoff election, the statewide turnout was down quite a bit from the Nov. 6 General Election, which garnered 61.44 percent voter turnout.

Runoff turnout fared better locally but was still down from Nov. 6 voting, with only 31.96 percent of registered Union County voters showing up at the polls on Dec. 4 as compared to 66.92 percent in the General Election.

As previously reported, Republican Brian Kemp will be the next governor of Georgia, after Democrat Stacey Abrams ended her bid in the gubernatorial race on Friday, Nov. 16.

The drawn-out governor's race was a contentious one, involving close vote margins and interventions by a couple of U.S. District Judges to ensure every vote counted.

In the end, Abrams acknowledged that she didn't have the votes to continue her challenge of Kemp, the majority vote getter.

Kemp's final margin of victory was about 55,000 votes, or 50.22 percent of the statewide vote to Abrams' 48.83 percent.

Robyn Crittenden, former commissioner of the Georgia Department of Human Services, is serving out the remainder of Kemp's term as Secretary of State.

Crittenden oversaw the runoff election after being appointed by Gov. Nathan Deal on Nov. 8 following Kemp's resignation from his position as Secretary of State.

Also resulting from Nov. 6 voting, Union County voters approved the SPLOST V ballot referendum in the 2018 General Election, meaning that the 1-cent countywide sales tax that's been in place since 1997 will continue through March 2027.

The measure passed with 7,153 YES votes to 4,167 NO votes, giving it a 63.19 percent margin of victory.

A SPLOST, or Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, is a 1-cent sales tax that is collected by counties for up to six years to fund county and city capital outlay projects such as roadwork, public safety equipment, infrastructure, etc.

The total sales tax in Union County is 7 cents on

the dollar, which includes a penny for current SPLOST IV collections.

Since the county is already collecting SPLOST money, the sales tax rate within the county will simply stay the same at 7 percent when SPLOST IV expires and SPLOST V begins in April 2021.

SPLOST V is expected to collect \$24 million over its six-year collection period, just like SPLOST IV.