

Security...from Page 1A

will make it more difficult for anyone that wants to harm one of our students."

However, DOE and the Union County Sheriff's Office will tell you that Union County has raised the bar when it comes to student safety in the state of Georgia.

"The taxpayers of Union County can rest easy at night knowing that their children are safe and their ESPLOST dollars are being put to good use," said DOE Dr. Howard Henley. "We visit schools all across the state and Union County is without a doubt, one of the safest schools that we have visited."

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason concurred with the DOE.

"The schools have made safety a priority and we are very confident in them," Sheriff Mason said. "They showed us the new security systems, the locks on the buildings, the camera surveillance, and the protocol for how the students get in, and get out of the building. They're doing a really



Union County High School halls had more than students walking the aisles. Public Safety officials, school officials and the DOE examined safety features.

good job with what they have to work with. They've come a long way in the last couple of years and have made a lot of progress."

According to UCHS Principal John Hill, imple-

menting the new safety measures was a tall task, but it didn't get any easier once they were in place.

The faculty was then required to learn the new system and keep it running like

a well-oiled machine over the course of the school year.

If you were to issue the faculty and staff a report card on how they have adapted to the changes thus far - they would pass with flying colors, Hill said.

"We all wanted to get together and showcase our security updates and to hear any kind of recommendations that would improve security," Hill said. "I can't say enough good things about Chris (Crow), Bill (Driskell) and Keith (Ledford)." I would also like to thank the School Board and the community for supporting the ESPLOST that allowed us to do this.

"We would also like to thank the front office ladies: Denise Kelley and Jackie Colwell," Hill said. "They are constantly answering phones, buzzing people in, signing people in, and a lot more."

"They have one of the hardest jobs at the school, they work very hard and deserve a pat on the back too," Hill said.

Mock Trial...from Page 1A

characters they are portraying on the stand, and according to Coach Payne, this team can attribute its success to their work ethic and effort.

"This team is simply not afraid of work," Coach Payne said. "Judge Miller has instilled his three keys to success - preparation, preparation, preparation."

"When they walk into a courtroom, they are prepared and confident and everyone in the room knows it," she said.

Coach Payne, Judge Miller and the rest of the coaches will have a few weeks to prepare for the State Competition, where the Top eight teams in Georgia square off.

Union County domi-

nated at the first ever District Meet.

The District Competition is something new that was implemented this year in order to cut down on the amount of teams making it to State.

In the past, more than 15 teams could reach state competition, but the tougher criteria didn't faze Union who won the Region as well as the District.

During District, Union won 4-of-4 courtrooms and took 11 of the 12 ballots cast for the winner.

Individual awards were: Outstanding Attorney - Alice Francis (twice) and Rachel Todd.

The Outstanding Witness Awards went to Corey Harris, Holden Helcher, Matt Peney.

Individual award winners at Region were Kat Capstick, Raven Heyer, Corey Harris, Francis, Todd Abhyjit Keepal, and Brooke Hamby.

Zach King, along with Harris, and Francis are the team's three seniors, while Payne, and April Krieger are the Teacher Coaches.

The Mock Trial team would like to thank Union County Superintendent Gary Steppe, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams, the Union County Board of Education, and the UCHS Administrators.

They also would like to thank the following financial supporters: United Community Bank; Lawrence Sorgen, Attorney at Law; Wesley Williams, Attorney at Law; Robbie Colwell, Attorney at Law; Stephanie McConnell, Attorney at Law; the Enotah Judicial Bar Association; John and Layne Ward, John Deacon, Attorney at Law; and Brass-town Pharmacy.

Kingston...from Page 1A

Washington, D.C.

"If we're going to create jobs in America, we have to get government out of the way," Kingston said.

Kingston promotes an American Renewal Initiative that includes a strong military, a balanced budget, a cost benefits analysis on regulations, and an effective regulatory environment, boosting private sector job creation, energy independence, simplifying the tax code, and enabling work

over welfare.

An important part of that renewal means simplification of the American Tax Code, Kingston said.

"If we simplify the tax code, we can turn things around," Kingston said.

Kingston has a business background, one in the insurance industry, where he earned his paycheck by 100 percent commission.

"If I didn't work, I didn't eat," said Kingston,

who is a strong supporter of agricultural interests.

"The district I represent in Washington is mostly farmland," Kingston said. "The American farmer and what they produce is the backbone of America."

Kingston's tour of the region also included a stop in Young Harris at the weekly Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting at Mary's Southern Grill.

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learned to become independent. I had to learn to do a lot of things by myself."

Francis, who has won Outstanding Attorney - twice - in Mock Trial this year, saved her favorite tribute for last.

"Ms. Payne, she has been there for me, whether it was personal or professional, petty or profound," Francis said. "She has always supported me. I love you Ms. Payne."

Afterward, Chamber President Cindy Williams had high praise for the two STAR Students.

"This is my favorite time of year," Williams said. "We get to honor our best and brightest and help give them a foundation that they will always remember."

Williams then proudly announced that the Chamber had meet all its goals in 2013.

Those goals included the establishment of a Farm Trail, a fresh new website, establishment of the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, where children age birth to 5 years old register and receive books each year, Programing, learning about the numbers behind local businesses, and the first Holly Jolly Christmas.

The Chamber also completed its first Travel Trip, taking 11 persons to Ireland. In 2014, the Travel Trip will be to Italy, Williams said.

The Chamber also completed its Community Guide and Business Directory.



Above, Althea Cantrell and Logan Wood from Woody Gap; below, Amy Payne and Alice Francis, Union County High School. Photo/Charles Duncan

Also in 2014, the Chamber will take a look at membership investment structure.

The initiative will allow businesses to pay their memberships based on the needs of their businesses.

The Chamber also will add a Tourism Director. Tobie Chandler will take that position, Williams said.

"Tobie Chandler has always had a passion for tourism," Williams said. "She's a perfect fit for that position."

p.m. Please note that this is a new venue for our general meeting and also that we are not allowed to bring any food or drinks into this building.

Help give our events at the Farmers Market a new name by bringing your suggestions to this meeting (or email them to secretary@blairsvillecruisers.com). See ya there! April is just around the corner, we are planning a great year to keep "cruisin' for kids" and want you to enjoy it with us!



The February meeting for the Blairsville Cruisers will be Thursday, February 27th at the former Chamber of Commerce building located at 78 Blue Ridge Hwy. The meeting will begin at 6:30