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lower temps and still icy road conditions, and whatever snow had fallen upon the land of Union County largely remained throughout the weekend, growing crunchy from refreezing.

There was talk as early

as Monday of last week that a snow storm was brewing and potentially headed for Georgia, and leading up to the wintry weather, the Union County Emergency Management Agency held a series of winter weather briefings led by the

National Weather Service.

Those in attendance for the Thursday and Friday briefings were representatives from every first responder organization in the county.

Union County Fire Department Station No. 1 hosted the briefings, which were attended by the Union County Sheriff's Office, Blairsville Police Department, Union County Schools, Union County Sole Commissioner's Office, Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, Union County Road Department, 911 Dispatch and Mapping, Union General Hospital, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and others.

The weather briefings took place Thursday and Friday before the storm came to town, in an attempt to give first responders an idea of what conditions would be like in the name of preparedness.

"Every department knows their role," said EMA Director Charles Worden. "Law enforcement works traffic, wrecks, and does what is necessary in helping to block and check roads.

"Of course, the school system needs to know so they can plan whether they're going to have school, or if it comes in after school starts, they can get the students back home safely

before it gets slick."

And as of the first weather briefing last Thursday, Worden said that the road department had already begun installing blades on their trucks and getting their spreaders ready to deliver the salt/gravel mixture to icy roads.

Throughout the wintry ordeal, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, the Union County Fire Department, Union County Sheriff's Office and others kept residents up to date on road and weather conditions through Facebook.

The fire department reported helping more than a dozen motorists, including

accidents due to ice, though no serious injuries were reported as of press time Monday.

And despite coming off a harrowing month and a half of battling brush and wildfires to end 2016, Union County Fire Chief David Dyer said that they were ready to tackle the snowy weather.

"We just go from one thing to the next, to the next – we've just got to change gears," said Chief Dyer, who is also EMA Deputy Director. "The good thing is, everybody here has had so much experience in it that they can just shift gears and go right along with the flow."



A little snow wasn't going to stop the U.S. Postal Service from delivering mail over the weekend.



Ingles employees worked hard to clear snow and icy slush from parking spaces on Saturday, after the big snow hit.

Barnes...from Page 1A

Gainesville at the time, and when he first asked her out she said no – she didn't want a relationship to interfere with their jobs.

She finally relented after taking a position as a paramedic in nearby Banks County, and after dating a few years they decided to get married. This year would have marked their 14th anniversary as husband and wife.

As to why he dedicated decades of his life to healing, volunteering and teaching, Shirley said that's just how Jim was.

"He enjoyed it, he had a passion for it," said Shirley.

Barnes spent most of the last 20 or so years as a paramedic with Towns County EMS, which honored Barnes on the day of his interment by posting a firetruck bearing the American flag at the entrance to Mountain View Funeral Home, just off Murphy Highway.

He was extremely dedicated to his job as a paramedic, continuing to work even when his health took a turn for the worse.

Eventually, when he felt he could no longer fulfill his duties as a medical professional, he took over the Towns County Transit program, and he ran that program successfully until he could work no longer, which was about a year before he died from heart failure at his home on Jan. 5, 2016.

Towns County EMA/EMS Director Rickey Mathis remembers the passion that so well defined Barnes all his life.

"I have never seen an individual that was more dedicated to a job and coming to work," said Mathis. "He touched my heart and the hearts of many that worked there. We just wish that everybody could be that dedicated."

Barnes commuted from his home in Blairsville to his job in Towns County, and prior to starting his employment in Towns in the mid-1990s, he worked as a paramedic in Banks County, and before that as a rescue professional in Smyrna and a firefighter for the Cobb County Fire Department.

For more than 30 years, Barnes traveled all over Georgia as an instructor for GEMA, teaching field-delivered training programs to other first responders and rescue workers, courses such as Crash Victim Extrication and Rescue Specialist, both 16-hour classes, as well as courses in hazardous materials and incident command.

He volunteered thousands of hours over his career to helping various organizations, like the American Red Cross, and even taught CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) classes to students at area high schools.

Barnes was a lifelong student himself, having completed countless hours of training during his years as an emergency medical worker, both to stay up-to-date on the latest techniques and to learn new subjects.

The Georgia Fire Academy and National Fire Academy, the University of Georgia, POST, GEMA, FEMA and the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians are just a few of the organizations and places of learning Barnes frequented for his vast amounts of acquired knowledge.

But there was more to the man than a near encyclopedic know-how of first responder information.

In his personal time, Barnes was a collector. He



Jim Barnes was a lifelong teacher. Here he is teaching CERT to high school students.

collected model trains and cars, was an aficionado of emergency light bars, and loved tinkering around with Jeeps.

Following his untimely death, EMTs from Towns and Union counties served as pallbearers at his funeral, and many of Jim and Shirley's friends left words of kindness in the online guestbook of Mountain View Funeral Home.

They remembered working with Jim and learning from him, reflecting on his kindness and the indelible mark he left upon the lives of others. One person even wrote how they remembered Jim playing "Cops and Robbers" around the neighborhood when he was a kid, and how everyone knew he played one of the good guys because he had a siren on his

bicycle.

On the outside looking in, Barnes was hero and friend to the residents and first responders in a great many communities in Georgia.

Closer to home, Jim was a loving husband and lifelong lover of helping others.

The Barnes family would like to thank everyone who helped with the funeral, those from Towns and Union who took part in the procession.

And the *North Georgia News* and the *Towns County Herald* would like to thank Jim Barnes, however late it may be, for his services as a medical professional and teacher, and for helping the often helpless in the many communities in which he served.