

Dustin Lee...from Page 1A

turnout gear, he went inside the burning home and rescued Lavonne and Larry Bennett. Larry Bennett is unable to walk without the aid of a walker.

The home was a total loss, but the Bennetts are safe and sound thanks to Lee.

"I came in here (court-house) not expecting anything, and now it's Dustin Lee Day in Union County," Lee said. "It really means a lot. I knew Commissioner Paris was going to talk about it, but, I had no idea that it would turn out the way it did."

Lee said he gets noticed a bit more when he goes into a local restaurant or the grocery store.

"Folks are coming up to me now, they recognize me from the news stories," he said. "I just did what I was trained to do. I wasn't seeking any glory. I just did what every Union



Capt. Richard Jones and Firefighter Dustin Lee. Photo/Charles Duncan

County firefighter is trained to do. I thank Chief Worden and Capt. Richard Jones for helping me be prepared for life and death situations. A special thanks goes out to Commissioner Paris, he really does everything within his power to have a top notch fire department."

Dustin's father, Wendell Lee, said from the day his son became a firefighter, he told him it was an uphill climb.

"I told him, 'now son, you're at the bottom rung of the ladder,'" Wendell Lee said. "I told him everything was out in front of him, and to keep climbing that ladder."

"The Good Lord was watching out for Dustin on Dec. 3 and putting him in the right places," Wendell Lee said. "I'm proud everything turned out with everybody safe."

Graduates...from Page 1A

took place at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

It was the largest graduating class in UCHS history. The next day, four graduates walked the aisle at Woody Gap School, making the 165 graduates the most in Union County

Schools history.

Graduation rate averages at the state level were 71.5 percent and 35 percent respectively in 2013.

"The hard work and dedication you focus on our students extends far beyond

the time you serve them," Williams said. "When each student walks across the stage on graduation night, they represent you and more than 14,000 hours of investment across 13 years.

"The daily impact on

students is often taken for granted, but we are in the profession because of teachers and mentors we now call colleagues," Williams said. "I thank you all for your passion and your service to our students."

Brown...from Page 1A

Mills, of Cherokee County, heard the case.

On June 21, 2012, Ronnie Brown showed up at his wife's place of work at Union General Hospital, and at gunpoint, forced her to leave that location in his vehicle. The incident occurred around 4:30 p.m. on June 21, Union County sheriff's authorities have said.

Debra Brown was then taken to a location near Wolf Creek where she was held against her will, Union County arrest warrants and sheriff's reports showed.

Authorities said Debra Brown talked her way through the incident, convinced her husband that the two would get back together, and convinced Ronnie Brown to take her back to her car. When they arrived back at Debra Brown's car, both got into Debra Brown's vehicle. The couple then traveled to Debra Brown's parents house; Ronnie Brown brought the gun, later determined to be a sawed off shotgun, along for the ride, sheriff's authorities said.

Authorities say Debra Brown went into the home,

told her folks to call 911 and went out the back door. The 911 call came from 169 C.H. Colwell Drive, the home of Debra Brown's parents, Union sheriff's authorities said.

Then Union County sheriff's Deputy Travis Gibson soon arrived and began questioning Ronnie Brown as he stood outside.

"Deputy Gibson asked him if he had a gun," then Investigator Lamar Dyer said. "He said he had no gun, but Deputy Gibson could see it in the front seat. It was a 12-gauge sawed off shotgun."

Union County sheriff's Deputy Julio Cruz and then Union County sheriff's Sgt. David Goodwin also arrived at the scene to assist in the

arrest.

At the time, the first charge against Ronnie Brown was misdemeanor obstruction for lying about not having a weapon, Deputy Dyer said.

Other charges against Ronnie Brown followed after investigators had the opportunity to interview Debra Brown and her parents, Deputy Dyer said.

Those charges included kidnapping, false imprisonment, possession of an illegal sawed off shotgun, possession of a weapon during the commission of a felony, and aggravated assault in violation of Georgia's Family Violence Act, Union County arrest warrants show.

Sheriff...from Page 1A



Sheriff Mack Mason

which can be a hassle when you have a lot of people traveling. You also get a lot of people who come into this area and aren't familiar with it."

Sheriff Mason reflected on his first year in office and feels strongly that a lot of the first-year wrinkles have been worked out and 2014 will be a smooth ride now that the transition period is out of the way.

"We're looking forward to the new year," Sheriff Mason said. "I think this year has gone very well. We had to make a lot of hard decisions and a lot of unpleasant decisions, but we made it for the good of the people of Union County."

"In the coming months, after all the records are in, we'll be given an account on the budget and our expenditures and right now we feel very good about it," he said. "Some areas we were underfunded and we dealt with a lot of start up costs, but everything has turned out better than expected and we're really looking forward to beginning the New Year."

Employees of the Sheriff's Office, Blairsville City Police, Union County Jail, and the Blairsville Probation Office and their families were on hand, as the Brackett Room was bursting at the seams. Of course that is usually the case when Jim's Smoking' Que and raffle prizes are there for the taking.

The Christmas party was also a time for Sheriff Mason and some of his employees to reflect back on their first year in office.

"We have in the neighborhood of 70 employees, counting our part-time people and a lot of them are here tonight with their families," Sheriff Mason said.

"This is a way to conclude the year going into the Holiday Season. We hope that everyone has a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe holidays," he said.