

Weather...from Page 1A

ready for power outages. You have to prepare for emergency shelter for folks.

"We're hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst case scenario," Commissioner Paris said.

The National Weather Service models were changing, but all models show sleet and ice headed our way.

At press time, the wintry precipitation was expected to arrive around 11 a.m. on Monday and continue throughout the afternoon.

In preparation, Commissioner Paris ordered the Union County Courthouse closed for Monday.

Union County Schools were already closed for President's Day, as well as local banks and the U.S. Post Office.

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency, or GEMA, warned of black ice conditions for Tuesday and



Capt. Richard Jones and Chief David Dyer examine weather models. Wednesday, and the National Weather Service was calling for snow on Friday.

In between, low temperatures for Tuesday called for 17 degrees, on Wednesday, 2 degrees, and 6 degrees on Thursday.

Chief Dyer said that he wished he had a look at the

problem.

"We'll be busy, we'll have our usual calls, but, if road conditions get bad, we'll be running down the road working wrecks," Chief Dyer said.

Of course Chief Dyer said he would love it if Union County dodged this weather bullet.

"Of course I think it's a little iffy right now," Chief Dyer said.

"We've got a pretty good bit of information, but, I don't think we have a handle on what exactly is going to happen. We are right at that edge where it could go either way," Chief Dyer said. "I hope at 11 a.m. the weather service will have a better idea of exactly what is going to happen. By then, we will probably be in the middle of it."

Commissioner Paris said there are concerns beyond Monday.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are projected to be bitterly cold by the National Weather Service.

"It's going to get colder and colder throughout the week. If we do get a large dose of ice, and power lines go down, it is going to be a serious situation," Commissioner Paris said. "The Red Cross is on standby in the event of a need for emergency shelters, but, if it is bad enough, you cannot prepare enough."

"We have to hope we can keep dodging bullets," Commissioner Paris said.

If the winter storm does arrive, the event will significantly impact traffic, Union County Sheriff's Sgt. Adam Dayton said.

Black ice issues are projected for Tuesday and Wednesday.

GEMA predicted significant travel problems for Monday in the mountain ar-

reas, with black ice expected Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

"If you salt the roads, the ice will melt and then refreeze overnight," Sgt. Dayton said. "Black ice is the biggest problem in a scenario like this."

Power crews are on standby with the threat of downed powerlines and iced over trees expected, Commissioner Paris said.

Post impact shelters are being prepared to be opened by the American Red Cross if 50 to 100 persons are impacted by power outages, Commissioner Paris said.

Emergency shelters will be available in the event they become a necessity, Commissioner Paris said.

"You can never be prepared enough for a storm like this," Commissioner Paris said. "This is a scenario that we would rather not see unfold."

STAR...from Page 1A

what it takes to become STAR Students and STAR Teachers.

STAR is an acronym, meaning Student Teacher Achievement Recognition. The STAR program is sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators Foundation.

To be named STAR Student, one must be a high school senior and obtain "the highest score on any single test date of the three-part SAT taken through the November test date of their senior year and be in the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average," according to the foundation website.

Those nominated as STAR Students must achieve SAT scores equal to or higher than the latest available national average on the critical reading, math and writing sections. Each high school STAR Student is then asked to name his or her STAR Teacher.

"Locally, from each school, we recognize a STAR Student and Teacher, and then they compete for a system-wide honor," said Williams. "The System winner moves

on to Region, and then the Region winner moves on to State, just to give you a little idea of how that works."

Rachel Todd, who was accompanied by her mother and father, Cynthia and Phillip, spoke to the group first.

"I just want to say thank you for everyone in my life, honestly, because without each and every one of you, I wouldn't be here today," said Todd. "I wouldn't be where I'm going next year or anything like that, so I want to thank mom and dad for putting up with me for 17 years and being my backbone through everything."

Todd also thanked the Union County Board of Education for its commitment to the school system, and Judge Murphy Miller for his dedication to the Mock Trial Team.

"Last but not least, thank you Coach Hunter for everything," said Todd. "I've been asked several times, why did you choose Coach Hunter? Namely because, not only have I had him for three math classes, he's helped me with my SAT scores and just math in general. And also, I

have him for homeroom, so he's kind of like my father at school."

Union County High School teacher and coach Tim Hunter was accompanied by his wife, Mandy, and his daughters Ava and Lola. As Todd's STAR Teacher, he expressed how important students like Todd are.

"For those of you who don't know her, she is as competitive an individual as you will ever meet in your life, and that is to her credit," said Hunter. "She is a winner in everything she does, and will continue to be."

Hunter went on to pay Todd what he considered the highest compliment he could give.

"A lot of times, you see kids come through the school who have very, very strong work ethics," said Hunter. "Rarely, you see them come through with an incredible, innate ability to do things academically. But when both of those two are the same person, that is somebody that you always remember. They are so few and far between, and she exemplifies all of that."

Victoria Nguyen, who

scored the highest in the SAT of any senior in the 11 sites of the Mountain Education Charter High School - around 2,000 students - attended the event with her parents, Jacquie and Rick, as well as her best friend, Sara Fuhs. The Nguyens own and operate the Lovely Nails businesses of Blairsville and Hiawassee.

"There are many things that have gone into getting to this point, and that includes inspiration, dedication, motivation, and the blood, sweat and tears of my parents," said Nguyen. "Secondly, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the hard work and dedication of all my teachers, counselors and administrators who have helped me through the years to get me where I am today."

Nguyen offered a special thank you to the staff at MECHS - several of whom were in attendance Tuesday night - and, of course, her STAR Teacher, Carrie Vandegriff.

"Mrs. Vandegriff - I would not be where I am today without you," said Nguyen. "You've inspired me with



your thoughtfulness, patience and dedication toward all your students. You really impressed me at how you take the time to really connect with each and every one of your students, including myself.

"You make learning fun with your teaching approach and your wonderful sense of humor," Nguyen continued. "You have the unique ability to make students excited to go to class. I know I'm only one of many students who you have positively influenced, and that you will continue to influence many more in the years to come."

Vandegriff, accompanied Tuesday evening by her husband, Mike, is the head

of the science department at White County High School. She instructed Nguyen in biology when Nguyen was a student in White County schools.

For Vandegriff, those designated as STAR Students should be viewed as more than mere intellectuals.

"There's so much depth that they bring to any classroom and any aspect of their life," said Vandegriff. "As they leave high school and go into the workforce and go into the world, I know that they'll make a very positive impact on everyone that they come in contact with. So, I am humbled to have been chosen by such a wonderful person to be her STAR Teacher."

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