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At the top of the list is the \$250,000 the county was forced to spend on courthouse security because of the Guns Everywhere Law passed in March by the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Nathan Deal.

"We've got the equipment, but we'll have the annual cost in salaries and benefits of the folks that must accompany that equipment," Commissioner Paris said.

The new courthouse security is about half of the \$600,000 budget increase.

Other cost increases include a rise in county insurance costs of \$35,000; Indigent Defense for Youth increased by \$113,000; Indigent

Defense for Adults increased by \$25,000, new aerial photography of the county comes in at \$20,000, increases for public works will cost \$52,000, and a state-required benefits increase of \$25,000 for library personnel.

Millage rates have been on the decline in Union County in recent years. Since 2005 the property tax millage rate has declined from 6.65 mills to 5.408 mills last year. Over the past five years tax revenues have been in decline with each year the county collecting less money than the year before. At the same time, costs of services continue to escalate.

"We just cannot continue without an increase,"

Commissioner Paris said.

Beginning Aug. 13, the first of three public hearings take place at the Union County Courthouse. There will be two public hearings that day, with the first happening at 11 a.m. and the second at 6 p.m. A third public hearing will be Aug. 20.

Even with a millage increase, Union County government currently has the third lowest property tax rate in the entire state out of 159 counties, Paris said.

"Our school system, which will not have a property tax increase this year, currently has the fifth lowest property tax rate in the state," Paris said. "When you

combine both the county and school current millage rate the total of 17.206 mills, currently is the second lowest property tax rate in the entire state.

"I refused to raise property taxes over the past several years because the economy has really been terrible and I knew the public simply could not afford it," Paris said. "While the economy is still not fully recovered, we feel like we must have a modest increase this year. The economy in Union County is recovering ahead of many areas with an improved job market and we simply cannot wait any longer for an increase, especially with the new courthouse security requirement."

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about the current system.

"I think this is a big improvement," Owenby said. "Traffic flowed much better on Friday and I did not hear any complaints. In fact, I had several parents tell me that it worked very well."

Another change that went into affect with the 2014-15 school year is the bus routine in the mornings and afternoons.

This year, the buses will pick up at the Primary School in the afternoon before going to the Elementary School, the Middle School, and then finally, the High School. In the mornings, the bus routine will flip-flop with students being dropped off at the High School first, followed by the Middle School, Elementary School, and the Primary School.

"That took a little bit of figuring out but we did fine with it," Owenby said. "It took us a little bit longer loading but that's typical of a first day with our little ones, because we want to make sure we get



them on the right bus."

At the Primary School, 170 new faces entered the red doors and made their way to their kindergarten classes. Owenby expects that number to rise somewhat but it's still

lower than last year's enrollment. The Primary School also added two Pre-K classes, consisting of 42 combined students to the building. But when it was all said and done, the first day came to an end

with little problem.

"I would like to thank the parents for a smooth first day, and then thank our teachers and staff as well, they all do an amazing job," Owenby said.



Photos by Lowell Nicholson



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state in the Target Sports project. As a first place winner in the Target Sports project, Kolbe has earned Master Status in his 4-H project work and receives an invitation to National 4-H Congress this fall. This honor highlights a year of hard work, including winning first place honors at DPA (District Project Achievement) and leading the Union County Shotgun Team to a 2nd Place finish at the State Shotgun Match.

Phillipe Jennings, son of Timothy and Jamila Jennings, took first place honors in the International project, earning him Master Status in his project work. Phillippe also will travel to National 4-H Congress this fall. Phillippe's first place honors, culminates a successful year in the International project including top honors at DPA, international travel to France, Israel, Netherlands, and six weeks in Brazil.

Madeline Walker, daughter of Russell and Sher-

ry Walker also took first place honors in the Food Safety & Preservation Project, earning her Master Status. Madeline is also invited to National 4-H Congress in the fall. Winning first place at State Congress, wraps up Madeline's success in the Food Safety & Preservation Project, including winning 1st place at DPA in March.

Ansley Burnette, daughter of Rod and Dawn Burnette, also won Master Status by winning the Master Horseman Project last fall. Ansley was recognized as one of only two students in the state to complete the Horseman Project.

Blane Brown, son of Bill and Bethany Brown took 2nd place honors in the Pork Production Project. Catey Allen, daughter of Carl and Michelle Allen finished 5th in the Fashion Review Project.

"This is the first year in my tenure that we have had three winners at State Congress," said Timothy Jen-

nings, Union County 4-H Coordinator. "These students have worked hard in their 4-H careers. They are great role models for younger 4-Hers in Union County who aspire to compete at State Congress some day."

During the week, 4-Hers enjoyed educational tours of the Martin Luther King Center, State Capitol, Georgia EMC, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Center for Disease Control, and Georgia Power Building. 4-Hers also enjoyed an afternoon at Six Flags where the state winners were announced at the Cristal Pistol.

4-H is the youth program of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

For more information about this program or other 4-H activities contact Timothy Jennings at the UGA Cooperative Extension Service at (706) 439-6030.

Governor's Office awards Intoxilyzer 9000 grant to the Union County Sheriff's Office

The Union County Sheriff's Office is pleased to announce that their agency has applied for and has received an \$8,000 grant from the Governor's

Office of Highway Safety (GOHS).

The grant, which runs October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014, will finance a new Intoxilyzer

9000. This machine was approved for use in the State of Georgia in January of 2013 as an evidential breath testing device used during the course of DUI arrests. Agencies all over the state will be required to replace their Intoxilyzer 5000 before December 31, 2015. With this grant, Union County Sheriff's Office will be able to update their equipment, without a cost to the citizens of Union County.

"The Governor's Office of Highway Safety is committed to keeping everyone safe on our roads and highways, from the smallest child to the most seasoned drivers," said GOHS Director Harris Blackwood.

"Keeping drunk drivers off of our roads is of the utmost importance to me," said Sheriff Mack Mason. "I want the citizens of Union County to know that we take drunk driving seriously and any measure that we can implement to keep drunk drivers off our roads will be used."