

Appreciation...from Page 1A

rong. "And then, we've had some little kids come up and say, 'Can I give something?' And it might be 14 cents, but we act like they give \$1 million - it's just cute."

Those involved saw the event as a way of giving back.

"This is gratitude for what other people do for us," said Linda Maddox, a volunteer from 21st Century Church. "A lot of them have thankless jobs, and I think it's wonderful to be able to thank them."

And the officials and county employees who turned out for the lunch expressed mutual appreciation.

"It gives us confidence to go out and do the very best we can to serve the community like we're supposed to do," said Union County Sheriff Mack Mason. "We're getting a lot of response from the community in all avenues. If we drop our guard and lose the confidence of the people, it makes our job very hard - we need good public relations."

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Fire Department Lt. Jeff Fortenberry, Jim Brown on behalf of the Georgia Army National Guard and others showed up to take part in the feast.

Many sheriff's deputies, police officers and firefighters were on hand, as well as staff from Avita Community Partners, Notla Water Authority and more.



Blairsville Assistant Police Chief Michael Baxter and Union County Sheriff Mack Mason talk shop during the Appreciation Luncheon served by 21st Century Church. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

"It's really nice of the church," said Jessica Young of the Union County Health Department, while her coworker, Jennifer Dunn, commented that "the second plate was as good as the first plate."

The appreciation lunch could not have happened without the support and dedication of many, from businesses to everyday people just wanting to get in on appreciating those who keep the community up and running.

Steve's Steakhouse Cookie Jar Restaurant provided fried chicken and okra. Cook's Country Kitchen made the green peas, butter beans and potatoes. Ingles donated ham and turkey, BI-LO gave pies and even Adams Foods IGA of Cleveland, cooked chicken strips for the affair.

"The hard part of it

is you have to wait until the night before to get everything prepared, because you have to cook everything so it'll be fresh," said 21st Century Church volunteer Jamie Burbage. "We did Towns County last week on Thursday, and then this one this week - everybody's been cooking for about two weeks."

Volunteers from the church and people within the community also baked cakes, donated money to buy drinks and made savory dishes to be enjoyed by all.

"To see that they respond and are so appreciative, that's what's been so nice," said Pastor Berrong. "They just sit back and they're so relaxed - we just leave it to them, whatever they want. We're just there to serve them."

BOE hears progress reports

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County High School Principal John Hill, and assistant principals C.T. Hussion and Jennifer Ludlum continue to raise the bar at UCHS.

During the October BOE meeting, Hill provided the Board of Education with the Administration Update for the high school.

"I appreciate the opportunity to bring everyone up to speed on what we're trying to do at the high school," Principal Hill said. "We've got a lot of good things going on and it starts with the support of (the school board). I'd like to thank them, along with (Superintendent) Mr. (Gary) Steppe and (Assistant Superintendent) Dr. (Jeremy) Williams."

Hill discussed the leadership courses currently available at the high school along with the new Freshman Leadership course that all ninth graders will participate in.

"These kids learn people skills, they learn work skills, they will hear from guest speakers, they will learn how to write a resume, how to balance a checkbook. They are practical, career-focused goals," Principal Hill said. "They will learn how to shake hands. On Friday, the teacher has to shake every student's hand, look them in the eye and tell them good morning or good afternoon. These are skills that we feel our kids are deficient in. We've heard from some of the largest employers in the area that there is a big deficiency in these skills and that is something we're addressing."

Another program that Hill discussed is the STEM Program. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math and the program integrates those four subjects, that according to Hill, go hand-in-hand with each other. Hill added that the four areas have always been in their own little box and have never collaborated or worked together.

"My cousin is an engineer at Lockheed-Martin and he says a lot of the engineering students coming out of Georgia Tech don't know what a 5/16th wrench is or how an internal combustion engine works," Hill said.

"What we're doing is bringing the different types of kids together and blend them. You get the kids who are hands-on and the kids who are academically advanced and they both push each other up," he said. "What you find is, the kids who are more hands-on, they put more effort into the class because it's relevant and it's something they are interested in. Then you get the academically gifted kids learning about hands-on applications so it's very interesting."

Other areas that are working together are agriculture, environmental science, and engineering classes. Recently those classes are working on bio-diesel technology and did stream and water



sample investigations, and some of those reports will be sent to the State.

With an unprecedented 200 kids eligible for Beta Club, six new Advanced Placement (AP) courses have been added at the high school, according to Hill. Macroeconomics, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics, AP Studio Art, and AP U.S. History.

"What this does is give every gifted student a course that they are interested in, but we've also got some exceptional staff that's doing this," Hill said. "Some of the new teachers we've hired and some of the teachers that we already had are doing some extremely exciting things in these very difficult courses. But we're giving those kids who are not challenged enough with their regular classes are being challenged. They are struggling and they need to struggle because it's ultimately preparing them for work, but first of all, college."

Superintendent Gary Steppe asked the board to find the funds for the expensive AP tests. According to Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams, the tests run about \$90 each but Hill added, and Assistant Principal Ludlum confirmed, that free and reduced lunch kids are allowed one free exam per year.

"We need to take down those barriers for the economically disadvantaged kids because they have every right to the same opportunities as everyone else," Hill said.

Other courses added this year along with the leadership classes are Creative Writing, Engineering, and Forensics.

"The kids are really excited about (these courses) and we're getting good numbers and participation," Hill said.

In the afternoons, the high school has added a Flex Period, which is a 30-minute period at the end of the school day.

The 30-minutes will be used for club meetings, grade level meetings, and other uses that would otherwise interfere with instructional time.

If students meet the academically and behavioral standards, they are allowed to leave school early at the end of 4th Block.

With the addition of the Flex Period, Hill has noticed an improvement in grades and behavior, decreased tardies, and increased attendance.

There is also an after-school program that is available for students requiring extra attention with their

classwork.

In another program that has been in the works for a couple of years, the University of North Georgia is going to offer a class at Union County High School through the excel program beginning in the spring.

In order for UNG to provide a professor, there must be enough students that qualify, so in a three-county collaborative with Towns and Fannin counties, the three schools were able to meet the minimum requirement of eligible students.

The classes will be held during 4th Block on Monday and Wednesdays, as well as after school, for those with scheduling conflicts during the day.

This week, the freshmen will be taking a learning styles exam along with a career day.

According to Hill, the learning styles exam determines if the students are auditory learners, visual, or hands-on.

"When you know how you learn, you can express that to the teacher and can hone in on the things that you need to learn," Hill said. "Basically it helps the kids to figure out how they learn and what they need to be effective. It is also very helpful to the teachers because it cuts down on behavior problems and improves grades. And more importantly, the kids learn, and that's what needs to be happening."

Finally, Hill reminded everyone that next month the high school will be holding its Veterans Day ceremony and invites everyone to attend.

The event is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 7 beginning at 10 a.m. at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

The tradition was started in 2013 as a way to promote patriotism and Veteran awareness throughout Union County and its schools.

All Union County students will be attending the ceremony. Multiple groups from the school system will be involved in the ceremony, including the UCHS Band, UCHS Chorus, UCMS Chorus, UCHS BETA Club, and the UCHS FFA.

All Veterans, their families, and community members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

There will be special seating for Veterans on the field. Parking for all visitors will be available in the Elementary School parking lot.

If case of inclement weather the ceremony will take place in the UCHS Gym.