

UC Fire...from Page 1A

said Chief Dyer. injuries were sustained in the accident, but paramedics Fortunately, no major

couldn't know that until they arrived on the scene and assessed the situation.

"The 911 center was getting hammered, and the dispatchers did an amazing job," said Chief Dyer, who is also 911 Director. "They've got to answer the phones, and they've got to answer the radio on law enforcement, EMS and fire. That's a lot to do."

As firefighters and other first responders made their way to the car crash, 911 dispatchers received another emergency call, this time about a potential structure fire on Crawford Road.

"A person drove by a house and thought they saw some smoke coming out of the house," said Chief Dyer. "It was the same time as the accident, so we diverted an engine from going to the accident to this fire. Firemen got on the scene and said, yes, we do have a structure fire."

By the time the fire department got mobilized with enough folks to fight the fire, the blaze at the residence on Crawford Road had spread to both floors of the home.

"It was a pretty significant

fire, but we had a good response from all the stations and a lot of firefighters showed up," said Chief Dyer. "It was the most firefighters we've had at a structure fire in a while."

"We had three tankers and two engines there ... and at one point we had four crews inside the home working, fighting fire."

The chief said that no one was home during the fire and nobody was injured, and that the cause of the fire is still being investigated.

Of course, even though the fire department's resources were spread a little thin that day, the chief said his department knows how to prioritize and manage situations like these.

"We depend heavily on volunteer response," said Chief Dyer, noting that volunteer numbers are up to 84. "The good thing about it is, that time of day, 5:30 p.m., people are off work, they can respond."

"We had to split up our crew from Station No. 1 that day, two went to the car accident and two went to the fire. It just takes a lot of hands to volunteer, jump in there, and go to that fire and go to that



A Union County firefighter breaking out a window in the home that caught fire.

wreck or whatever."

Chief Dyer said he and his department have been working really hard for the last couple of years to get the word out about needing more volunteers.

Fortunately, numbers are up in recent years, and the chief said his department could really feel the impact of having a more robust volunteer base helping out at each of the three

scenes on March 28.

The Union County Fire Department is looking to increase its volunteer count to around 100, and those interested in taking up the helmet should contact UCFD Fire Station No. 1 at (706) 439-6095.

Be sure to follow the fire department Facebook page at Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA.

Hands-free...from Page 1A

"As a result, Deal amended his budget recommendation initially presented in January to include an additional \$167 million for K-12 education," per a news release. "These funds will ensure the state is fully funding the Quality Basic Education funding formula and providing local school systems with 100 percent of the state's share in financing for local schools."

Next school year will be the first time since 1985 that the state has fully funded QBE for all schools statewide, and Gov. Deal was excited to share the news.

"Georgia's strong economic growth in recent years has allowed us to invest heavily in education, transportation, public safety and health care," said Gov. Deal. "These investments have in turn helped to create more economic growth by helping Georgia achieve and maintain its state as the No. 1 state in which to do business."

"This year, as a result of stronger-than-anticipated state revenue performance and federal tax reform, I'm amending my FY 2019 budget to include additional funding in

a number of areas, including education and transit, two areas that companies often cite as important factors in determining where they wish to grow and expand their businesses."

Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield said that full funding is going to be a big deal to the school system - roughly \$267,000 more for next school year.

"We are extremely

pleased with the increase to eliminate austerity reductions to QBE," said Dr. Rayfield. "We want to thank Gov. Deal and our legislators for their continued support of education."

"As we continue to deal with increased employee and operations costs, this new funding will be helpful as we work to balance our budget for FY 19."

Also during the legislative session, Gov. Deal signed into law HB 918, the first state income tax reduction since 1937.

The tax cut will result in a drop in the top income tax rate for individuals and corporations in 2019, from 6 percent to 5.75 percent, and the bill doubles the standard deduction for all taxpayers.

The Georgia General Assembly is one of the largest state legislatures in the nation and meets each year from January until late March.

Composed of a House and Senate, the General Assembly's job is to set the state's annual operating budget and to propose laws.

UCSO...from Page 1A

taking the test be hooked up to various equipment.

Conversely, CVSA technology measures otherwise imperceptible changes in voice patterns using only a microphone, and the interviewer simply interprets the charts when the test is completed.

"I've actually used it twice so far since I have gotten it," said Det. Pilote of his certification. "This is an investigative tool. Just like a polygraph, it's not admissible in court, but it does help us clear names."

"If you're not associated with anything, you take the test, and if it shows that you're being truthful, no deception at all, it helps us clear a name."

Pilote's partner in the UCSO Criminal Investigations Division, Lt. Tom Mangifesta, pointed out that CVSA is not a lie detector test per se, but that it shows deception associated with stress regarding specific events.

"Let's say we're investigating a burglary," said Lt. Mangifesta. "If you didn't do it, it's going to show. But there's different formats that, you may not have broken in, but let's say you're the getaway driver."

"You're going to show stress, and there's certain questions we can ask that will lead us to believe, okay, you didn't actually go in, but you were there when it happened."

Lt. Mangifesta recertified as a CVSA examiner the same time Det. Pilote received his certification last month.

The training occurred March 5 through March 9 in Atlanta, and the pair certified under Senior Instructor Michael McQuillan of the National Institute for Truth Verification.

"We also use it for pre-employment examinations," said Lt. Mangifesta. "If you're going to work in the jail, you want to be a deputy, you've got to take the test. There are certain questions on there that are associated with questions on your application."

For employment purposes or otherwise, Det. Pilote said that the biggest part of the voice stress analyzer test is actually the interview that takes place beforehand.

"The test in and of itself is only a few minutes long," said Det. Pilote. "The initial interview is where you try to get as much information as you can, and then you conduct the

test. Based on the results, you do a follow-up interview, or you can rule them out."

Many law enforcement agencies across the U.S. prefer CVSA to polygraph for a variety of reasons, including much faster certification time, less restrictive testing conditions and overall ease of use.

"It's to test the truthfulness of their statement or their employment application - that's it," said Lt. Mangifesta.

"We also follow up with what they call a 'cold call,' which means if I'm giving a test and I get a response, to eliminate any bias in my interpretation. I'll send the test to Marc."

"He doesn't know the person's name, he doesn't know the questions. All he's doing is looking at that chart."

Added Mangifesta: "It's a very good investigative tool that we can use to narrow the number of suspects and eliminate innocent people. That's very important, and that's mostly what we do it for, to eliminate innocent people."

Det. Pilote transitioned from patrol to CID in January 2017, and in that time, he's completed nearly 300 hours of training as a detective. His new certification is good for two years, at which point he'll have to recertify.

Shopping...from Page 1A

will begin on the first Thursday of April," said From Me 2 U owner Michelle Rowe. "A lot of the locals are happy we're going to extend our hours because they don't have time to shop during regular business hours."

Businesses that want to stay open late were encouraged to offer a gift or discount during the extended hours to draw customers into their stores.

"We told them that some people will have discounts, some people will have gifts," said Rowe. "Our gift with purchase will be from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m."

Added Rowe: "It will be called 'Shop Late Thursday,' and Darren Harper has promised us a banner on the courthouse lawn to let tourists and locals know we will be open late

on the first Thursday of the month."

Currently, Harper is planning to have a work session on how to improve Facebook presence, so businesses that want to take part in the work session should reach out to him.

The Visit Downtown Blairsville App is taking off, with 14 businesses already involved and running digital coupons. Downtown businesses are encouraged to contact Darren Harper to get exposure on the app.

"Any business in the downtown can have a free digital coupon," said Harper. "You just have to tell me what your offer is, for example,

Michaelee's added one today, and if you have lunch with them between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., you get 10 percent off your meal."

Added Harper: "It's pretty straightforward, and the way the process works is you tell me what your special is, and you and I agree on a password, so when somebody comes in and says, 'Hey, I've got this coupon and I want to redeem it,' that password is what your sever, your cashier or you personally punch into their phone. And it redeems the coupon and they can only use it one time."

The Spring Arts, Crafts & Music Festival is getting ready to kick off Memorial Day weekend with The Tom Floyd Band playing on May 26.

Mountain Coin Club meeting

The meeting of the Mountain Coin Club on April 10th will feature a 30-minute video presentation on rare colonial coins. The National Guaranty Corporation chairman will explain highlights of the million-dollar Eric P. Newman collection.

Dr. Newman built a phenomenal collection of Colonial and Pre-Federal coins. This served as the basis for much of his numismatic research.

Charlie Johnston, Charter Member of the Mountain Coin Club, will facilitate the educational program. Join us for the interesting evening at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Technical College Blairsville campus.