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radio, including Denny.

And though retirement has been good to Dills so far – no more 12-hour workdays, six days a week – he said he does miss certain aspects of working at the Union County E-911 Communications Center.

“What I miss most is the excitement of not knowing what the next call coming in is going to be,” said Dills. “I worked two single-engine airplane crashes, but the most challenging aspect of the job, and I think all the dispatchers would agree, is when you pick up the phone and there is a child on the other end who is asking for help.”

Prior to Dills becoming that calm, collected voice on the other end of some folks’ most desperate hours, he worked at Arbor Acres Farm, like so many others in Union County.

He started his dispatch journey in 1993, when he attended Tri-County Community College to become

an emergency medical tech. Soon after, he joined Union County Fire Station No. 2, where he fostered his interest in 911 dispatch.

Dills started working at the now defunct Towns/Union 911 Center in February of 1994, back when 911 dispatch was a whole other ballgame.

“There was no computer-aided dispatch,” said Dills. “No location came in with the phone number, and there were no cellphones. We would have to radio the deputies to go to a payphone and call us.”

Thankfully, the 911 center has experienced quite a few changes over the years, having transitioned away from payphones and map books to its current modern, multiscreen, updated and computer-aided dispatch call center.

Dills, 66, said that, though he loved his job, a couple of things clued him in to the fact that it was time to retire.

“I checked into Social Security, and most people get more money by retiring when they first become eligible,” said Dills. “The other thing was my uncle Gentry Dills, who just recently passed away.

“He was 86 years of age, and everyone said he lived a long life. I retired at 66 years of age, and 86 years old is only another 20 years away.”

Lt. Millie Baxter, who now runs the day-to-day operations of 911 Dispatch but worked alongside Dills as his dispatch partner for 15 years, said that Dills’ experience and personality have been greatly missed.

“He was very professional, very smart, he was very good at what he did,” said Lt. Baxter. “Denny had a lot of knowledge, he was very calm – he was the perfect person to be behind that console.”

Union County 911 Director David Dyer said he remembers being dispatched to

emergencies by Dills.

“We could always depend on Denny to give us the right information in a calm, cool and collected manner,” said Dyer. “He did everything he could for us.

“I’ve always said that, being out there in the field, no matter how we do our job, it doesn’t really affect the dispatchers, in a way. But how they do their job really affects how we do ours. If they do a great job, it really makes things work smooth. Denny was a great example of that.”

Dills said he’d like everyone in the community, especially those who tune in with scanners at home, to know that dispatchers are constantly multitasking.

“Just because they aren’t on the radio doesn’t mean they aren’t busy,” said Dills of his fellow dispatchers. “They may be on the phones, entering warrants for Blairsville PD, giving someone the number for other agencies, or looking up latitude/longitude for a lost hiker.

“When they have an accident, especially one inside the Blairsville city limits, it isn’t unusual to get as many as 15 cell phone calls on it, and this is answered usually by two

dispatchers.”

When Dills retired in June, he was Union County’s Terminal Agency Coordinator for the Georgia Crime Information Center, or GCIC, a responsibility he carried for years.

Many know Dills’ wife, Leeta, who is an RN at Union

General Hospital in the Surgery Department, where she has worked for 21 years. The two are enjoying his retirement.

Union County Solicitor General Commissioner Lamar Paris would like to thank Dills for his more than 23 years of service to the county.

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electric utility division of the cooperative.

“Our broadband division as a whole is outperforming even our electric utility division in the operating margin per consumer,” Nelms said. “With that, we plan to continue to expand our broadband in the future.”

The board of directors also has come under fire for voting to subcontract right of way projects with Georgia Right of Way. The reason for the subcontract is the rising cost of health care and workman’s compensation insurance, Nelms

said.

Georgia Right of Way is itself a cooperative.

“We’re third in the state in our worker’s comp premiums,” Nelms said. “In 2016, our costs were at \$341,000, which was the third highest in the state of Georgia when compared to other EMCs.

“We were only behind Sawnee and Jackson EMCs,” Nelms said. “Both of those are EMCs that are either reaching or exceeding 200,000 meters on their system. We are only 13th in the state of Georgia at 51,000 meters when compared

on meter count.

“This is certainly not the only reason we are partnering with Georgia Right of Way, but it should certainly help to reduce our level of exposure along with our premiums,” Nelms said. “This in turn can help to put downward pressure on expenses in the future.”

Nelms also said subcontracting with Georgia Right of Way allowed BRMEMC to keep its employee numbers manageable. The EMC currently has 188 employees.

Qualifying for City of Blairsville elections to begin next week

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Starting Monday, Aug. 21, Blairsville residents will be able to qualify to run for mayor and either of two council seats in the city’s Nov. 7 General Election.

Currently, those positions are held by Mayor Jim Conley and councilmembers Buddy Moore and Tony Dyer.

Residents will also be able to qualify for the Nov. 7 Special Election to fill the re-

maining two years of Council member Martha Cone’s term – Cone passed away in May.

The qualifying period will run from Monday, Aug. 21, day to day through Wednesday, Aug. 23, at Blairsville City Hall, from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day of qualifying.

Qualifying packets are currently available for pickup during regular business hours at city hall.

The qualifying fee for mayor is \$780, and the qualifying fee for each council position, including the vacant seat, is \$108.

To be eligible to serve, a candidate must be at least 21 years of age, a Blairsville resident for at least one year immediately prior to the date of election, a registered and qualified voter in the Municipal Election, and he or she will need to live in the city while holding the elected office.

“Celebrate The Holidays” - Plants, Flowers and Cake!

The seventh annual North Georgia Community Flower Show that took place August 3rd through 5th at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center in Blairsville was a huge success with over 160 people attending the show. The show was organized by the Flower Show Committee comprised of Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, area Garden Club members, the Union and Towns counties Cooperative Extension Offices, the Union County Commissioner’s Office and volunteers from our community.

This year’s show included 200 exhibits from residents of Union County and surrounding counties in several sections and divisions including cut specimens for flowers and trees and shrubs, container plants, hanging containers, native plants, bonsai, youth, education and design. Awesome describes it best, from Susan Jarocki’s Dahlia ‘Bashful’ bloom that won a first award in the cut specimen section to the bonsai section containing several of Rod Burley’s Bougainvillea that rivaled exhibits of larger shows. Dixie Confections and Made by Mamz each donated beautiful, delicious cakes that were enjoyed by attendees and Flower Show volunteers.

Although it was not a Standard Flower Show as sanctioned by National Garden Clubs, Inc., we were proud to have accredited flower show judges Virginia Palmer, Sharon Payne, Frances Dyer and Debora Nicholson and native plant expert Elaine Delcuze and design experts Virginia Fancher and Stephanie Gray critiquing our show for awards. Many proud participants took home first place awards. The Hor-

Narcotics Anonymous

A new NA group called “One Is Too Many” has started meeting in Young Harris at Sharp Memorial Methodist Church. Meetings are being held every Wednesday evening at 6 p.m. The church is on campus and the meeting entrance is through the back door.

For further questions about Narcotics Anonymous please call the NA Help Line at 888-666-3609.



Best In Show Award - Jennifer Logan and her husband



Bonsai Exhibit - Rod Burley’s Bougainvillea specimens

ticultural Excellence Award went to Tom Starrett for his Juniper procumbens ‘Nana’. The Designer’s Choice Award went to Sharon Payne for her floral design in Section C, Thanksgiving: Give thanks with a grateful heart. The Best In Show Award went to Jennifer Logan for her floral design in Section E, Happy Birthday; I’m not getting older, I’m getting better. The Youth Award went to Laura Mauldin for her 4th of July design entry. The Education Award went to Brian Fancher for his exhibit on Moss Gardening.

Other First Place Blue Ribbon Awards went to Laura Mauldin - Phlox, Emily Rittenhouse - Zinnia elegans, Brian Fancher - Echinocactus grussonii, Gold Ball Cactus, Rod Burley - Adenium obesum, Desert Rose, Lynn Varian - Juniper communis, Susan Jarocki - Dahlia ‘Bashful’, Pat

Smith - Rosa floribunda and Helianthus sylphiodes, Jo Anne Allen - Alocasia amazonica, African Mask, Sheleila O’Neal - Hexastylis ‘Little Brown Jug’, John Hendon - Lavender ‘Bridget Chloe’, Christine Issa - Plectranthus coleoides, Sharon Payne - Halloween: Trick or Treat design, Stephanie Gray - Christmas: The Magic of Christmas design, Elizabeth Claypool - Easter: The greatest gift of Easter is Hope design.

After the Flower Show, Amy Tatum, marketer with Homestead Hospice, picked up all of the remaining cut flowers for her patients to enjoy. Administrator Lisa Hawthorne stated earlier that she was sure the flowers would “put smiles on their faces.” The North Georgia Community Flower Show Volunteers would like to thank the community and our sponsors and contributors that supported this effort.