

## Sewer...continued from Page 1A

everything operates efficiently.”

The plant itself is high tech, with monitoring capabilities from a computer monitor that keeps a lid on manpower issues.

If something goes off-line or awry, Smith can detect it from his home computer.

Smith, and operators Matt Wilcox and Jody Cook know the facilities inside and out. The operators have learned the operations inside and out.

“We’ve spent many hours coming in and fixing things – even after the upgrades – and making things right,” Smith said. “We’re on top of things. This plant runs smoothly and efficiently, just like a model plant is supposed to.”

The city currently serves 3,400 customers. That number will grow significantly over the next 15 years, Smith said.

During the economic lull, being on top of the sewer situation gives the city a leg up when growth begins to snake through the North Georgia Mountains again.

“Our significant capacity should give us a leg up when the growth gets back



**Ken Smith, manager for the city's Wastewater Treatment facilities, says the city has 750,000 gallons per day of treatment capacity still not occupied. That will mean jobs in the future. Photo/Charles Duncan**

in cycle,” Smith said. “This plant promotes Blairsville and Union County for expansion.

“Sewer means jobs, it means bringing businesses here, especially with our tax rate being as low as it is,” Smith said. “If you don’t have the infrastructure in place to support growth, there’s no way new businesses find their way here.

“Mayor Conley and Commissioner Lamar Paris have been very progressive

in preparing for the future,” Smith said. “They’re both focused on bringing jobs here, and jobs mean prosperity.”

Mayor Conley said that having top notch facilities is the lynch pin to attracting and keeping growth in place for the future.

“It’s just like the upgrades with our airport, and our roads, you have to have certain key pieces in place like water and sewer to make the growth equation come to

fruition,” Mayor Conley said. “I don’t know when the economy is going to turn around, but when it does, Blairsville and Union County will be in a solid position to attract some serious jobs to our community.

“That’s what we’ve been striving for during this economic lull,” he said.

“We’ve focused on getting the pieces in place for when the growth returns,” Conley said.

## Roads...continued from Page 1A

ganization. They’ve always worked with us, and we now feel fortunate to have Todd Long as our Deputy Director over GDOT. He was the area engineer here.

“We also have Russell McMurray as the chief engineer for GDOT and he was the engineer for our district,” Paris said. “We know these guys, they know our roads and they know what and where we’re talking about when we bring up a road name.

“That’s very important for us,” Paris said. “Both of these guys have been all over Union County.” Paris said Long and McMurray understand Union County’s specific road needs and that’s important in the long haul.

“I think these guys are

going to work with us as much as they can,” Paris said. “We want to get the Glen Gooch By-Pass reworked in a couple of years. We want some turning lanes to make some intersections safer, and traffic lights on the South end.

“GDOT’s also going

to be buying right-of-way on 515 East towards Young Harris for that widening project in 2014,” he said. “We still have some other projects that we need addressed. It’s important to have the right GDOT guys in place to make some of those projects happen.”

## Regency Hospice events

The Grief Support Group will meet the first and third Thursday of the month from 3:30 - 5 PM in the small conference room in United Community Bank.

Men’s Coffee will meet the first and third Tuesday of the month from 10-11:30 AM at Grinds ‘n Glazes in Blairsville.

If you or someone you know has experienced the death of a loved one, you are invited to attend the grief support provided by the staff of Regency Hospice.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Colvert, Bereavement Counselor at 706-896-1251.

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