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traveled south on Georgia 325.

According to Cpl. Russell, Freeman was following a riding companion at the time of the crash on his 2015 Yamaha.

"He was riding with another fellow, who had made it on down the road on his motorcycle," Cpl. Russell said. "His traveling companion came back looking for him and found him laying there. He put out a call for help."

Freeman was traveling south on Georgia 325 and negotiating a left-hand curve. Freeman, Cpl. Russell said, was traveling too fast for

conditions.

"He left the roadway, the bike traveled 115 feet skidding on its side," Cpl. Russell said. "The bike struck a sizable rock, causing Mr. Freeman to go airborne. He traveled 9 more feet before striking a tree."

Freeman was pronounced dead at the scene, Cpl. Russell said.

He was preceded in death by his two grandfathers, Robert Eugene Freeman and Pat Hughes. Joel Preston Freeman was a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Surviving Joel Preston Freeman are his parents, Keith

and Sheila Hughes Freeman of Blairsville, one brother, Aaron Keith Freeman of Blairsville, two grandmothers, Jackie Freeman of Brasstown, NC, and Lois Mason of Blairsville, several aunts, uncles, cousins, many other relatives and friends also survive.

A Celebration of Joel's Life was held on Sunday, Feb. 26, at the Union County Community Center with Pastor Valentin Rush officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations may be made to any charity in Joel's memory.

Mountain View Funeral Home of Blairsville had charge of the arrangements.

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it right the first time.

Amazingly, though the job can become incredibly intense and stressful, Baxter and her fellow dispatchers never become overwhelmed by the task at hand.

In the face of extreme stress, they revert to training.

"You just do it," said Baxter. "Your heart's in it, and you take care of your people. That's what you do. You do your job."

Dispatchers work in pairs for 12-hour shifts, and there's a third dispatch station at the ready, just in case.

Each dispatcher logs into several programs to start their shift, such as computer-aided dispatch and GCIC/NCIC databases, dealing with as many as five and six screens at one time.

This requires a mastery of multitasking and a plethora of patience, which is demonstrated every time someone calls 911 or an officer keys up their radio.

No matter the emergency - from fire to violence to crimes in progress - the men and women of Union County 911 Dispatch are ready to get whatever help is needed to a resident's doorstep.

On the first responder side, dispatchers also run tag and driver's license information for police officers and sheriff's deputies, helping law enforcement to gather a more accurate picture of who they're dealing with out in the field.

Emergency Medical Services and the fire department coordinate their efforts through dispatch as well, and dispatchers regularly interact with the following agencies:

Union County Sheriff's Office, Blairsville Police Department, Union County Fire, Union General EMS, Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia State Patrol, U.S. Forest Service, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, wrecker services, medical life flight services, as well as neighboring agencies around the state.

Union County 911 even acts as the backup dispatch for Towns County 911, and vice versa, should there be an abundance of emergency calls at one time or need for greater than average first responder coordination.

Keeping that in mind, it's important to only dial 911 in cases of true emergencies.

In 2016 alone, Union County's staff of nine dispatchers, working two at a time around the clock, handled 7,096 calls through 911, notwithstanding regular



Dispatcher Carrie King



Dispatcher Marlana Bryson

communications with all first responders.

But many 911 calls aren't true emergencies, and these calls add up and can potentially take away from a dispatcher's valuable time.

For those who would still like to reach out with their concerns, there exists another number that goes through to the same dispatchers on shift, just to the non-emergency line.

The Union County 911 Non-Emergency phone number is (706) 439-6038.

As far as calling 911, dialing from a landline will give dispatchers a home address, and triangulating a call from a cellphone is remarkably fast and usually accurate, though the mountainous terrain can make tracking cellphones during emergencies tricky.

Dispatchers say one of the biggest things residents can do to help them out is to know their address and be able to

tell dispatchers where they are. That way, emergency services can get to residents as quickly as possible.

Union County Fire Chief David Dyer took over as 911 director when Charles Worden retired earlier this year.

Dyer is proud of the men and women who work in 911 Dispatch, and he realizes that their jobs are just as important as other first responders.

"This is not just a group of people sitting here waiting on a phone call - it's busy," said Dyer. "They are continuously working, and it's extremely stressful because you are isolated."

"I think it's one of the biggest unsung aspects of public safety. People see policemen out on the street, they see firemen, they see ambulances. They never see dispatchers. But they know that when they call 911, there's somebody on that line."

Allegheny Masonic Lodge "Big Country" Breakfast March 4th

The Allegheny Masonic Lodge "Big Country" Breakfast will be held on Saturday, March 4th, from 7 a.m. - 11 a.m. at the Allegheny Masonic Lodge, 60 Rodgers Street, Blairsville, GA for \$7 per plate. This year's meal includes: eggs, bacon, sausage, grits, pancakes, biscuits and gra-

vy and a beverage.

Please come out and enjoy a great breakfast and fellowship. All of our proceeds go to our Masonic Charities such as scholarships, support for the local Boy Scouts, 4H, the UGA Experiment Station, etc.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you.

UGH...continued from Page 1A

External Defibrillation (AED) units; and techniques from the "Stop the Bleed" campaign.

Already, teachers and staff at Union County Primary and Union County High have received visits from the hospital, with further visits planned for each of the remaining schools in the system - Union County Elementary, Union County Middle and Woody Gap School - between now and March 15.

The idea for the training days came out of a meeting between Union General Hospital Administrator Leslie Daniel and Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield. The two were discussing a different project at the board office not long ago, and Dr. Rayfield asked Daniel if the hospital would donate an AED machine.

"And I said I would if I could train everybody in the system to use the AED," said Daniel. "I got to thinking about it, and I thought, why not do AED, CPR and this new program that's coming through the state called 'Stop the Bleed.'"

Added Daniel: "The hospital always wants to get everybody involved with health care. That's so important to us."

Leading the training sessions has been Union General EMS Director Wesley Rogers, with assistance from Air Life Georgia and Northeast Georgia Medical Center.

Rogers has made sure to bring plenty of training tools to each session, such as dummy chests for the practice of Hands-Only CPR, along with actual AED machines, tourniquets and medical supplies used in the cessation of bleeding.

"The point we're trying to get across is to convince people to act if somebody's having an emergency, and not to be scared that they're going to hurt somebody or do something wrong," said Rogers.

Much of the philosophy behind bystander first-aid has changed in recent years, driven by the need to simplify what is required of a bystander in an



UCLS teachers Dixie Conger and Brittney Stinnett practice applying a tourniquet during a "Stop the Bleed" training session held by Union General Hospital in the high school's Media Center on Wednesday, Feb. 22.



Greg Chambers and John Duncan practice applying a tourniquet under the supervision of Flight Medic Jesse Turk.

emergency in order to encourage intervention.

"You don't have to have a lot of training - the point is to act," said Rogers.

Dr. Melissa Bridges, who teaches English at Union County High, said she got a lot out of the training, which took place at the high school on Feb. 22.

"This is very relevant and timely training, seeing as we work with students," said Dr. Bridges. "Anything can happen at any time. Plus, having my own children, it just gives me a better sense that I can deal with a problem should it arise."

UCLS Principal John Hill also took part in the training, and he said the school system is fortunate to have access to this type of program through Union

General Hospital.

At the high school, Hill sees the training as being especially important in terms of the many sports activities enjoyed by students.

"I've had a lot of staff members really say positive things about the training," said Hill, who utilized the training as a first-aid refresher course. "The hospital, all those guys are doing a fantastic job, very professional and very businesslike. I really learned a lot that I didn't know, so it was great."

Residents looking to learn more about the lifesaving technique known as Hands-Only CPR can visit the American Heart Association's website at www.heart.org.

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