

Dyer...from Page 1A

under Chief Dyer's belt include Fire Officer IV, Fire Instructor I, Fire Inspector I, Wildland Firefighter I, EMT Instructor II and SAR Tech Level II.

Emergency management is divided into four main categories: planning and preparation, emergency response, disaster recovery, and mitigation.

According to GEMA.GA.gov, hazard mitigation is defined as "any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazard events."

In other words, as Chief Dyer put it, "We go out and try to find ways to make things safer."

Planning in general is probably the largest of Chief Dyer's responsibilities as EMA director.

"Ninety percent of EMA work is preparing for and mitigating to keep things from happening," said Chief Dyer. "The remaining 10 percent is the response if something does happen."

Not only do plans help the county to know what to do in the event of a disaster, but having the proper plans in place can secure greater financial reimbursement for damages from state and federal sources following disaster declarations.

"We also do exercises," said Chief Dyer. "That's one of our responsibilities, to make sure that the community is using the plans as well as conducting

field exercises in preparation of major disasters."

Those exercises include tabletop roleplaying all the way up to full-scale communities simulations of disasters in parts of the county, and the chief will be putting together a few scenarios in the foreseeable future.

Battalion Chief Richard Jones and 1st Lt. Ernie Pruitt serve as Chief Dyer's EMA deputy directors.

"A lot of people don't realize how much of a team effort emergency management is," said Chief Dyer. "People think that emergency management is, hey, if something happens to us, the government will come help us."

And while that may be the case to an extent, Chief Dyer

said that individuals in their homes have responsibilities to be prepared as well.

"We can help as much as we can, but we don't have all these resources laying around," said Chief Dyer. "So, people need to know how to take care of themselves for a while, and they need to know how to work with us."

"We always need volunteers. We need volunteer firefighters, we need volunteers for CERT, the Community Emergency Response Teams, the Red Cross. We're always looking for folks who can help."

To find out more about volunteering, check out the fire department's Facebook page at facebook.com/ucfd1.

Hill...from Page 1A

Two hours after she arrived at her father's home with her two juvenile children, Union County 911 received a call from the victim's residence, according to Lt. Osborn.

When authorities arrived, they found that the home's resident, an elderly man in a state of dementia, had been secured to a chair with duct tape, hooded and taped around the throat, and beaten severely, said Lt. Osborn.

The home invasion was

an attempt to extort money from the man, according to Lt. Osborn.

In the course of investigation, it was determined that Hill had been in the area about a month prior, and had managed to secure thousands of dollars from her father's bank account, according to Lt. Osborn.

"In the state of Georgia, it's against the law to exploit a disabled adult," said Lt. Osborn.

Those crimes resulted in Hill's arrest on charges of exploitation of an adult and false statements, with bond set at \$30,000, according to Lt. Osborn.

The investigation continued as Hill remained in Union County lockup, and several weeks after her arrest, new evidence surfaced concerning the home invasion, according to Lt. Osborn.

"The case broke wide open the week of March 13,"

said Lt. Osborn. "We were able to secure some evidence connecting her with helping to set up the home invasion and robbery of her father."

Hill was then charged with the home invasion and other crimes, for which no bond has been set, according to Lt. Osborn.

She remains in the Union County Jail, according to the sheriff's office.

"The home invasion is an isolated incident," said Lt. Osborn. "Crimes of this nature do not typically happen in Union County, and that's what raised the red flags on this one and caused us to dig deeper into the suspect we have in custody."

"But the exploitation of adults, we are not going to tolerate that, period. I don't care if it's your father, your wife, your elderly mother, your elderly father, your disabled son, daughter, whoever they may be - if you're abusing

them in any way, we're going to handle it."

Lt. Osborn said that he was glad to report that the elderly man is recovering and doing well.

In an unrelated incident, a Walmart employee has been arrested and charged with 18 counts of theft by shoplifting for separate occurrences of theft spanning December 2016 to March 19, 2017, according to Lt. Osborn.

Bonnie Jones, 48, of Blairsville, was taken into custody at Walmart on Friday, March 24, at 2 a.m., according to Lt. Osborn.

The total value of merchandise taken by Jones was just over \$600 in various household items, according to Lt. Osborn.

Lt. Osborn has been keeping busy this month, having taken out 34 warrants last week alone.

Rayfield...from Page 1A

March each year," said Dr. Rayfield, "and we want to recognize the contributions of our board members here in Union County and across the state of Georgia."

"I will tell you that most of you in this room, a lot of you are able to see them once or twice a month, sitting in this seat and going through the agenda, going into executive session, coming back out and getting their picture made."

"There is a lot more to serving as a board member than those public appearances. They digest a lot of information, they field a lot of calls - complaints, if you will - and also concerns from their constituents about public education in Union County and across the state. Those come in the form of phone calls, emails, letters, personal contacts."

"There's not many places that a board of education member can go publicly and not encounter a situation where they have to answer some questions about how the school system is run and how well we're doing."

"It is a very difficult job, but I can tell you that all five of these folks are extremely committed to that, they're committed to excellence. And as I heard one of them say just a few minutes ago, they are very committed at all costs to doing what's right for kids."

School Board Appreciation Week is sponsored by the Georgia School Boards Association, or GSBA, which has a stated mission of ensuring "excellence in the governance of local school systems by providing leadership, advocacy and services, and by representing the collective resolve of Georgia's elected boards of education."

According to the GSBA website, "as constitutional officers of Georgia, school board members are responsible for setting educational policies, employing school personnel, providing buildings and equipment, operating a transportation system and disbursing school funds."

"As community leaders, school board members serve as advocates for the children in local public schools and must study, evaluate and decide what actions are in the best interest of those students."

In the meeting, Dr. Rayfield also recognized several schools in the system that have excelled in various areas: Union County High School as an AP Challenge School and AP STEM School; and UCHS and Union County Middle School as Beating the Odds Schools, with UCMS having achieved that honorific for the past five years.

Union County Elementary School and UCMS



Union County Board of Education members Keith Potts and Patrick White

were also recognized as Title I Reward Schools.

The board approved three UCHS students to travel to a DECA competition in Anaheim, California, at the end of April. The students won at the state level for

their business project with the high school's INCubator EDU curriculum.

Board members also approved the Fiscal Year 2018 full-time certified rehires, as well as new hires and resignations.

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