

BOE continues livestreamed meetings; Hill thanks community

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Board of Education convened on May 19 to discuss upcoming budget cuts, personnel changes and graduation in a regular meeting streamed live on YouTube.

Superintendent John Hill opened the meeting with a brief update on the 14 percent state budget cuts that are coming down the pike for school systems across the state.

Despite keeping a close

eye on the potential shortfalls, Hill admitted that not much has changed since the last meeting, and he is still waiting on state lawmakers to pass a budget in June to have a better understanding of how big an impact the cuts will have locally.

"We won't know anything until we get our allotment sheet after the legislature meets and that has been approved by the Georgia Department of Education," Hill said. "We will keep you all posted as we get more information about the

budget.

"I do want everyone to know that we're doing everything we can to take care of our employees and continually provide the quality education that the students of Union County deserve."

Hill also touched on the Union County and Woody Gap graduations that were held later in the week, complimenting faculty and staff for their hard work to provide students with the best ceremonies possible.

"The high school folks have done a great job," he said. "They've been filming graduation (for UCHS) and each family was able to see that live. They had their honors and awards ceremony (online). It was viewed by more than 1,000 people, and we've had a lot of compliments.

"I want everyone to know the Baccalaureate Service went very well. It was put out on Sunday evening at 7 p.m. Tonight, we're holding our scholarship ceremony. We had over \$200,000 in scholarships donated by local businesses during a financial crisis.

"That says so much about our community. Thank you, Union County business owners

and anyone that donated to help these seniors be successful in the next phase of their life.

"To the seniors out there, we love you, we miss you, and we're committed to your success post-graduation. Keep your chin up, keep doing the right thing, and you're going to be successful in life.

"Just remember that you have a whole group of employees here that love you and are committed to your success, even after you graduate and leave us. So, don't hesitate to come back and ask for help. Anything we can do, we're here to serve you."

Hill went on to say well done to Union County teachers and paraprofessionals for their work during the online class sessions over the final two months. According to Hill, Union County set the bar for virtual learning thanks to the cooperation between parents, students and staff.

"A lot of school districts really struggled with this effort," he said. "I feel like the reason they struggled is because they didn't have the staff that we have. They've gone above and beyond to serve our students during this trying



time."

Hill also bragged on the school nutrition staff and the volunteers who helped serve almost 194,000 meals during the shutdown. The school will continue serving meals to children in the community for another month, he added.

"I'm so proud of the effort that these folks put in," Hill said. "It's super hard work, but it's super rewarding. We will not be serving on Memorial Day, but we will pick back up on Tuesday and continue

through the end of June."

In personnel moves, the board voted to approve all certified rehires and all recommended separations. All told, the school system parted ways with four teachers and two paraprofessionals, including four resignations, one retirement and one termination.

Both lists will be available to the public after the school board votes to accept the May 19 meeting minutes, which will occur in the next regular board meeting in June.

Scholarships...from Page 1A

was accepted into the United States Air Force Academy for an education valued at over \$416,000.

Savannah Dyer, Elexia Ochoa and Mattison Ruff will receive the Hagan Scholarship, which is a nationwide merit scholarship for high-achieving and rural students that will provide each with \$48,000 over four years at their chosen colleges.

Ruff will receive an extra \$8,000 her junior year to study abroad.

Local businesses and organizations also gave scholarships to seniors whom they felt deserving of the support, such as Jessie Holbrook and Lindsay Lovell, who received the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Above & Beyond Scholarship.

Kody English received the Byron Herbert Reece Memorial

Scholarship, which is selected by UCHS English teachers and awarded to an upcoming Young Harris College student who excels in writing.

"The Class of 2020 was honored and recognized for their academic and personal accomplishments," Hussion said regarding the ceremony. "Even in these tough times, our local foundations, organizations and businesses awarded generous scholarships that totaled approximately \$222,000.

"On behalf of our students, I would like to thank our community for their unwavering support. This graduating class has also been awarded \$2.45 million in college scholarships. Additionally, 63 members of the Class of 2020 received a 3.7 or higher GPA.

Their academic achievements qualify them for

over \$350,000 in Zell Miller Scholarship Funds. Another 78 graduates will receive the HOPE Scholarship, which equals \$391,000 in paid tuition. Finally, 50 students are eligible for the HOPE Grant to be used at technical colleges. This grant money equates to \$114,000 towards diplomas or certificates.

"Class of 2020, your opportunities are vast as you bid farewell to UCHS in pursuit of higher education and training. If you choose to use your awarded scholarships to earn certificates, diplomas and degrees over the next four years, your class will have been awarded over \$5.86 million towards your education."

To watch the entire awards video, visit the Union County High School Facebook page.

Dyer...from Page 1A

notch archer when I took the reigns as head coach," Potts said.

By the end of his sophomore year, Dyer's stock was rising, and Emmanuel started taking interest. While participating in a 4-H competition at the college, Emmanuel Coach John Winchester was so impressed that he approached Dyer to ask his age.

When Dyer answered that he was only 16, a stunned Winchester requested that he reach back out in a year or two.

Dyer never forgot the coach's offer, and in the fall of his senior year, he got back in touch. As it happened, Winchester hadn't forgotten either, extending an invite for an October visit to Emmanuel.

"Their agriculture program really drew me in,"

Dyer said. "I'm not sure what I want to major in yet, but I know it will be something in agriculture like ag business or ag education."

Despite coming from a family that isn't heavily involved in archery, Dyer still credited them with putting him on a path that led to the local 4-H program and a college scholarship.

"My dad and brother really started me off shooting and taught me a lot about it, but they weren't into it as much as I am," he said. "My brother was into shotguns, and sometimes he shot bows, but he didn't do it competitively.

"I really got serious about archery and knew it was something I could do (at college) during my sophomore year. I was among the Top 20 (archers) in the state, and I had the Emmanuel coach talking to

me at that time.

"I also couldn't have done this without Mr. (Timothy) Jennings and my 4-H coaches. They really helped the program grow into what it is today."

Jennings serves as Union County Extension Coordinator and assistant archery coach, and he, too, had high praise for Dyer and his abilities.

"Preston has led the 4-H Archery Team the last couple of years," Jennings said. "Unfortunately, the team was unable to compete at the state match, but we are proud to have Preston represent Union County at the collegiate level."

The archery team usually participates in four indoor events each year, with Dyer competing in the Open-Compound class. The team also competes annually in an outdoor archery competition at Rock Eagle 4-H Camp in Eatonton.

"Preston is an all-around great person, and all the kids looked up to him as well as the rest of the senior archers," Potts added. "I look forward to seeing where Preston's future takes him in archery as well as life."

UCHS Access Students and Teaching Staff thank local businesses



UCHS Access Students during Community Based Instruction

Union County High School Access Students and Teaching Staff would like to thank the following local businesses for providing vocational training opportunities during this year's Community Based Instruction Program: CVS Pharmacy, Chick-fil-A, Ingles Grocery Store, PaPa's Pizza, Corrugated Replacements, and Union General Hospital.

Prior to school closures due to Covid-19, these students volunteered their time and effort to learn various vocational tasks that included stocking and fronting product, dining room preparation, bagging groceries, making pizza boxes, packaging orders, housekeeping tasks, and more.

We can not thank these wonderful business partners enough for their support and look forward to working with them again in the future.