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be on the board.

"I'm voting for Mickey Cummings, and I wish the people that would have voted for me would do the same," Henson said. "I've known Mickey Cummings forever, and he's a good man and an honest man. I can't think of anyone better to represent the membership of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC."

Patrick Malone and Charles Rich also are petition candidates for the EMC board of directors' Union County seat.

Henson said that the board of directors have taken some hits, and in some cases, deservedly so.

"The Terry Taylor (former president of EMC Board of Directors) situation (owing more than \$48,000 in back utility bills) should have never happened," Henson said. "It created a backlog of mistrust from the membership and deservedly so."

"I think what needs to happen is for everyone to get on the same page," Henson said. "The directors need to have the best interests of the EMC and the membership at heart when making decisions. If they do that, everything else will work itself out."

"Right is right, and wrong is wrong," he said. "If you make a mistake, fess up,

just admit it. Nobody is perfect and people understand that sometimes mistakes are made."

Henson provided a response to a recent Letter to the Editor published in the *North Georgia News* as well. That letter implies that five current or former directors owe more than \$65,000 in loans from the EMC. Policy Bulletin No. 250 prohibits the organization from making loans to employees or directors for any purpose.

"Policy Bulletin No. 232 allows directors, employees and any member of the EMC to partake in promotions offered by the EMC such as

hot water heaters, heating and air, or any other type of energy conservation promotion," Henson said.

"Of the \$65,399 that was mentioned, more than \$45,000 of that is the debt created by Terry Taylor," he said. "The rest of that is money owed for energy conservation promotions, which is perfectly permissible."

"I guess it all goes back to what I was saying earlier, we need to work together instead of against each other," he said. "If we're all on the same page, things will work out."

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that they've been here," said Judy Smith, who, along with husband Mike Smith, co-chairs the event. "And we had no problem (reaching the 65-vendor limit that the festival allows)."

Whatever your interests, the Butternut Creek Festival was certain to pique them. Furniture, pottery, fabric art, pet supplies, hand cast sandstone candles, lathe-turned wood, oil and watercolor paintings, glass wind chimes and sun catchers,



decorative painting, gourd art, glass art, yard art, metal craft, scarves and necklaces, hand-crafted leather, wooden toys, wood musical instruments, bird houses and feeders were all available – but that wasn't all.

Blairsville's own Sylvia Garner was on hand to show off the art work of Union County Middle School students. Friends of Union County Library, the Blairsville Cruisers, and the Humane Society were all in attendance along with Union General Hospital Auxiliary who was selling fresh baked goods and a chance to purchase raffle tickets.

"I'm glad the festival is

here because it brings great art and artists into town and it's also a good way to bring commerce to the area," said Blairsville resident Shannon Larsen a long time festivalgoer, and the daughter of a local artist and former festival vendor. "I always look forward (to the festival) and would love to see it grow even bigger."

The festival has evolved beyond your run-of-the-mill arts and crafts show and featured demonstrations and musical acts throughout the two-day event.

Butch Dey demonstrated his blacksmithing skills, Mal McEwen returned with his chainsaw art and Jerry King

was back with his old time, foot-pedal-powered wood turning.

Blue Ridge Dulcimer Players were strumming in the shade all weekend while Bruce Adams from Gainesville and the Fastgear Band from Robbinsville, NC took the stage on Saturday. Meanwhile, Elvis and Cody & Carlee Savage of Cleveland, entertained festivalgoers on Sunday.

"This is one of our favorite arts and crafts shows that we do and we love coming here," said Billy Goodman, who, along with wife Peggy, make the 300-plus mile trip from Anderson, Ala., which is located in the northwest corner of the state, to sell their custom birdhouses. "We've been coming here for years and have no doubt that we'll return."

According to their website, the High Country Artists, Inc.'s intent is to promote quality craftsmen and artists in the region through exhibitions and demonstrations and to support art programs in the community.

"There are some minor improvements that could be made (to the festival) but as they say, 'if it's not broke then don't fix it.' We've always had a good crowd and we filled up all the parking lots on Saturday. We couldn't do it without all of our sponsors and want to thank them for everything."

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bined with the \$2 million in prior SPLOST funding toward the total \$8.6 million, the school system was able to start again on the building in the spring of 2014.

"I think it's more than just a Fine Arts Center," said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams. "As far as I know, we're one of a few high schools that didn't have an auditorium at all. So, anytime we tried to have the whole student body, it was usually in the gym. When we had performances from our band, they had to do it in the cafeteria, or chorus had to rent out First Baptist Church."

Dr. Williams and Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe visited seven or eight other fine arts centers around the state in order to construct the ideal building, and the 986-seat auditorium features super-efficient LED lighting and an 80 foot stage, with cutting edge sound and light technology handpicked by the system's Director of Technology Bill Driskell.

Each classroom has been made with specific student activities in mind – the band room has a bay door allowing for a vehicle or trailer to back directly into the classroom to load equipment, and the flooring in the chorus, drama and band rooms are all different, designed to accommodate the needs and acoustics of each practicing group.

In short, what the students have now is light years ahead of what they had previously, both in terms of practice and formal performance.

"We have a great program," said Dr. Williams. "About a little more than a third of our students, sixth grade through 12th grade, are involved in band or chorus."

Moving forward, the Fine Arts Center will also be a place for community involvement, as the school system plans to allow various performing arts groups to book the venue.

"If we just cover the cost of what it takes to operate it – we're not trying to make money off of them or anything. That's our intent, and hopefully it'll work out that way," said Superintendent Steppe. "We want it to be a community – we don't want it to be just a school facility, we want it to be a com-

munity. Taxpayer money is building it, so we want to try to serve both groups."

The building takes up an impressive 35,000 square feet, complete with dressing rooms for performance arts, a concession stand for hungry patrons and screens that drop down in the auditorium, which can be put to academic or entertainment uses.

"There's not a facility that's like this around," said Assistant Facilities Director Chris Crow. "It's not only something for the school – this is a community thing. This is a great building for the community to have any kind of quartet or gospel singing or a church service or whatever – you can do so many things with this building."