

# Woods Tours Schools...from Page 1A



State School Superintendent Woods talked safety amid COVID-19 with nursing staff and UCBS senior interns Mary Davis and Jaden Olmstead last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Primary School Principal Millie Owenby, left, showing off the media center for Richard and Lisha Woods that Thursday. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## POW and MIA to be honored by American Legion Auxiliary at local Davenport Vet Center

On Friday, September 18th, from 4-7 PM, the local Unit 121 of the American Legion Auxiliary will hold an open house at the Leon Davenport Veterans Center on 78 Old Blue Ridge Highway (the gray building that used to be the Blairsville Chamber of Commerce, adjacent to the park and ride). Those who have experienced the grief of having or being a POW or MIA are welcome to come and join in fellowship for a time of reflection. During the open house,



POW/MIA individuals will be honored with a candle lighting, and recitations of the Missing Man will be given at 4:30, 5:30, and 6:30. Attendees are encouraged to bring a photo of the POW/MIA to be placed on

the table of honor, and attendees will be given a few moments to speak, if they desire, about their loved one. COVID precautions will be taken; social distancing will be observed and masks will be required to be worn inside the building. Light refreshments will be served. For more information on the program, please contact Unit President/Chaplain Janice Walters-Taylor at 706-745-1854. NT(Sep9,24)CA

students safe on campus. Woods has been visiting various schools around the state to see how different systems are operating amid COVID-19. He's been gathering ideas as well as asking what he as an elected official can do for the schools. Hill said he would like for communication to improve between the school system and the Department of Public Health, but that he had the utmost confidence in the district's local COVID-19 Task Force consisting of doctors and others from the Blairsville community. Together, Woods, Hill, Principal C.T. Hussion and an entourage of educators undertook an extensive walking tour of the high school, stopping to speak with teachers and students while discussing the various COVID mitigation practices implemented in Union County. From there, Hill took Woods over to the primary school, where Principal Millie Owenby led him on a tour of the facility there, showing him the ways in which the school has come to embrace the successes and challenges of this year's virtual and in-class learning

options. Woods was impressed by the district's preparation, lauding both the robust online learning contingencies and the in-house contact tracing program in the inevitable event of COVID-19, to be assisted by systemwide assigned seating to limit the number of people having to quarantine. "It seems to be a very unified group," Woods said of the overall effort. "With contact tracing, the plan there looks to be very efficient - what I've seen is a good job. "I think we're looking at what could be for the future, and we're looking at some proactive things such as distance learning and what do we want to keep even after this passes." Added Woods, "When you look at how everyone's handling (returning amid COVID-19), it's a little bit different, but there are a lot of commonalities. Here, they have a great plan; they know that if X happens, this will be our next step. "Looking at providing for needs of kids, of teachers - even those that have underlying conditions - I think they're being very respectful of that. They face some of the challenges

that other districts are facing and if they lose teachers, that becomes problematic. "They're working it out that, if we do lose teachers where does that come from, or what is that potentially going to do?" Hill let Woods know that everyone in Union County Schools was thankful for the state's help accessing critical hot spots for kids without home internet access, and he shared excitement for a good rest of the year as roughly 75% of students continue in-person instruction and 25% do online-only. Before parting ways Thursday, Hill also made sure to tell Woods that his entire leadership team and all the schools were thankful for his and Lisha's trip to Union County, noting further his own gratitude that Woods seemed to really care and want to listen to local school systems. "Y'all's success is our success," Woods said. "I want to thank you for allowing us to come up today. There will be some things that I take back and have discussions either internally or with the governor just so that we can make sure the school year goes well."

## Nelson Thomas honored for Leadership and Support

Nelson Thomas received a plaque of appreciation for his unwavering leadership and support to the Union County Democratic Committee at the August meeting. Mr. Nelson served as County Committee Chair for many years from 2005 to 2014 and 2017 to January 2020. Mr. Thomas grew up in Fannin County where his father also served as County Democratic Committee Chair until moving to Union County with the family. He says that his interest in the Democratic party started at around eight years old tagging along with his father. After college at University of Georgia, Mr. Thomas began a career in Real Estate. He currently is Night Emergency Supervisor at Branan Lodge in Blairsville. He describes himself as an FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) Democrat. Mr. Thomas said, in the past, he questioned the differences in Democrats and Republicans and became a stronger Demo-



Nelson Thomas receiving plaque of appreciation from Michelle Maloney, Second Vice-Chair. Recently the meetings were held by Zoom but the August meeting was held at Meeks Park with masks and social distancing required. Currently there are almost 300 people receiving the UC Democratic newsletter with about 30 people just recently added. NT(Sep9,27)CA

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