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and ‘democracy,’ and comes to the conclusion that a republic is a form of democracy. So it was technically not fair to say that they made it a republic instead of a democracy, because it’s both.”

One of the things the competition judges liked best about Hooper’s speech was her thoughtful delivery – she came out from behind the podium and walked around, which enhanced her relationship and engagement with the audience.

“As my speech comes to an end, I hope I have left one thing with you all,” said Hooper during her speech. “If somebody ever asks what type of government America has, you can answer with full confidence and certainty – a democratic republic.”

For her speech, Godwin chose to tackle the question of whether or not “we have an honest free press today.”

She, too, utilized definitions to make her case, defining the terms “honest” and “Freedom of the Press” before moving on to the responsibilities of journalists.

“Not too many years ago, reporters like Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, David Brinkley and Chet Huntley, the leading broadcasters of their day, gave the American people accurate, fair and completely factual, triple-checked news reports,” said Godwin, adding that these journalists never kowtowed to special interests.

In conclusion, Godwin found that, with a few exceptions, there does not today exist an honest, free press.

“News reporting agencies today are businesses, answerable to sponsors and advertisers,” said Godwin. “And like any good business they market to and keep ‘happy’ the clients, better known as view-

ers that will bring in the most money – advertising money from sponsors that want to reach a specific market of people with their products.”

As for Brendle, she spoke from the heart in an attempt to answer the following question: “Are we a nation under Christianity?”

“Growing up in a Christian house I would be the first to say yes. However, I have to say no, we are not a nation under Christianity,” Brendle said in her speech.

She justified her statement by analyzing the intent of America’s Founding Fathers, and she drew inspiration from James Madison, also known as the Father of the Constitution.

“The Fathers believed that the only way to protect religious liberty was to keep the government out of it, thus creating the First Amendment,” said Brendle. “This not only gave us as citizens the right and freedom to practice or be a certain religion, but as well to keep the U.S. out of religious conflicts that have torn many nations as great as our own apart.

“We were given the right of liberty, life and the pursuit of happiness. We are a people divided by religions, yet together by our support of the Constitution by this nation’s Fathers.”

So, what’s next for these three speech winners?

Hooper will be attending the prestigious Governor’s Honors Program in science this summer before starting her junior year. She said she plans to put her scholarship money into college savings, and she intends to compete for more scholarship money next year.

Godwin will attend Wingate University this fall, following a pre-pharmacy

course of study.

Brendle said she hopes to be serving her country soon, as she anticipates joining the U.S. Marines following graduation, though she’s keeping her options open with backup plans of becoming either an officer of the law or an early childcare teacher.

Judges for the competition were Patrick Malone, Lee Knight, Jeff Langley and Wayne Fowler.

UCGOP Chair Dale Allison and Media Specialist Cherie Martin helped to organize the event with a nonpartisan committee devoted specifically to the Future Leaders Scholarship Public Speaking Contest.

The two are working on paperwork to create a separate nonprofit entity for the contest, and hope to put on another contest this fall and every fall thereafter.

Corporate scholarship sponsors for this spring competition were Core Capital Financial Services, Inc., First Baptist Church of Blairsville, In Sister’s Kitchen LLC, Benjamin T. Maltby CPAs LLC, Mountain View Funeral Home, Nelson Tractor Co., Park Sterling Bank, United Community Bank of Blairsville/Union County and the Union/Towns County Tea Party, plus many individual sponsors.

Those looking to donate toward student scholarships in future competitions can do so now by making checks payable to Future Leaders Scholarship Committee, and sending them to Future Leaders Scholarship Committee, c/o Dale Allison, 103 Blue Ridge St., Blairsville, Georgia, 30512.

For questions about how to get involved, contact Allison at (706) 745-1359

## Raid...from Page 1A

in Georgia and North Carolina probing prescription drug fraud involving former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder, Blairsville physicians James Heaton and David Gowder, led investigators to Hayesville Family Practice, which is owned and operated by Union General Hospital in Union County.

On April 20th, agents with the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. DEA Drug Diversion Task Force, along with investigators and deputies from Union County, in Georgia, as well as Clay and Cherokee County North Carolina Sheriff’s Office, executed a search warrant at Hayesville Family Practice.

Plott was named in the search warrant and he was interviewed at the facility as the search warrant was executed, according to sources close to the investigation.

Agents informed the newspapers that a search warrant affidavit executed to search Hayesville Family Practice indicates the investigation of the facility stems from concerns over prescriptions issued to persons by Plott.

Patient records, along with other files and records identified as being potential evidence, were seized from the facility, sources said.

Sources close to the investigation say a review of the findings of the search warrant by prosecutors with North Carolina District 30, which includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Macon, Swain, Haywood, and Jackson counties, will make a determination as to possible charges.

The Union General Inc. Board of Directors released the following information related to the search of Hayesville Family Practice:

*Union General Hospital owns and operates a family health care clinic, the Hayesville Family Clinic, in Clay County, NC.*

*On April 20th, local and federal law enforcement authorities executed a search warrant at the practice offices. Though Union General, Inc., its board of directors and management continue to cooperate with the ongoing investigation into prescription drug fraud across the region, no advance notice was given.*

*It is the understanding of the hospital board that this*

*investigation is focused upon the prescription of medications more than a year ago. Prescription records and related patient files and records, paper and electronic, were identified as potential evidence and seized. The search warrant does not appear related to any current or ongoing concerns with the Hayesville Family Clinic.*

*In order to combat prescription drug abuse in the community, Union General Hospital utilizes an opioid treatment protocol, which minimizes narcotic prescriptions and assists patients through other recognized clinical best practices. Union General clinics utilize CDC guidelines for the use of opi-*

*oids for chronic pain management.*

*All health care providers associated with the clinic have also completed training on the safe administration and prescription of pain medications.*

*It remains the mission of the Union General health care system to provide high-quality, cost-effective health care to each of our patients as well as promoting wellness throughout North Georgia and Western North Carolina. Union General is also committed to continuing the operations of the Hayesville Family Clinic as well as ensuring access to quality healthcare for the residents of rural Clay County, NC.*