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designated as an isolated school by the Georgia Legislature. The reasoning behind the Sparsity Grant funding: due to its location of approximately 3,000 feet above sea level and being accessible only by way of hazardous, curvy mountain roads, Woody Gap School qualified for those funds.

The school provides classes from Pre-K through 12. In 1981 the school realized Standard School status and has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges since 1988.

Also, most recently, the state Board of Education determined that a merger of Union County and Woody Gap School is not feasible because consolidation of the two schools would result in a portion of students whose travel

time would exceed the state's prescribed criteria concerning travel time to and from school.

Does the state care about any of that? Apparently not, they're just reaching for another piece of pie.

So there you have it, the local school board hasn't been wasting your property tax dollars, the state of Georgia has been caught with its hands in the mixing bowl.

To date, the state is still grabbing for another slice of proverbial pie.

When the local school board asks for your vote to extend the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, they are being quite sincere.

Extending ESPLOST is of vital importance to everyone in this community.

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toil from sunrise to sunset to keep food on our tables as well as their own. The founding fathers of the Union County Farmers Market wanted to create a workable marketplace for these families to sell their goods at a competitive price, right in their own backyard. Their thoughts were, if the local agri-food producer can support his family, and we can generate significantly more demand, year after year, then the next generation can carry on the family legacy.

As a re-planted member of this community, and before meeting these youngsters, I would not have given the benefit of agricultural education in our local schools too much thought. I have since been exposed to dozens of young adults who raise pigs instead of hell and milk cows instead of milking their parents dry for money to buy an old pickup truck. The current leadership of our Union County schools also acknowledges the importance they play in

the future of our agricultural economy. They are developing a program that takes a century of heritage soaring into the second decade of the 21st century.

This month you have the opportunity to support that effort by voting "yes" to ESPLOST. I'm not a local politician, nor do I financially benefit from our agriculturally generated dollars. I've never raised a child, so I have always paid taxes to our public education without direct benefit. But I've shook the hand of a committed Chandler Dyer. I've looked in the eyes of Dakota Collins when he still assures me how much he loves the earth beneath his muddy boots. I want us to be able to sing "Young MacDonald has a farm, e-i-e-i-o" and know that it's viable in this county, in this decade. I voted yes to E-Splost at the Courthouse, today. It felt really important to do so. Please join me and cast your vote by or before Mar. 19.

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experience a sightseeing tour of Dublin with a local guide, including O'Connell Street, Grafton Street and Phoenix Park; and enjoy an evening of fun and Irish music at a local Dublin pub.

Interested travelers can learn more about the tour by attending an upcoming, free and informational presentation on Thursday, March 14, 2013 at 9am at the Union County Community Center. Please note that this trip is open to the entire community – business owners, families, retirees, etc. For more information about the Irish Splendor tour and

to RSVP for the presentation, please call the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce at (706)745-5789 or email travel@blairsvillechamber.com

Chambers of Commerce throughout the State and beyond are realizing the value of group travel as a means of community development. Strengthened partnerships, eye-opening experiences, and an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day are just a few of the many benefits. I hope to see you on March 14.

Dockery...

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financial burden on the business owners (and residents) of Union County! Why would we want to stop collecting the extra penny from visitors and place this added burden back on ourselves? Don't we already pay enough?

Finally, keep in mind that this is not another tax increase mandated by our local government, but merely a continuation of a process that already exists not only in Union County, but in many other Georgia counties as well. The next time you travel to Canton or Exit 1 to shop, remember that you are paying for school improvements in those counties. Why wouldn't we want travelers who visit our area to do the same for us? Voting YES for continuation of the 1¢ SPLOST makes good business sense!

Misti Dockery
Blairsville