

Murder ...from Page 1A

covered a deceased male in outside the home so as not to disturb the crime scene, and

we secured a search warrant to search the home.”

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation was called to assist in the death investigation, Sheriff Mason said.

Sheriff Mason also contacted authorities in Chattanooga to alert them that Vestal was a person of interest in a double homicide in Union County.

Two Union County deputies were dispatched to Erlanger Hospital to stand guard over Vestal as he recovered from his suicide attempt.

As Vestal recovered and was ready for release, he waived extradition back to Union County, Sheriff Mason said.

“At that time we secured two arrest warrants for

murder for Cody Lee Vestal,” Sheriff Mason said.

Once back in Union County, Vestal was interviewed by Detective Mangifesta, and Georgia Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Ben Couch.

During the interview with Mangifesta and Couch, Vestal confessed to the double murder, Sheriff Mason said.

“Tom Mangifesta has worked 70 homicide investigations as lead detective in Florida and about 50 or so more in tandem with other detectives,” Sheriff Mason said. “We’re lucky to have Tom. I’m lucky to have all my deputies.”

The motive for the crimes is still unclear, Sheriff Mason said.

Family members told Union County authorities that during a telephone conversation on Saturday night with Marilyn Laughlin, she shared that Vestal and Poat had had a confrontation.

Laughlin told family members that Poat had to use a gun to back Vestal down. That telephone conversation ended around 10:30 p.m. on Saturday. No one had heard from Marilyn Laughlin since that time, Sgt. Hammond said.

The motive for the killings appears to have been inspired by the dispute between Vestal and Poat. Authorities believe that dispute likely played a role that led to the murders.

Sheriff Mason said

that county records show that Marilyn Laughlin and Anthony Poat purchased the house on Georgia 325 last year, having moved here from Murphy, NC.

“The best we can tell, they were not married,” Sheriff Mason said. “Both of their names were on the deed. It is our understanding that Cody Lee Vestal lived with the couple.”

Vestal is charged with two counts of murder. He is currently being held in the Union County Jail, jail records show.

Marilyn Laughlin was laid to rest on Monday at Green Lawn Cemetery in Natchez, Miss. Funeral arrangements for Anthony Poat were unavailable at press time.

TOTY ...from Page 1A

children reached the ages of 3 and 5 years old, Maddaleni went back to school to become a teacher.

Her first 11 years in the teaching profession came in Florida with the last nine coming at Union County.

“I work with a lot of wonderful and fantastic teachers,” Maddaleni said. “That makes it quite an honor to be selected as the Elementary School’s Teacher of the Year because my colleagues voted for me. So that shows that they understand how hard I work and how much time and effort that I put into helping children.”

During her 20 years, she has taught each grade from first through fifth. She has taught fourth and fifth grade at Union County and was recently named the writing teacher for a new program that has been implemented this year.

“She is now our school-

wide writing teacher after a writing program was recently started,” Cook said. “She has done a fabulous job and she loves children more than anything in the world and wants them to do their very best.”

After receiving TOTY honors, Maddaleni made sure that her co-workers were recognized for the incredible job they do with our county’s youth.

“I have to thank the fifth grade teachers that I have worked with for many years,” Maddaleni said. “We work very well together in helping the kids. I also want to thank my principal, assistant principal and the staff, they are wonderful people to work with.”

Other Teacher of the Year recipients were Chris Robbins, Union County Primary School, Angie Everett, Union County Middle School, Alecia Frizzell, Union County High School, and Michelle Twarog, Woody

Gap Schools.

In other business, Union County High School Student Body President Morgan Owenby presented her proposal for a memorial honoring the late Ed Rohrbaugh. Union County High School junior Stephanie Busse proposed a memorial for Kevin Williams, a UCHS student that recently passed away. Williams was diagnosed with cancer in December and passed away in January.

Both memorials were unanimously approved by the BOE.

The Rohrbaugh memorial will be located at the entrance to the Union County High School softball field where the walkway from the parking lot runs parallel to the right field line.

According to Owenby, a dogwood tree planted at the entrance to the softball field will feature a plaque that reads ‘Rohrbaugh Way.’

There will be a monument that reads, “Mr. Rohrbaugh was more than our principal, he was our friend, encourager, and leader, investing time in our lives making us believe in ourselves and inspiring us to rise up.”

The memorial for Williams, who was a member of the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band, will be a park bench dedicated to him at the new Band Room which will be located at the new Union County Performing Arts Center, that is currently under construction behind Union County High School.

“We wanted to do something special for him and we spoke with (Band Director) Will Stafford and in that conversation we anticipated putting up benches at the new Fine Arts Center,” Union County Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams said. “The view that it’s going to have, you can’t beat it.”

STAR ...from Page 1A

plaques. But it was very unexpected.”

In order for a high school senior to attain STAR Student recognition, he or she must score the highest score on any single test date of the three-part SAT by the November test date of his or her senior year. Qualifying students

must also be within the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average.

And in case those qualifications were not enough, those nominated as STAR Students must achieve SAT scores equal to or higher than the latest available national averages on the critical reading, math and writing sections. Each high school STAR Student is then asked to name his or her STAR Teacher.

Todd chose her math teacher, Tim Hunter, and they are a package deal – if she wins at state, so does he.

At the region banquet in Dahlonega, Todd thanked Coach Hunter for his support as a teacher, friend and father figure at the high school, and Hunter told Todd in front of a large audience that she was the best student he had ever seen, and likely the best he ever would see.

Todd attended the banquet with her mother and father, Cynthia and Phillip, as well as her little sister, Hannah, while Hunter was escorted by his wife, Mandy.

To win the region title, Todd simply had to have the highest score in the region. Competition at state, however, will include judged interviews given by the winners in each of the 12 STAR regions.

This is important because there are likely perfect scores out there, and while Todd received a near-perfect score, she feels comfortable going into the next leg of her STAR Student journey.

“Because it has an interview portion, I actually feel like I have a decent chance of winning,” said Todd. “I’ve always loved interviews. And at the least, I think I’ll be a de-

cent competitor.”

Todd will be attending Princeton University in the fall, where she hopes to attain a concentration in chemistry, with a certificate in piano performance.

She is the only STAR Student in school records to have made it past region to state competition.

Should she win in Atlanta in April, Todd is poised to win an etched crystal award and a cash scholarship from AT&T. Hunter, who will be attending the state banquet with Todd, would receive a cash award from the Frances Wood Wilson Foundation.

Service

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recognize,” Barnes said. “The honorees are Dr. Jeremy Williams, Associate Superintendent Union County Schools; Union County Emergency Management Agency Director, Charles Worden, who recently retired as Union County Fire Chief; Michael Gowder, president and CEO of Union General Hospital; Chris Wadle, businessman and developer of the King’s 5 & 10 building on the square; and Cancer Society and Humane Society volunteer, Stacie Head.”

The recipients will be honored at the Rotary Club’s Second Annual Service Awards Gala, to be held at North Georgia Technical College’s Blairsville Campus on Georgia 515, on Saturday, April 11. The Gala is black tie optional, and will include dinner, entertainment, a silent auction, and a drawing for a cash prize.

The recipients receive a unique glass trophy, a cash award, and the overall winner gets a City Pass package with hotel from the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Tickets are \$75 and include admission, dinner, complimentary beverage – including wine, music and dancing, silent auction and more.

For more details, ask any Rotarian, or call Rick Maddox at (404) 310-7072, or Patty Barnes at (706) 897-2302.