

STEM...from Page 1A

their freshman and sophomore year.”

Then, through partnerships with Young Harris College and North Georgia Technical College, these students are able to take advanced-level dual enrollment classes and get advanced placement credits on campus at UCHS in their junior and senior years, she said.

“We also work really hard to make sure they all complete an internship,” said Frizzell, which is another requirement for STEM certification.

Frizzell thanked the members of the Blairsville-Union County community for their help in arranging internships at local businesses and at Union General Hospital for these students.

She also thanked the STEM teachers, without whom the STEM program would never have been possible.

Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill took the floor to say a few words.

“Kids, I hate to tell you, the end goal is not a college degree,” said Hill. “It is a job – a very good career. So, keep that in mind. And keep in mind that all the theory and all of the book knowledge in the world is all worthless if you do not have the practical application piece.”

“Something that you have to keep in mind, kids, are the soft skills. Those are the things that are going to set you apart as you enter the workforce. Ethics, morals, punctuality, being nice



Superintendent Woods speaking on the importance of STEM education in the Multipurpose Room of Union County High.

Photo by Mark Smith

to people – those are valued. And I think they’re universally valued across our nation.

“In your generation, if you can bring those things to the table, along with a very good, solid education, you’re going to go very far in life. So, don’t ever forget how important that is, and don’t forget all of these folks that helped you get to where you are today. Always look for opportunities to give back.”

Hill then introduced the keynote speaker, Richard Woods.

“Our job is really to prepare you for life,” said Woods to the students in the room. “That’s what we do.”

Continued Woods, “(A

high school diploma) allows you to open up and unlock doors. STEM is just a key. It is just a key to provide a door that allows these young people to experience something.

“But it does take a lot of work. This is not something that the intent is just to give everyone a trophy. We want it to mean something and be of value. So again, to the leadership – from the superintendent to the board – thank you for seeing the vision.

“To the teachers as well, I can’t say enough about this. If our teachers do not buy into this wholeheartedly, then it does not happen. You get a very mediocre, watered-down experience. I think that’s the importance of having buy-in.”

Woods went on to say that the STEM program is not meant to be carried out in isolation, but to be done in concert with the community, which is the reason for the internship requirement. That adds the practical application piece, he said.

Having a STEM-certified school in the county will also attract economic development, he said, because businesses will see that the school is producing a pool of skilled workers and leaders.

Finally, Woods encouraged students, teachers, parents and the community to be ambassadors for the STEM program in Union County.

“I think you’re on the right path,” said Woods.



State School Superintendent Richard Woods, right, with UCHS faculty on April 26.

Photo by Mark Smith

Prom 2019...from Page 1A



Everyone had a blast at this year’s Union County High School Prom, which featured plenty of dancing all night long at the Community Center.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

receive their crowns and share a first dance as the King and Queen of Prom.

“It was really shocking to be named prom queen,” said Owenby. “I was super surprised and super honored that my classmates would select me for Prom Queen.”

Smith was also surprised and excited to take on the role as Prom King, since royalty runs in the family.

“My sister was Prom Queen three years ago,” said Smith. “So, it’s great to have this sort of tradition that I can carry on.”

Next steps for the pair include Owenby attending

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College after graduation, and Smith soon heading to the North Georgia Technical College in Clarkesville to pursue an education and career in the welding industry.

“I signed with Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College on Thursday,” said Owenby. “I plan to further my education to become an ag teacher.”

Both seniors have enjoyed their time at Union County High and advise underclassmen to cherish the memories they’ve made while they move through this part of their lives.

“I’m excited for graduation and happy to move

forward,” said Owenby. “I would recommend that underclassmen take in every moment they can, because it all flies by so fast, especially senior year.

“It seems like senior year is the fastest year ever, so just take your time to enjoy it, because you’ll miss these good moments if you don’t. It’s something that you’ll never be able to get back if all you have are worries.”

Added Smith, “I agree with Emily. I just wish there was a way to know that you are in the good old days before you left them.”

Union General Health System generates \$256,286,994 for Local and State Economy



System provided approximately \$4,301,105 in uncompensated care while sustaining more than 1,103

adequate payments from government insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid have made it increasingly difficult to meet the community’s health care needs. In 2017, 44 percent of all hospitals in Georgia operated with negative total margins.

“With a combined total of 23 affiliated facilities, Union General Health System is a leader in healthcare for the North Georgia area. Our two hospitals and nursing homes are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and are dedicated to ensuring our residents receive state-of-the-art health care services,” Kevin Bierschenk, CEO said. “We are constantly challenged with making sure each patient receives quality care regardless of ability to pay. This environment often puts financial stress on our state’s hospitals.”

According to Kevin Bierschenk, CEO, every community needs nearby access to a strong, vibrant health care system that will not only meet the health care needs of its residents but also attract other industries and businesses to the area.

“Preserving access to health care is extremely important and we are the primary guardian of health in our local communities,” said Kevin Bierschenk, CEO. “A healthy community depends on the strength of its hospitals and healthcare facilities, both financially and in treating patients.” NT(May1.Z26)CA

full-time jobs throughout the North Georgia region. When a US Department of Commerce multiplier is applied to the jobs number, it is revealed that an additional 2,726 jobs are supported across the state due to the economic activity of Union General Health System. The health system spent \$61,257,769 in salaries and benefits, resulting in total household earnings in our region of \$120,579,793.

“Union General Health System’s mission is not only to provide quality health care but also to serve as an economic engine for our local communities,” Kevin Bierschenk, CEO. “We are proud to partner with our North Georgia region to offer quality health care services close to home. As a leading employer in the region, we are dedicated to improving lives.”

Union General Health System is a major component of the area’s economic strength; however, the health system’s leadership, like the rest of the Georgia hospital community, is concerned about economic challenges that affect the ability to deliver timely and efficient care. A fast-growing uninsured population and in-

In 2017, Union General Health System (Union General Hospital, Chatuge Regional Hospital, Union County Nursing Home, Chatuge Regional Nursing Home as well as 19 other affiliated facilities) in the North Georgia region generated \$256,286,994 in revenue for the local and state economy, according to a recently released report by the Georgia Hospital Association, the state’s largest hospital trade association. Union General Health System had direct expenditures of more than \$109,585,237 in 2017. The total economic impact of those expenditures was \$256,286,994 when combined with an economic multiplier developed by the United States Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis. This output multiplier considers the “ripple” effect of direct hospital expenditures on other sectors of the economy, such as medical supplies, durable medical equipment, and pharmaceuticals. Economic multipliers are used to model the resulting impact of a change in one industry on the “circular flow” of spending within an economy as a whole.

During the same time period, Union General Health