

**BOE...from Page 1A**

County School System pays a flat rate of \$25,000.

Last year, there were nine students enrolled in the program. This year, Towns County expects to send up to 11 students, a fairly large growth from last year's enrollment considering the program.

Approved during this month's meeting, the board will be participating in the FY17 Board Governance Training. This training will especially benefit those on the board this year due to changes that may

occur because of the addition of a new superintendent and board member.

"We have to file a proposed plan for the board training by Sept. 15," said Superintendent Rayfield. "Basically, what we're looking at is trying to focus on strategic planning moving forward for the next three to five years. There are specific sessions for that sort of planning. "Also, Reviews and Revisions of System Goals and Priorities is another class we're looking at, which would

fit well with strategic planning training.

"Finally, Board Roles and Responsibilities, which is important since we're having one new board member coming on in January as well as having had a new superintendent. I think it's important."

The October board meeting has been moved to Tuesday, Oct. 11, due to conflict with the school system holiday schedule. Next month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 20, at 7 p.m.

**Carr...from Page 1A**

of job conception and business investments in a state that is quickly becoming an economic powerhouse.

The event, a Power Lunch organized by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored and catered by Blairsville Chick-fil-A, played host to many prominent local and state leaders familiar with the commissioner and his work.

District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Regional Director Amy Turner from U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson's office, and Matt Gurtler, who will be unopposed in the Georgia House of Representatives District 8 general election in November, all attended the luncheon to hear Commissioner Carr speak, joined by a room full of business professionals from around the county.

"My job today is very easy, introducing someone today that everyone at the State Capitol is very fond of, Chris Carr," said Sen. Gooch in his opening. "I think he has the best job in the state government. He's our salesman. He travels the world telling other people what we already know - how great we are and how beautiful this part of the world is.

"Since he has become the commissioner of economic development, Georgia has become the No. 1 state to do business.

"Chris is no stranger to politics. He grew up in Atlanta and lives in Dunwoody now. He started up in Washington D.C. as chief of staff for Sen. Johnny Isakson for several years, so I'm sure he's glad to be back home.

"He came back to work for the state when Gov. Nathan Deal gave him the job in 2013. He's done a great job for us. I'm glad to be here today to introduce him and call him my friend."

Commissioner Carr began his message explaining why Georgia has become the go-to destination for businesses, new and old. According to Commissioner Carr, while business expansion and investment are components of Georgia's appeal, those aspects are not why people are drawn to the southern state.

"There is something different about our state," said Commissioner Carr. "If you talk to site consults, if you talk to the companies that we're dealing with, if you talk to companies that are looking into Georgia, they will tell you there's something different here.

"It's in our DNA to be pro-business. Tourism, the arts and the people of the state of Georgia, those are the things that really make us what we are."

Commissioner Carr went on to further this discussion on why exactly Georgia has become a business destination, delving into the key components that make a well-rounded business community. Aside from the geological advantages that Georgia has, along with being a port state with a booming international airport, Georgia is full of communities that offer vast opportunities via art, tourism, education, international trade and local businesses.

"Our success as a state is because we have worked collaboratively," said Commissioner Carr. "There is no city, there is no county in this state that has everything that every company needs. If you're talking about workforce, no county has an entire workforce. If you're talking about tourism assets, nobody has exactly what everybody needs. If you're talking about film, whatever it may be, workforce does not stop at the county or city line.

"We have to recognize this. It's great to have something in your backyard, and if you don't, then it's great to have something in your neighbor's backyard."

Global commerce plays a huge role in not only statewide workforce but also smaller communities. While smaller communities may not be home to global industries, the fact that such businesses are laying down roots in the state is a direct indicator that proper steps are being taken to reach the full potential of a region.

Since 2011, Georgia has moved from the 10th largest state to the eighth largest state due to this focus on detail. According to the commissioner, this jump is also attributed to the emphasis on workforce education by way of dual-degree programs, universities, technical colleges, charter schools and other means of higher education available to those who want it.

Companies want talent and a workforce that will be able to grow within a company, making a state that values fostering individual strongpoints



**Georgia Department of Economic Development Commissioner Chris Carr served as the keynote speaker in the Power Lunch. He spoke on Georgia's national rise as a business power.**

the place to be, according to the commissioner.

Gaining smaller businesses within the state international trade is also a focus of the Georgia Department of Economic Development. If smaller firms are granted such an opportunity, their business will eventually grow, resulting in a need for a larger workforce, thus creating jobs.

Workforce does not stop at businesses and companies. Tourism is quickly gaining speed around the state, from the historic culture of Savannah to the outdoor commodities of North Georgia.

"Tourism is a \$60 billion a year industry in the state of Georgia," said Commissioner Carr. "In 2015, Georgia welcomed over 102 million visitors. That's a nearly 4 percent increase.

"We've divided the state up into regions and we work with communities to identify new tourism assets, existing tourism, and try to help market

and identify ways that we can find that next job or next dollar of investment."

Tourism would not be a complete industry without the help of the arts, specifically the rise of the film and television industry in the state. Georgia is now one of the film capitals of the world, which alone brings in a wide array of employment opportunities.

Last year, 250 films and television shows were shot throughout the state, and that number is increasing every year.

"We all need to work hand in hand together," said Commissioner Carr. "It's not just about one area or one division or one part of the state or one community. It's all about us working together. "I can tell you how proud we are to work with people from all around the state, folks in this room in particular, to have great economic development success. The future looks bright."

**Bridge...from Page 1A**

entirely sufficient bridge and zero represents an entirely insufficient (or deficient) bridge.

"The calculation takes into account the structural adequacy (55 percent), serviceability and functional adequacy (35 percent), and how essential the bridge is for public use (15 percent). Over half of the rating is based on structural condition (or adequacy) because failure of a bridge structure could be catastrophic."

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said that he was not exactly thrilled with the prospect of closing SR 180 to through traffic for a year, calling the proposed detour "huge."

"Right before you get to Vogel, there's a road that turns right to Suches," said Commissioner Paris, describing the detour. "So instead of turning there, you'd have to go all the way across the mountain like you're going to Gainesville, and when you get on the back side of the mountain, you'd have to turn right on (US) 19 that goes

to Dahlonega.

"And then it goes up to what they call Stone Pile Gap, and then you've got to turn right on (SR) 60 and go I don't know how many miles of crooked road all the way into Suches. And then, you'd have to turn right and go back out another probably eight miles to Lake Winfield Scott just to get back to where you started."

The Detour Open House meeting will be informal, read the GDOT release: "There will be no formal presentation. A court reporter will be available to allow the public an opportunity to make verbal comments about the project."

Added GDOT: "Written statements will be accepted concerning this project until Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2016. Written statements may be submitted to: Mr. Eric Duff, State Environmental Administrator, Georgia Department of Transportation, 600 West Peachtree Street, NW - 16th Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30308."