

North Georgia News

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May 16, 2018

EMC highlights fiber expansion, other budget details

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC will soon take steps toward expanding the reach of its fiber optic network.

BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms made the announcement during a presentation of the cooperative's upcoming FY19 Capital Budget in the May 8 regular board meeting.

The EMC will be spending roughly \$500,000 on new fiber distribution lines in the next fiscal year, which will constitute a modest expansion of new branches off the main system originating between July 2018 and June 2019.

Director Daniel Frizzell described the upcoming expansion as a "pilot step" for the EMC, a step that will essentially allow the EMC to pressure test new marketing strategies in rolling out roughly 20 to 25 miles of new fiber installation.

However modest in scope initially, the new infrastructure will be the largest one-time expansion since the original grant that got the main fiber system started over seven years ago, said Nelms.

"We want to dip our toe in before we go full gusto to make sure our efforts are a good investment for the membership," said Nelms after the meeting. "We want to make sure people know it's out there, because they

don't know it's out there. That's what we've found."

Areas to receive fiber expansion have not yet been determined, but Nelms did say that the new fiber will be deployed in the "most dense, underserved areas of our system."

Furthermore, Frizzell said it's likely the EMC will sort out which areas are to receive FY19 expansions by engaging communities to see where the most interest lies, a strategy that Nelms said will allow the cooperative to be more competitive in the marketplace.

"I think when we originally did our initial builds, it was, we'll build it first and then they, we'll build it," said Nelms.

"That's the way it worked from an electricity standpoint in the 1940s and '50s."

"But with broadband being such a competitive market, you can't just build it and they will come. You've got to be very intentional with your marketing and show people the real value in it."

Fiber marketing strategies the EMC will be looking to implement run the gamut, said Nelms, including "mailouts, phone calls, door knockers, maybe a community event ... just whatever it takes."

Fortunately for future fiber customers, the adoption rate of the EMC's existing broadband services is at a point where "we feel that now is a



Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Lineman Chase Hemphill with General Manager Jeremy Nelms. Hemphill attended the May 8 board meeting to talk about winning Third Place for an event in the 2018 Georgia Lineman's Rodeo.

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2018 Relay For Life walks for a cure on May 19

By Mark Novak
North Georgia News
Staff Writer



For decades, local resident Allyson McGraw has been helping the American Cancer Society to fight cancer, and she's been involved with the local Relay For Life for the last 24 years.

The Union County Relay For Life will take place on Saturday, May 19, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market.

"American Cancer Society tries to reach into all the communities, because cancer knows no boundaries," said McGraw. "It doesn't care what race, what sex, what age, and the hardest thing in my years of being a volunteer is to help people see there is more than one type of cancer."

"The causes and the reasons that (cancers) start in our bodies is a whole different ballgame, and now, because of the research that the American Cancer Society started many years before Relay For Life, with that basic research, we can now catch the breast cancer genes."

"We know all of that stuff about mammograms, and we have ultrasound mammograms and 3-D things and stuff, so we have more survivors. Childhood cancers, the survivorship of many of those, are up to 80

percent and more."

Added McGraw: "I remember in my younger days, anybody in our family that had the big 'C,' it was a death sentence, and no matter if you had surgery or whatever. We've come a long way. We can't cure them all, but we have such a good success rate, and I choose to support the American Cancer Society because they spend the money in a wise way."

One of the main reasons McGraw became involved with ACS back in the '70s was the research that the organization was doing on the dangers of smoking.

"I wanted my 4-H children and students to do a community service project, so we started working with 'Don't Smoke, Quit Smoking,'" said McGraw. "Then we did Great American Smoke Out, and

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A view from the 2017 Union County Relay For Life.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Fire Station 2 buys eight AEDs with donations

By Shawn Jarrard
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Thanks to generous donations from the public, the Union County Fire Station No. 2 has been able to purchase eight automated external defibrillators, or AEDs.

So, what exactly does an AED machine do?

"A high percentage of cardiac arrests are caused by an irregular heart rhythm called ventricular fibrillation," said Union County Fire Chief David Dyer. "What these portable machines do, you attach them to someone, and they will read your heart rhythm."

"If you're in that (v-fib) rhythm, it will deliver a shock to knock that rhythm out, and your normal, healthy rhythm should take back over."

In short, an AED can mean the difference between life and death when it comes to



Union County Fire Chief David Dyer accepting the new Zoll AED Plus machines with fellow firefighters.

Photo/Facebook

sudden cardiac arrest. Just ask Union County Firefighter David Burnette, the lieutenant in charge of

Volunteer Station No. 2 at Jones Creek.

"About a year and a half ago, I had a cardiac arrest,"

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Sheriff's Office warns elderly of 'Grandparent Scams'

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Union County Sheriff's Office is warning people, especially elderly residents, about scam artists who trick people into sending them money by impersonating loved ones over the phone.

"They're called 'Grandparent Scams,'" said UCISO Det. Lt. Daren Osborn. "In the last month, we've had two reported scams, where somebody will call and pretend that they're a grandchild of the victim."

"The scammer will say that they're in jail for DUI, for example, and that they need a certain amount of money to get out, for bond money or to pay



their fine off, etc."

Variations on the scam include a relative calling for help to pay a hospital bill or needing quick cash to leave a foreign country.

Lt. Osborn said that a lot of would-be victims pick

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Last week to vote early ahead of primary

By Shawn Jarrard
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Early voting for the May 22 General Primary and Nonpartisan General Election ends Friday, May 18.

This Friday, during the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., registered Union County voters can cast their ballots at the Union County Registrar's Office.

The Registrar's Office is located within the Union County Courthouse and will be open to voters even during lunchtime.

As of Saturday, May 12, there were 1,037 people who had voted early in Union County.

Since this is a primary, voters will need to declare

a political party to receive a ballot, otherwise, voters will only be able to vote in the Nonpartisan General Election.

Election Day will be on Tuesday, May 22, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the 11 pre-assigned Union County voting precincts: Ivy Log, Dooley, Gum Log, Blairsville, Pat Colwell, Trackrock, Coosa, Jones Creek, Owl Town, Choestoe and Suches.

Voters are not required to bring their mailed precinct cards, but they must show a photo ID to vote.

Union County has 17,004 total registered voters, and Tuesday, April 24, was the voter registration deadline heading into the election.

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4-H kids close out banner year with honors

By Mark Smith
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More than 200 people attended the Student County 4-H annual student awards ceremony on Sunday, May 6, at the Union County Community Center.

All told, nearly 75 kids received recognition that evening for their accomplishments in 4-H, as an audience of parents, relatives, teachers and 4-H donors looked on in admiration.

The local chapter is part of the larger Georgia 4-H Program, an extension of the University of Georgia that serves as a public education partner with Union County Schools.

"The 4-H program in Union County and throughout



These Union County High School seniors will be wearing their 4-H cords during graduation on May 25.

Photo by Mark Smith

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