

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Hill named superintendent sole finalist in BOE meeting

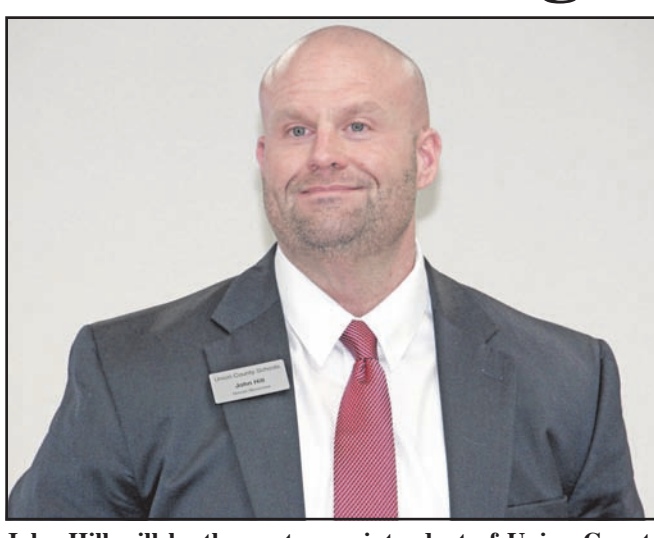
By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County's own John Hill is set to become the next superintendent of Union County Schools. The Union County Board of Education voted unanimously in its Dec. 12 board meeting to name Hill the sole finalist for the position. "We as a board are fortunate we were part of the process of finding the person that will lead us into the future," said Board Chair Cindy Odom that evening. "We considered options and considered doing a statewide search or looking locally. "We decided we have

so many quality employees at Union County Schools, we wanted to open it up on a local level first. Which, we did that, received some phenomenal applications, and were very impressed. (We) really feel strongly that we've chosen the best person that will lead us into the future." Following a 14-day public comment period, the board will hire Hill to start the 2018-2019 school year as the system's new superintendent. Hill is currently the director of human resources and operations at the board office, and he said he's looking forward to working closely with Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield in the coming months

as he can from the departing superintendent. "I'm very honored," said Hill, following the meeting. "It's a very serious thing to me to do the right thing for the kids and our community, but first of all the children." His wife, Jessica, was right by his side during the meeting, as the board made clear its intention to hire Hill to be the next superintendent of Union County Schools. "I appreciate the support of my wife and my family," said Hill, before commenting on his goal moving forward. "At the end of the day, I want this school system to be judged by the employability and the

success of our graduates. That's truly what matters." Hill, who is himself a Union County graduate, has served in pretty much every educational role within the school system since first coming aboard in 2004. He's been a teacher and coach, a school principal and board administrator, and now, he'll be the next superintendent of Union County Schools. The task won't be easy – the system has performed at the very top of the Pioneer RESA for the last two years running, though Hill said he is ready to pick up where Dr. Rayfield will be leaving off.



John Hill will be the next superintendent of Union County Schools, starting the 2018-2019 school year. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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## EMC directors talk Winter Storm Benji in board meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The North Georgia News and North Georgia Herald would like to thank the employees of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC for their hard work and dedication during Winter Storm Benji. These employees worked long hours in terrible weather conditions over the Dec. 8 weekend to restore power to more than 20,000 homes throughout the five member counties of the EMC. In turn, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms and the EMC Board of Directors would like to thank the road departments of Towns and Union counties for keeping the roads clear, as well as local businesses in both counties for providing food and other supplies to line

workers. Nelms and the directors discussed Benji in their Dec. 12 regular board meeting, and though member attendance was down from last month, EMC Board President Mickey Cummings said the transition to Cummings attended by the membership has been going well. "We're learning as we go," said Cummings. "We want to be as transparent as possible. We want our members to come." The board voted in October to open its monthly meetings to members in good standing, and the first regular board meeting opened to the membership occurred on Nov. 16. Moving forward, all regular board meetings will be open to members who follow the member attendance policy. The policy calls for

members who plan to attend to fill out an attendance form at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. This form can be found by navigating to BRMEMC.com, hovering over the "About Us" section at the top of the page, and selecting "Board Meetings" from the menu. Under the "Board Meetings" section of the website, members can find the attendance form – as well as the attendance policy itself – beneath the meeting schedule. The form is called the "Member Notice of Intent to Attend a Board Meeting." Members wishing to address the board during a meeting will need to fill out an additional form, located in the same place on the website, called the "Member Petition to Present at Board Meeting." The forms will need to

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BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms, Director Danny Henson and Board President Mickey Cummings. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

## A foot of snow couldn't stop Blairsville Shop with a Cop

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Winter Storm Benji tried its best to play skrooge on Friday, Dec. 8, blanketing the county in a foot of snow that forced the Blairsville Police to call off Shop with a Cop on Dec. 9. What Benji didn't know was that nothing, not even snow, could deter the police department from making sure their Shop with a Cop kids got to go shopping for Christmas at Walmart. Faced with the dilemma, the department regrouped and rescheduled the event for the following weekend, Dec. 16, and got the word out. Fortunately, everything came together on Saturday, Dec. 16, and 80 Union County kids got to participate in the

2017 Blairsville Shop with a Cop, which ended up helping 57 families for Christmas. Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll said that he was supremely thankful to the community for their donations to the Shop with a Cop Program every year, and that in a way, it was almost like the community taking the kids Christmas shopping. "Without their help, we wouldn't be able to do it," said Chief Carroll. "It's always good to help those kids out. We look forward to it every year." Something else the chief looks forward to each Shop with a Cop is when kids realize they have an opportunity to get gifts for their family members who, just like them, might not get anything under the tree otherwise – it just warms the heart.

Numerous deputies from the Union County Sheriff's Office attended the shop to show their support, as well as members of the Blairsville Cruisers, who received law enforcement help earlier in the week with their Shop with a Cruiser Christmas program. "Most of these are the ones that are not going to have anything for Christmas, and we're here to help make sure they do," said UCSCO Lt. Daren Osborn, speaking for his fellow deputies. Wayne Tanner of the Blairsville Cruisers couldn't have agreed more with Osborn that day – he and his fellow car enthusiasts were just happy to help. This year, the Cruisers donated \$5,000 toward the Shop with a Cop, guaranteeing

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From the Blairsville Police Department: Rusty Walker, Chief Johnny Carroll, Assistant Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter and Shawn Dyer. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

## Cruisers take local kids Christmas shopping



The Blairsville Cruisers and other volunteers on Tuesday, Dec. 12, just before the kids arrived to begin the Shop with a Cruiser Christmas experience. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Blairsville Cruisers are all about cars, community, children, and yes, Christmas.

Which is why dozens of Cruisers arranged for 62 children from needy Union County families to meet them at Walmart for the car club's annual Shop with a Cruiser, on

Tuesday, Dec. 12. These compassionate Ford and Chevy-loving members of the mountain part of each year raising tens of

thousands of dollars to host their shopping experience for kids. They also give thousands of dollars and volunteer much of their time to other area Christmas programs, such as the Blairsville Shop with a Cop and the Union County Sheriff's Office Give-A-Gift for Christmas Program. "This is what we work for, this time of the year, to help the kids out," said Cruisers President Pete Barley. "This is what we work for all year, to wait for this day to happen – it gives the kids something to look forward to every year. And each child will get \$250 to spend." The environment inside the meeting place of the Walmart Garden Center before the kids arrived was one of excitement and anticipation – after all, the Shop with a Cruiser event is like Christmas morning for the Blairsville

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## Blairsville mayor urges water customers to join UCWENS

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Staff Writer

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley is asking Blairsville City Water customers to sign up for the Union County Wireless Emergency Notification System. His calls for water customers to sign up for UCWENS come after the city had to issue a systemwide Boiled Water Advisory on Monday, Nov. 27. That advisory lasted several days and caught many water customers off guard, including businesses and others that had to shut down or make special accommodations due to state law regulating potable water sources during such advisories. The benefit of signing up for the alert system is that



Mayor Jim Conley residents will know right away via text messages, emails and phone calls the next time an advisory is put into place, and theoretically with more notice than the Nov. 27 advisory. People can also receive targeted alerts through UCWENS based on their address.

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**PANTHERS Basketball**

Dec. 19 @ Gilmer 6 PM

Dec. 21 vs. Pickens 7 PM

**Battle of the States-Towns Co.**

Dec. 27th-29th

Merry Christmas

From the staff of the North Georgia News and West Printing Company

The North Georgia News and West Printing offices will be closed Dec 22nd and Dec 25th