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The Union County Board of Education showing unanimous support for an agenda item on Tuesday, Aug. 20.
Photo by Mark Smith

wall-to-wall academy, where academics would be focused on whatever career (the student) has in mind," Davis said. "For instance, construction, they would take more math and geometry. Healthcare, they would take more biology and sciences. It's really just connecting the dots."

A College and Career Academy at Union County Schools would not replace or displace existing programs, and instead would be an addition to existing programs, Davis said.

The \$3 million would generally be for renovation of existing buildings and construction of new facilities to accommodate the academy at the school system.

Davis said that most school systems that apply for this grant don't get it the first time around, but he and Superintendent John Hill are confident in Union County's ability to earn the grant, as so many of the requirements are already in place.

Because the Union County School System is set up as a Georgia charter school, however, the grant application will require the school board's approval of a charter contract amendment prior to submittal to the state.

Davis said such an amendment would not affect the system's charter status, and the board unanimously approved the above-mentioned CTAE plans, agreeing to circle back on the contract amendment.

The contract amendment was on the agenda for a called meeting that occurred after press time on Aug. 27.

Davis said the CTAE Program has grown by over 14% since last school year, and High School Principal C.T. Hussion added that 62 new high school students have enrolled since the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

In other school news, Transportation Director Stanley Garrett will retire this week, effective Aug. 30. Garrett has



Leslie Daniel with John Hill in the August school board meeting.

been with the school system for 43 years, and Superintendent Hill said he will be greatly missed.

The issue of Garrett's replacement was to be discussed in the Aug. 27 called meeting alongside the charter contract amendment.

Also in the Aug. 20 school board meeting, retired U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Art McCann was recognized for his July 10 induction into the 27th Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning.

McCann currently works as an administrative assistant at Union County High.

Middle School Principal Gwen Stafford and Athletic Director Dr. Banks Bitterman presented middle school student Noel Hyatt with the "Going the Extra Mile Award" that Tuesday.

Hyatt raised \$1,300 for student athletes who might not be able to afford athletic gear otherwise this year. She will split the money between the athletic departments of Union and Towns County Schools because she has attended both.

Board office staff also recognized several community partners, including the folks behind the annual "Backpack-2-School Bash," plus Bank OZK, Union General Hospital, United Community Bank and First Baptist Church of Blairsville.

Special Education Department Chair Crystal Chastain accepted the Special Education Graduation Rate Award for her department.

Local Family Connection Director Katy Jones received a certificate of recognition for the 2019 State of Hope Sites Award.

Union County Schools was one of only 10 school systems in the entire state that was awarded a State of Hope Site Grant, which Jones wrote, and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport said Jones hoped to use the grant money to continue the food bank and the mentor program.

"It's not all about achievement," Davenport said. "It's sometimes about keeping kids warm and providing tennis shoes and some of the other things that they actually need. We do appreciate your part in that. Thank you."

Davenport reported that the Homework Enrichment Center – the system's new afterschool program – was on schedule to start Aug. 26 and run four days a week.

Teachers are sending out their recommendation forms now, Davenport said, because the program is available by teacher recommendation only.

Alternative Education Program Assistant Principal Casey Jones reported that there are currently 45 students distributed among three programs. Jones said he expects to have 10 early graduates this fall.

The schools held a third and final millage rate public hearing on Aug. 27, which, again, occurred after press time. Following the public hearing, the board was expected to adopt the millage rate of 11.74 mills to account for the school system's portion of 2019 property taxes.