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Businesses, private homes and churches have become primary targets of metal thieves and the cry has gone out from law-abiding citizens for help and the Georgia General Assembly answered the call.

The solution came in the form of Georgia's Regulated Metals Recycling Law, which deals with registering as a secondary metals recycler.

A secondary metals recycler by definition is anyone involved in the process of buying secondary metals in any amount that has served its original purpose.

This applies to the "metal recyclers" who purchase secondary metal, as well as individuals and businesses that buy old vehicles or "scrap metal" from individuals or businesses.

This also includes individuals located in a residence buying metals or buying metals from a truck parked on private or public lands.

Regulated metal property is any item composed primarily of ferrous or non-ferrous metals.

Union County sheriff's



Lt. Tim Derflinger

Lt. Tim Derflinger said the law is cut and dry.

"The state of Georgia through the Georgia Sheriff's Association is trying to cut down on the number of thefts of scrap metal that we are experiencing and help the legitimate scrap metal dealers run a legal business," Lt. Derflinger said. "If we can filter out the legal from the illegal operations then it makes it easier for law enforcement to enforce the law.

"Many people who participate in the business don't realize they need to register and we are trying to get the word out that they need to come in and do that," he said. "The scrap metal yards are regulated, but it is the people selling them scrap metal that are unregulated and this is

what the law is addressing.

"If a homeowner needs to get rid of some scrap metal and he hauls it to the scrap yard then that is not affected," he said. "It is the people who buy old cars and scrap metal and turn it for a profit that the law is dealing with.

"One thing that is advantageous for dealers registered in Union County is that they can go anywhere in the state and sell their metal," he said. "If they find a better price somewhere else in Georgia, then they can sell their inventory there without having to re-register.

"Once they are in the system they show up all over the state and don't have to register in each county," he said.

Scrap metal dealers can register at the Sheriff's Office Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. The fee is \$200 and registrations must be renewed annually.

The Georgia Sheriff's Association Web site has the information each dealer will need to be in compliance with the law and can answer any questions.

Lt. Derflinger also can help, call (706) 439-6066 and he will be glad to help you with your registration.

Scrap metal theft is a big problem in Georgia and

in Union County. It hurts residents, but it also hurts those who are trying to work legitimately in the scrap metal business throughout the state.

Registering your scrap metal business is important and will allow you to work more openly with the public by operating within the confines of the law.

Locally, law enforcement officers, have also heard the cry from the residents of Union County.

Scrap metal thieves better watch their backs because Union County Sheriff Mack Mason and his deputies have had enough.

If you are buying scrap metal and turning it for a profit then you must be registered with the state through the Sheriff's Office or you will be operating illegally.

The penalty for a first time conviction, buyer or seller, of the Regulated Metals Recycling Law is a misdemeanor.

The second conviction, buyer or seller, is a misdemeanor of the high and aggravated circumstance.

A third conviction, buyer or seller, is a felony and will be punished by imprisonment of not less than one year, but no more than a decade behind bars.

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"This is huge. It's really a big deal," she said.

Cox was referring to the news made public by Hank Weldon, College Series Manager that the site for the 2013 National Championship will be Lake Chatuge.

"It will be the first time the championship event has been held outside Arkansas, and it promises to be the biggest in the history of the series," Weldon said.

"This will be the biggest tournament that's ever been here. ESPN will be here to televise it," Cox said. "Young Harris, Towns County and the college will get a lot of exposure."

Cox gives full credit to YHC senior angler Brad Rutherford as "the spearheading force in getting the team started."

Rutherford introduced the idea of bass fishing as a sport when he was a mere freshman at YHC. Thankfully, the idea was well received and put into action.

Rutherford in his final year at YHC, is majoring in business and public policy, but he's quick to tell you that his dream is to "win a Bass Pro Tournament," and with his enthusiasm for the sport, it seems to be a dream that is realistic.

"We give all the credit to Brad. Had he not been so interested and such a good fisherman, we wouldn't have gotten this opportunity," Cox said.

"Our college bass fishing program is a huge asset to our community, and I am so proud of our team that continues to grow and thrive as they compete locally, regionally and nationally," said Cox.

In 2012, the YHC team of Brad Rutherford and Chandler White led the school to a 10th-place finish in the national championships.

"As I traveled all over the country competing, I began talking about this amazing lake we have by our school and how good the fishing is," Rutherford said. "I started showing everyone pictures of the fish I have caught from Lake Chatuge. This led to the director of BASS, Hank Weldon, contacting me about the lake and how great the fishing would be if they came here.

"Then I contacted YHC and told them about the opportunity and they jumped on board," he said.

"A huge thanks to Mr. Kendall for helping with the money. It means a lot to have a community that is supportive



Young Harris College President Cathy Cox, angler Brad Rutherford, and Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall. Photo/Libby Shook.

of bass fishing," Rutherford said. "The donation is going to lead to many great things for the City of Young Harris and Towns County."

"This money is coming out of a 'Special Events Economic Development Fund,'" Commissioner Kendall said. "It's earmarked just for functions such as this.

"We are proud to have this event coming to Towns County," Kendall said. "It will provide a much needed economic boost to restaurants, hotels, gas stations, grocery stores, and more."

Cox thanked Kendall as he presented the check to her as Rutherford proudly looked on.

"This will go to help defray the cost of the tournament," she said. "We appreciate Mr. Kendall's generosity on behalf of the county."

Thanks to Rutherford, YHC, the city of Young Harris, and Towns County, it looks like a win-win for everybody here.

Let's hope for three days of excellent summer weather for the first three days in August.

Principals...

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Stone, currently assistant principal at UCMS has worked as a teacher and assistant principal for 21 years. She has worked for the Union County Schools System for the past nine years.

"Like Millie, Gwen is definitely qualified for her next opportunity in the education field," Steppe said. "Again, we believe that both of these highly qualified individuals will best serve Union County Schools," Steppe said. Though Collins has retired, he will continue to serve the school system in an advisory role, according to the BOE.