

BOE considers building upgrades; Salazar recognized for scholarship award

By Mark Smith
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Union County Schools Assistant Superintendent David Murphy and Facilities Director Chris Crow presented the members of the Union County Board of Education with a facility planning update at the monthly board meeting on Jan. 15.

Murphy noted that Union County has been experiencing “steady, continuous growth” in recent years, with a consequence for the school system that the buildings for the primary grades would very likely be at 99 percent capacity in 10 years.

The age of the school buildings was also discussed. “If you average the age of these buildings, they’re 66 years old, on average,” said Crow. “So, they’re getting a lot of age to them. Pretty much anything that you can think about as far as upgrading, they need it.”

It was apparent by the

end of the presentation that the board needs to begin planning now for the future to decide whether to renovate or build new. There are many options available, but all agreed that the planning needs to start now.

Murphy also talked about strategic planning for the school and covered a wide range of topics, including an increased social media presence, building partnerships within Union County, and organizational excellence, just to name a few.

School culture and climate was of significance in the presentation because of the new Union United initiative: Union County Schools includes five separate schools but wants to be thought of as one united school system.

Incorporation of the GeorgiaBEST program of imparting student employability traits is also part of the UCS strategic plan.

In other Union County Schools news, Sahory Salazar, who will graduate this school



Zachary Von Shook received recognition in the Jan. 15 board meeting for having completed the requirements for early graduation from Union County High. Here he is with his family.

Photo by Mark Smith

year, was recognized for her match with a scholarship to Columbia University through the QuestBridge National College Match program.

Salazar’s scholarship is a full four-year scholarship valued at approximately \$300,000, said Union County High School Principal C.T. Hussion.

The QuestBridge National College Match program had a record high of 16,248 applicants. Only 6,502 of those applicants were chosen as finalists. Out of 6,502 finalists, only 1,044 outstanding students were chosen, Salazar being one of them.

The Woody Gap Sports Club, which was formed in 1977 and has been putting on the Indian Summer Festival the first full week in October

since then, was recognized for its help in meeting the needs of Woody Gap School through innumerable fundraising efforts over the years.

Club President Larry Woods and Vice President Jerry Woods were on hand for the recognition.

Dr. Stacey Benson, Dr. Patty Atkins and Tiffany Switzer, officials with the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Supports through Pioneer RESA, accompanied UCHS Teacher Mr. Loy Cook and Paraprofessional Ms. Peterson in recognizing 16-year-old Zachary Van Shook.

Van Shook was awarded early high school graduation after passing the Unity Associates Certification Exam in computer science.

Van Shook is the first student in Union County to pass the exam and plans to attend a post-secondary school after



UCHS Principal C.T. Hussion presenting senior Sahory Salazar with an award recognizing her full-ride QuestBridge Scholarship to Columbia University, pictured here in the Jan. 15 Board of Education meeting.

Photo by Mark Smith

Lockett...from Page 1A

escort Lockett home, where they were greeted by hundreds of flag-waving residents lining the roadways.

According to Sgt. Lockett’s obituary:

“In some ways, Chris was a walking contradiction. On one hand a big, strong, tough U.S. Marine and former intimidating presence on the football field. But he was also just as comfortable quietly walking arm-in-arm with his mom Lisa, being her escort, simply being her son.

“Those who knew him best will miss the infectious smile of a guy who was usually the life of the party, the ever-

present sense of humor and his love of good-natured embarrassment; especially when it came to his mom.

“One of his favorite things to do was show up at her workplace when she was least expecting it, just to get the reaction. Despite being a comedian a lot of the time, Chris was serious when it came to loyalty to his family and friends, and he would have their back without question when they needed him. He was, as his mother aptly put it, ‘Just one of a kind.’

“As a U.S. Marine, Chris earned: the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal (2),

the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; National Defense Service Medal; NATO Medal- ISAF Afghanistan; Afghanistan Campaign Medal; Sea Service Deployment Medal (2); Letter of Appreciation (3); Certificate of Commendation (individual award) and Meritorious Mast.

“He was a Marine Corps martial arts program instructor (first degree black belt), Marine combat marksmanship rifle expert 2nd award, Water Survival qualified, Avionics Warfare equipment apprentice and Aircrew Survival equipment apprentice.

“Born July 17, 1992, Chris is survived by his mother, Lisa Marie Kotchenreuther; father, Jeff Lockett, and stepmother, Megan Lockett, all of Murphy; grandparents David and Karen Cook of Marble; and siblings, Dustin, Tyler, Ashley, Jessica and Ashlee.”

At the time of his funeral, the family was asking that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Lockett’s honor to the Wounded Warrior Project at 4899 Belfort Road, Suite 300, Jacksonville, FL 32256.

Townson-Rose Funeral Home of Murphy had charge of all arrangements.

EMC...from Page 1A

Jeremy Nelms reported that the co-op’s rate consultant had recently completed an updated cost of service study.

Currently, the fixed charge portion of each residential customer’s bill, aka the customer charge, is right at \$21.37.

Based on the updated cost of service study, Nelms said that the fixed charge portion of each customer’s bill should actually be in the \$38 to \$40 a month range.

Now, it’s important to point out that adjusting the customer charge upward – most likely in small increments over time – would likely result in a corresponding rate decrease in the cost of electricity per kilowatt-hour, according to

Nelms.

Such revenue neutral rate adjustments would help the membership to better maintain the fixed costs associated with running a local power company by allowing the EMC to become less dependent on power sales, which have steadily declined in recent years due to energy efficient technologies, according to Nelms.

These fixed costs include things like power poles, powerlines, computers and software, company trucks and other equipment, etc., all of which ensure that the lights and gadgets stay on regardless of how much energy is used by those connected to the grid.

The board took no action on the updated cost of service

study in the January meeting, though Nelms did say that, should directors choose not to implement any rate adjustments in the near future, the EMC could expect an erosion of net income “starting not this fiscal year, but certainly the next.”

Moving forward, Nelms said he would be inviting the EMC’s rate consultant to speak with the board prior to any staff recommendations on revenue-neutral rate adjustments.

In other news, Nelms said that he and other EMC staff members had recently visited with House Speaker David Ralston and State Sen. Steve Gooch in Atlanta to discuss a piece of broadband legislation pre-filed by Sen. Gooch for the 2019 Legislative

Session.

The bill, known as Senate Bill 2, “would authorize Electric Membership Corporations to deploy broadband services throughout Georgia,” according to a Senate press release.

As an industry leader in rural broadband, BRMEMC is ahead of the curve and currently working to grow its already established fiber optic offerings.

However, should Sen. Gooch’s bill pass, it would provide the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC with expanded access to alternative funding mechanisms like grants and low interest loans to quicken the pace of that growth.

Union County Primary School Kindergarten Registration for 2019-2020

Union County Primary School has reserved March 11th and 12th to screen and pre-register new kindergarten students who will begin school in the 2019-2020 school year. The required pre-registration will be by appointment only Monday, March 11th and Tuesday, March 12th at the Union County Primary School. The appointments will be scheduled between 9 AM to 11:40 AM and 1 PM to 2:20 PM. Parents may call 706-835-4321 or come by the school to schedule an appointment. For the best selection in appointment times, please schedule an appointment as soon as possible. *Note – There is no registration needed if the upcoming kindergarten student is currently enrolled in the UC School’s Pre-K Program. Pre-registration can be expedited if parents complete an enrollment packet prior to their appointment.

A copy of the enrollment packet is available on the school system’s website at www.ucschools.org (For Parents > Student Registration), or the Primary School front office. Parents who bring a completed enrollment packet to their appointment will be entered in a

drawing for a girl’s and a boy’s backpack filled with school supplies for their child’s 1st day of school.

All children who turn five years of age on or before September 1st, 2019 are eligible to attend kindergarten in the upcoming school year. Eligible children who have been attending any other Pre-K or Day Care program will need to pre-register for kindergarten.

Parents and Students are required to be at the registration appointment and you should bring the following documents:

Age Verification: The school system requires evidence of the student’s date of birth and accepts as evidence a birth certificate or an alternate document from the prioritized list in the state enrollment rule.

Social Security Number: The school system complies with the provisions of O.C.G.A. §20-2-150, which requires a person enrolling a student to provide a copy of the student’s social security number or to sign a form stating that the person does not wish to provide the social security number.

Immunization Certificate: The school system requires

proof of immunization as required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-771, which includes an exemption for religious grounds and provisions for a temporary waiver.

A Georgia Department of Human Resources Form 3231 marked “Complete for School” shall be considered proof of immunization. Out of State Immunization Records will need to be transferred to a Form 3231 by the Union County Health Department prior to registration. The Union County Health Department is located at 175 Chase Drive, Blairsville, GA, 706-745-6292.

Notarized Affidavit of Residency: Located in the Enrollment Packet available at www.ucschools.org. The form can be notarized during registration, if the parent/guardian has not signed the form.

Documentation for Homeless Students: Homeless students, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, shall be enrolled immediately with full participation in school activities, regardless of whether all of the above can be provided at the time of enrollment. The designated employee responsible for care of homeless students shall assist the person

enrolling the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth in acquiring the necessary documents for enrollment in accordance with the requirements of the state enrollment rule and the McKinney-Vento Act.

Georgia Public Health Form 3300: The form may be obtained from the Health Department or your doctor’s office. The form must be presented when attending a Georgia school for the first time.

The Union County School System, in its enrollment procedures, requirements and process does not and will not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, or immigration status.

Parents are welcome to contact the Primary School (706-835-4321) for answers to any questions you may have regarding the Kindergarten Pre-Registration process. Call soon to make your appointment. And, bring a completed enrollment packet to your appointment for an opportunity to win a backpack filled with school supplies.

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graduation.

The principals of each of the five schools, Primary, Elementary, Middle, High and Woody Gap, gave their mid-year reports. All schools reported normal operations.

“These folks are dedicated to these kids and the community, and we really do appreciate them very much,” said Superintendent John Hill.

The board voted for Cindy Odom to remain Board Chairwoman and Patrick White to remain Vice Chairman.

The board accepted the student petition for nine early graduates from the Alternative Education Program. Hill said all those students have met the requirements for a diploma from Union County High School.

The board approved the Charter System Renewal Application simultaneously with the Advanced Education Accreditation.

The board approved the Family Connection Subcontract with the Council on Alcohol and Drugs, Inc.