

Digest...from Page 1A

and run everything as economically as possible.

"At least when we pay our property taxes, all the money but a very small fraction, stays here and is used in the local economy toward jobs,

education, and infrastructure," he said. "Once the school and the county set the millage rate and run the 5-year history comparison in the *North Georgia News* for two weeks, I can take all the necessary docu-

ments to have them approved by the Georgia Department of Revenue."

Commissioner Knight said he is still expecting to have everything ready for the tax bills to be printed and

mailed around Oct. 16th. The bills will be due by Dec. 20th as long as the digest and millage rates are approved on time by the state, Commissioner Knight said.

Taxes...from Page 1A

I'm proud that we're able to maintain our budget and millage rate with a slight decrease," he said. "The only way we're able to give a millage break is because of our SPLOST revenues. They pay for so much that ordinarily would have to come from the general fund budget."

A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 of assessed property value. The value of county property is assessed at 40 percent of its value.

It's the second year in a row that Commissioner Paris has cut the county millage rate.

The Union County Board of Education met Monday afternoon to propose the School Millage rate. The Union County School Board kept the millage rate at 11.798 mills last year. No details were available at press time on whether that millage rate will stay the same.

The Blairsville City Council will keep its millage rate at 2 mills for city maintenance and operations budget purposes.

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley said the city will do its part to keep taxes low.

"Nobody likes to pay

taxes. Nobody likes to have their taxes increased. We have to face facts, the economy just doesn't warrant a millage rate increase," Mayor Conley said. "People are hurting as it is. As a government, we just have to stay the course and keep costs in line as much as we can. We'll keep looking for ways to save the taxpayers' money."

The 2013 Tax Digest for Union County remains virtually unchanged from a year ago, Tax Commissioner Lee Knight said.

Overall, the tax digest is down \$461,400, Commissioner Knight said.

Once the ritual of locking in the new millage rates is complete, Commissioner Knight will deliver the county's Tax Digest, five-year tax histories and millage rate resolutions from local governments to the Georgia Department of Revenue.

If approved at the state level, tax bills will head to the printer and should be in the mail by around Oct. 16th.

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Open House...from Page 1A

extinguisher demonstrations. In the past we've cut up cars but this year we're not doing that. This is just a time for everyone to come together and see what's going on. It's also a good time for all the fire guys to come here and hang out. Usually we just come here for meeting and then go home, so it's a wonderful opportunity for us to bond as well."

Despite Union County's top-notch firefighters being on call 24/7, firefighter Matt McGough, says that fire safety and preparedness is the best recipe for avoiding an emergency situation.

However, if a fire occurs, one should immediately call E-911 and escape the building.

"Check your smoke alarms and never hesitate to call 911," McGough said. "Sometimes people feel nervous about calling, but if you think you have a fire call 911.



The brave men and women of Fire Station 2 at Jones Creek.

"The other thing that I emphasize is having an evacuation plan and once you get out, don't go back in. It can be tough, especially if you think your kids are in the house," he said. "The problem is, if you get out, then go back in,

you create another problem.

Instead of looking for one person, now we have to look for two."

The Open House took place between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and has averaged an attendance of around 150-200 people over the last few years, especially since they have been blessed with perfect weather each year.

"This year when we scheduled it, I was told, 'you can't have it that day, it's the first day of bow season,'" Ueltzen said. "I don't think it's going to matter. We have great weather, it was a little cool this morning but we're excited about today and look forward to another great event for the community."

Fest...from Page 1A

buildings, streams, rivers, mountains, and wildlife. Whether you came to soak in the beauty of Vogel State Park, tap your toes

to the live music, or dive in head first to the crafts and demonstrations, the festival was sure aiming to please.

"This event is the culmination of everything we do here at the park," Vogel Volunteer Rita DeMarco said. "We are going to try and make this an annual event. We are holding a photo contest, a silent auction, and the volunteers are selling food and drinks at the concessions. This is one of our biggest events of the year. The festival predates the park volunteers, the volunteers didn't become involved with the park until 1995."

As patrons made their way into the park, each of the artisans were providing demonstrations in their field of expertise. One of the crowd favorites as always, Jim "The Magic Man" Eubanks had dozens flocked around his tent, performing his tricks for children and adults of all ages. Eubanks has become a local celebrity, recently featured on CNN and Good Morning America.

With Riley O'Conner as the Master of Ceremonies, the festival featured the music of the Wauka Mountain Boys, Cornbread Ted and the Butterbeans, Collins Brothers and Friends, Roots and Branches, The Kelley Family, Phil Tanner and the Skillet Lickers.

The Vogel Volunteers also were selling bricks for a Memory Walkway. Anyone can still purchase a brick with up to 14 characters engraved into the brick to help preserve the memories of the park. All funds are given back to the 82-year old park for educational programs, the CCC Museum and other park needs that are not sufficiently funded by the park budget.

If you are interested in purchasing a brick for the Memory Walkway, please contact Vogel State Park at (706) 745-2628. Just because summer is winding down, doesn't mean that business will slow down for Vogel and its volunteers.

There is a full slate of activities lined up through the end of the year.

Up next on the agenda for the Vogel Volunteers will be the Music in the Park on Sept. 28th, the Fall Hoedown on Oct. 19th, and the Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 14th.

Vogel is a vital cog in the Union County economy. The park brings an estimated 219,000 visitors to the area. According to Arthur Fitton, \$15 million was pumped into the local community because of Vogel State Park.

"They visit the park, they fall in love, so they buy land up here," Fitton said.