

# Teachers...from Page 1A

Now in her fifth year at the high school, Conger instructs her students in STEM Biology, Honors Biology, and dual enrollment Human Anatomy & Physiology.

"We have some of the best students in Union County,"

said Conger. "Our students treat our teachers with respect and are motivated to learn. When I am asked about how my school year is going, I answer honestly in saying that I truly couldn't ask for anything better."

"I love the role I get to

play in my community as a teacher. I enjoy giving back to my hometown through teaching our students."

Ashley Pruitt is Teacher of the Year at Woody Gap School, where she's been for six years and teaches fourth and fifth-grade students.

"I became a teacher because, as a student, I always struggled through school and never enjoyed going to school," said Pruitt. "I thought that if I became a teacher who engages students and makes school fun, students would enjoy school."

"Teaching students in Union County, and especially Woody Gap, provides a unique opportunity of opening the world up to a rural community."

The process of becoming System Teacher of the Year involves an external panel that will interview each candidate and conduct classroom observations before deciding who among the five teacher candidates should receive the honorific.

Last year, Brittany Jordan of Union County Elementary earned the title of 2017-2018 System Teacher of the Year.

Whoever is selected as 2018-2019 System Teacher of the Year will go on to compete for the title of Georgia Teacher of the Year, sponsored by the Georgia Department of Education.

# Voting...from Page 1A

Nov. 6 General Election.

Each of the following candidates will appear on the ballot:

For Governor, Republican Brian Kemp, Democrat Stacey Abrams and Libertarian Ted Metz.

For Lieutenant Governor, Republican Geoff Duncan and Democrat Sarah Riggs Amico.

For Secretary of State, Republican Brad Raffensperger, Democrat Josh Barrow and Libertarian Smythe Duval.

For Attorney General, Republican Incumbent Chris Carr and Democrat Charlie Bailey.

For Commissioner of Agriculture, Republican Incumbent Gary Black and Democrat Fred Swann.

For Commissioner of Insurance, Republican Jim Beck, Democrat Janice Laws and Libertarian Donnie Foster.

For State School Superintendent, Republican Incumbent Richard Woods and Democrat Otha E. Thornton Jr.

For Commissioner of Labor, Republican Incumbent Mark Butler and Democrat Richard Keatley.

For Public Service Commissioner District 3, Republican Incumbent Chuck Eaton, Democrat Lindy Miller and Libertarian Ryan Graham.

For Public Service Commissioner District 5, Republican Incumbent Tricia Pridemore, Democrat Dawn A. Randolph and Libertarian John Turpish.

For U.S. Representative in 116th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of

Georgia, Republican Incumbent Doug Collins and Democrat Josh McCall.

For State Senator from the 51st District, Republican Incumbent Steve Gooch is running unopposed.

For State Representative in the General Assembly from the 8th District, Republican Incumbent Matt Gurtler is running unopposed.

For District Attorney of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Republican Incumbent Jeff Langley is running unopposed.

For County Board of Education District 2, Republican Incumbent Tony Hunter is running unopposed.

For County Board of Education District 4, Republican Incumbent Keith Potts is running unopposed.

For County Board of Education District 5, Republican Incumbent Patrick White is running unopposed.

For Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor, Jennifer Logan is running unopposed.

Union County voters will also be asked to support or reject the continuation of the county SPLOST in the Nov. 6 General Election.

A SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) is a 1-cent sales tax that is collected by counties for up to six years for the purposes of funding county and city capital outlay projects such as roads, public safety, infrastructure, etc.

The sales tax in Union County is 7 cents on the dollar, which includes a

penny for current SPLOST IV collections.

Since the county is already collecting SPLOST money, if residents decide to renew the SPLOST, the sales tax rate within the county will stay the same at 7 percent.

SPLOST V is expected to collect \$24 million over its six-year collection period, just like SPLOST IV.

The county would also be able to issue \$10 million in SPLOST-backed bonds to complete projects if the referendum passes.

Also on the ballot are five Proposed Constitutional Amendments, including: the creation of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund to protect water quality, wildlife habitats and parks; the creation of a statewide business court to lower costs, enhance efficiency and promote predictable judicial outcomes; the encouragement of the conservation, sustainability and longevity of Georgia's working forests through tax sub-classification and grants; the provision of rights for victims of crime in the judicial process; and the authorization of fair allocation of sales tax proceeds to county and city school districts.

Further, there will be two Proposed Statewide Referenda on the ballot, one providing for a homestead exemption for residents of certain municipal corporations, and another providing a tax exemption for certain homes for the mentally disabled.

Of course, voters will want to more fully familiarize themselves with the language of the amendments and referenda before voting.

# SPLOST...from Page 1A

to collect \$24 million over a six-year term.

"SPLOST is a proven funding source for public safety, roads, quality of life and infrastructure needs," said Paris. "Thanks to everyone who spends money in Union County, visitors and residents alike, Union County is able to provide needed services and facilities while maintaining one of the lowest property tax millage rates in the state."

Paris has pointed out that the SPLOST continuation does not include plans for large buildings or facilities that would significantly burden the future county budget, and instead, focuses mainly on "public safety, roads, quality of life and infrastructure needs."

Examples of projects included in SPLOST V are: roads and bridges; upgrades and improvements to county administrative facilities; library upgrades and improvements; public safety facilities, vehicles and equipment; parks and recreation upgrades, improvements, facilities and equipment; solid waste upgrades and improvements; and economic development facilities and land acquisition.

"The necessity for these services will not go away. The easiest way to pay for them is through continuing the SPLOST," said Paris.

Another item planned under SPLOST V is Fire Station 13 up Murphy Highway, which will expand a more favorable ISO rating to that area of the county to effectively reduce people's insurance rates.

SPLOST V funds will also be going toward new youth baseball fields next to the Union County Farmers Market, plus a youth soccer field.

And the commissioner has been looking into the possibility of installing another Convenience Center in the county using SPLOST V funds, so that many residents won't have to travel all the way into town to dispose of their household garbage and recycling.

Furthermore, the City of Blairsville will receive 8.5 percent of SPLOST V for its projects, or about \$2 million, which will include water and sewer, public safety, public works and administrative building upgrades.

SPLOST IV projects currently underway include vital equipment upgrades at the Union County E-911 Dispatch Center; upgrades to new digital radios for all public safety personnel; a new double gym with offices for the Union County Recreation Department next to the Health Department on Glenn Gooch Bypass; new pickleball courts; a new pavilion at Meeks Park; a new road into the Farmers Market; a fire department training facility; and a newly refurbished ladder truck, a first for the Union County Fire Department.

SPLOST-backed debt still remaining on the Union County Community Center will also be paid up by the end of SPLOST IV, meaning the county will be operating debt-free when SPLOST V begins.

Looking back over the

history of the SPLOST in Union County, most people would be able to identify a handful of SPLOST projects in just a moment's time.

The Farmers Market, the Splash Pad, new vehicles for the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department, the Saddle Club Arena and Suches Community Center, Meeks Park and Meeks Park 2, the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, plus many more projects, all have been built, purchased or improved using SPLOST

# City Council...from Page 1A

unanimously to approve the resolution in their Oct. 2 regular meeting at Blairsville City Hall.

The loan, not to exceed \$800,000, features 20 percent principal forgiveness written into the agreement, and so the city anticipates that the maximum loan payback will be approximately \$640,000.

This new grit removal system will eliminate costly recurring maintenance at the wastewater treatment facility due to grit.

As previously reported, Engineering Management Inc., the city's engineering firm, is currently designing the grit removal system, and the city will have from December 2018 to February 2019 to bid out the construction and award a contract.

Actual construction on the project will need to have started by June 2019 in order to meet GEFA's deadline for first loan draw to pay the contractors.

In a separate wastewater treatment plant project, the city will be replacing two motive pumps used to provide treatment for the plant, as well as reconfiguring the existing pipe network.

The pumps in question have proven problematic since first being installed in 2011, and every time one of the them fails, it costs the city tens of thousands of dollars to remove, repair and reinstall it.

The existing pumps are 60 horsepower and can operate in reverse, whereas the new pumps recommended by Evoqua are 25 horsepower and cannot operate in reverse.

Because the new pumps cannot operate in reverse, a

dollars.

Also stipulated in the continuation referendum: "If the tax is approved by the voters, such vote shall also constitute approval of the issuance of general obligation debt of Union County in the principal amount of \$10 million for the above purposes."

People with questions about the SPLOST are encouraged to contact a special email address set up for just such a purpose at SPLOST@uniongov.com, or call the Commissioner's Office at 706-439-6000.

reconfiguration of the piping and some demolition to completely remove the old pumps will be required so that the reverse process can be accomplished via valves through the new, reconfigured pipe network.

Also, the new pumps will operate on less than half the horsepower of the existing pumps, and Councilmember Mary Ruth Cook raised the question of whether the proposed pumps were sufficient to handle the job.

McGaughey told Cook that Evoqua had already assured him that the pumps would perform satisfactorily. He also consulted the new pump manufacturer, Flygt, with the same question and got the same positive answer.

Based on the recommendations, the council approved the purchase of two new 25 horsepower pumps for \$74,202.68, which, along with the new piping, will be installed by Evoqua for \$99,900.

In other news, the council held a public hearing and first reading to adopt the 2019 Operating Budget. There were no public comments on the budget, and copies of the proposed operating budget can be obtained at city hall.

Airport Manager John Hamler reported that a new Wi-Fi credit card machine was to be installed at the new terminal by Oct. 5, and that the new avgas tank was operational.

Hamler said the Experimental Aircraft Association is having its Fall Fly-In here on Oct. 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The public is welcome. Food and beverages will be available for \$5 per plate.