

Schools...from Page 1A

million from the state, and \$1.5 million for austerity cuts, and the state also took \$6 million for the local fair share," Dr. Williams said.

"The Fiscal 2015 budget is in line with the tax collection rate and the state mon-

ey we're receiving," he said.

Dr. Williams told the BOE that student numbers are on the rise. The school system is increasing by an average of 25 to 30 students each year.

"We just graduated a class at the high school of 125

students," Dr. Williams said.

"We'll be starting the new school year with right at 800 students at the high school. The rising senior class is at 171," he said.

"Our high school is doing a better job of keeping students," Dr. Williams said.

"We don't have as many students transferring to Mountain Education Charter High School," he said.

The rising sophomore class is at 202 students, the rising junior class is at 228 and there are 171 rising seniors.

It will be the largest high school class in Union County High School history, Superintendent Gary Steppe told the BOE.

"Our dropout rate is very low," Steppe told the board. "We were sixth in the state last year in graduation

rates."

The athletic programs are currently in Class AA for the next two years.

When realignment occurs in two years the high school is projected to elevate to Class AAA status.

Missing...from Page 1A

"We got a report of a backpack on the trail just beyond Walasi-Yi," Sheriff Mason said. "The trail isn't more than 3 feet wide, and hikers were having to walk around it. It was still there when they returned from their hike."

Union County sheriff's deputies retrieved the backpack.

Inside the pack, they discovered Paur's belongings, his wallet and other items. Included among those other items was a substantial amount of money.

Sheriff Mason, deputies, firefighters and Emergency Management personnel searched an area just off the Appalachian Trail near Walasi-Yi to no avail.

"He's 6-foot, 1-inch, 230 pounds, brown hair and blue eyes," Sheriff Mason said.

Paur left his vehicle at Walasi-Yi and paid \$200 for those at the Interpretive Center to watch it for him, Sheriff Mason said.

Paur is still listed as a missing and endangered per-

son in Union County, Detective SSgt. Darren Osborn said.

Contact information on the backpack led authorities to call family members in Wisconsin, Sgt. Osborn said.

"He's made it all the way to Macon County, NC, he's ill-equipped to hike, but, our understanding is that he's headed to the end of the Appalachian Trail in Maine," Sgt. Osborn said. "We've still got all his belongings that he left on the Trail in Union County.

Other hikers on the

Trail say Paur has a tarp and a gym bag as his only supplies for hiking the AT.

"We've contacted the U.S. Forest Service," Sgt. Osborn said. "His brother is trying to make sure he's got supplies at each stop on the Trail."

"If law enforcement intervenes and they feel like he's not a danger to himself or anyone else, we'd like to get his belongings back to him," Sgt. Osborn said. "That way, we can clear him off our system. He's still listed as a missing person in Union County."

Casino...from Page 1A

The future of additional projects is likely. The Eastern Band of Cherokee has access to 600 additional acres adjacent to the Phase I Project.

Wojtkowski, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, told the group that the decision to build the casino in Murphy was because it was closer to the feeder market of Atlanta.

"It's closer to those customers known and unknown," she added. "There's tremendous geographical potential of putting our gaming closer to the largest concentration

of adult population. The adult population within 150 miles of Murphy is 26 percent greater than Cherokee."

The Cherokee Casino's Total Rewards program boasts 2.3 million members within 180 miles of Cherokee, with only 497,000 visiting that facility today, Wojtkowski said.

"We knew there was a tremendous upside with customers that are already in our database today," she said. "Our winning partnership with Caesars Entertainment gives us a proven track record in the gaming industry."

"This is an ambitious project, but we are confident that it will be a success - for our customers, our tribe and for the surrounding communities," she said.

Casino games featured at the new facility include traditional favorites as well as the most popular slot games available on the market when the new casino opens.

Phase I will include about 1,000 slot machines, 50-to-75 gaming tables, and a large food court area.

"We continue to grow demand," she said.

The casino will create an estimated 900 jobs and inject up to \$39 million in wages into the surrounding communities, Wojtkowski said.

"Basically, the casino business is 24/7," she said. "When you make the decision to be in this business, it really is a life choice. You're going to give up your nights, you're going to give up your holidays, and you're certainly going to give up your weekends if you want a career in this industry."

Testing...from Page 1A

It will combine Reading, English/Language Arts and Writing into a single test.

The new system also will be a more coherent measure providing consistent expectations and rigor to position Georgia students to compete with peers nationally and internationally.

The Georgia Milestones

will also be a consistent signal about student preparedness for the next level, be it the next grade, course, and or college and career.

The new system also will provide a standard measure of student achievement both within system - across grades and courses - and with external measures - NAEP;

PSAT; SAT; ACT.

The new testing system will include open-ended questions to better gauge students' mastery of content.

With some exceptions for special education students with specific testing accommodations, Georgia Milestones will be administered entirely online by the fifth

year of implementation, compared to 35 percent online administration of the EOCT in 2013-2014.

The State of Georgia awarded a bid on Wednesday, May 28 to CTB/McGraw-Hill to develop the new testing system. The award is for a \$107.8-million, five-year contract.

Vietnam Veterans meeting

Attention Vietnam Veterans - those who served during Vietnam War, if you served in the military during the Vietnam war (not necessarily in country) between February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975, please come and join us.

Our organization meeting on May 7th went very well. We have 66 names of veterans that have or will sign up. That is sufficient to create a chapter here in Blairsville.

The next step is an important one and we need your assistance. Make plans to attend the next meeting June 23, 2014 in the Cadence Bank conference room (2nd floor) from 1 PM to 2 PM. The bank is located between Rite Aid pharmacy and the Union County Library. Spence Davis (state VVA President) will be present again.

The agenda for the meeting will be: 1. Introductions; 2. Selection of temporary officers; 3. Statement by Mr. Davis about VVA's goals and objectives; 4. Requesting input from members as to what they want this chapter of VVA to be and how it should operate; 5. Selection of next meeting day/time and place.

Contact info: vva@owltown.net 706-781-9350 (mike).

Nunn at Meeks Park June 20th



On Friday, June 20, Michelle Nunn, Candidate for US Senate from GA, will be in Blairsville for a Meet and Greet. This is part of a swing through North Georgia and we are very excited that Blairsville is part of her itinerary. The event will be held at Pavilion #1 in Meeks Park from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Her husband, Ron, son Vinson, age 11, and daughter Elizabeth, will join Michelle age 9.

Local dignitaries from our county will be there as well. Refreshments will be served. Please plan to come and welcome Michelle to our county and spread the word to Others who would like to meet her and hear what she has to say.

Free lunches for children in Suches

The Community Center in Suches is the place to be if you're 18 years old or younger.

The Georgia Mountain Food Bank of Gainesville is providing free lunches to youths 18 and younger.

There are no income

requirements to get the free lunch. Limited transportation is available. The program began June 9 and will continue daily Monday - Friday throughout the summer. For more details, call (706) 747-5434.