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be expensive to replace," Paris said. "It's probably a \$30,000 culvert. I'm contacting Georgia Department of Transportation today and see if they can help us with that."

Some of the hardest hit areas were in the Southside, with the Choestoe community bearing the brunt of the flooding. Typically, the headwaters swell well before other creeks and streams.

That was the case on Wednesday, Paris said.

"You have to realize that is the Nottely River Watershed, and that watershed goes all the way up to Brasstown Bald," Paris said. "It all runs downhill. We definitely got more water this time on that end of the county and that's how it usually works."

Matthew Akins, Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation general manager, said work crews were out in full force battling the elements as they worked to restore power to area residents as straight-line winds, torrential rains, and flash flooding swept through Union and Towns counties and most of the EMC coverage area.

He was quick to point out that he was very impressed with their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice during the adverse weather conditions.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the EMC employees for a job well done in responding to and managing the power outages yesterday and last night," Akins said.

"As usual, the team pulled together and worked efficiently to get power restored to our members as safely and quickly as possible," said Akins.



EMC crews work to clear downed trees to allow them to replace a twisted off power pole off Georgia 515 in Union County. Mother Nature kept the crews busy for 27 hours, Wednesday into Thursday. Photo/Libby Shook

"We had a total of 171 outages affecting almost 15,000 members," he said. "Our office personnel did an excellent job answering more than 2,000 phone calls."

Akins said that power crews worked throughout the night in the cold, rain, and wind to restore power to everyone, including replacing 20 broken power poles, in just over 27 hours.

"The BRMEMC team came together, developed a game plan, and worked through the night until we had everyone's power back on," said Akins.

Approximately 12 engineering and metering employees were grouped into six "bird dog" crews. There were also six employees assigned to deliver materials and six mechanics to work on vehicles and equipment.

Akins reported that they had approximately 30 office employees answering phones and five employees in dispatch.

Due to the fact that so many power poles were down, Akins offered warnings to stay away from any downed lines including power, telephone, or cable; do not touch any object that is in contact with downed power lines and can transmit electricity such as water and metal; and never drive your car over power lines.

"If a power line falls across your vehicle while you are driving, stay inside your car until you receive appropriate assistance," said Akins.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Paris said Union County dodged a bullet.

"You know, this could have been a whole lot worse than it was," he said. "If it had

rained another two or three hours, we really would have been in trouble.

"We're fortunate to have escaped with only minor flooding and some storm damage," Paris said. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the folks in Bartow and Gordon counties," he said. "May the Good Lord help those folks get back on their feet as quickly as possible."

Staff writer Libby Shook contributed to this report.

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snow," Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said. "I can't remember a weather week like this ever."

"Our road crews are ready to put down gravel and salt, and we'll make certain travel is possible for residents," Paris said. "I guess we'll just have to wait this one out."

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said Neel's Gap headed toward Gainesville was a problem, as temperatures were significantly lower on top of the mountain.

"You could see the snow on the mountain before the first flake dropped here," he said. "That's usually the way it works."

In no time, the area became white with the big, fluffy, wet snow.

Travel didn't become hazardous until after nightfall. That's when temperatures dipped into the upper 20s and the Sunday morning commute became a problem.

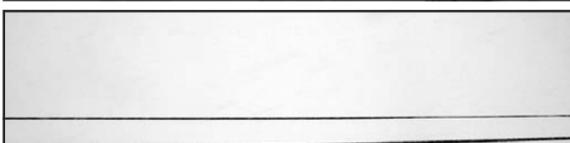
The storm system experienced lulls, but consistently churned out the snowflakes. Precipitation amounts totaled up to five inches of the white stuff in some parts of the county. Hiwassee, Young Harris and Towns County was the hardest hit by the snow storm.

The snow led to the cancellation of most high school sports activities on Saturday, as school officials erred on the side of caution.

The snow system had Union County Schools on a two-hour delay on Monday.

That's something that has become a regular feature in recent weeks with Mother Nature playing tricks with the weather.

The weather for the rest of the week appears warmer and damper. With rain predicted by the National Weather Service by the end of the week.



BRCT's production of *The Neverending Story*



The cast *The Neverending Story*

One of the main purposes of Blue Ridge Community Theater is to introduce the magic of theater to all ages. Our Sunny D Children's Theater is a vital part of this mission as they take school age children (5 to 18) and teach them all aspects of theater production.

Sunny D is currently putting the finishing touches on its production of *The Neverending Story*, based on the children's book by Michael Ende. The story follows Bastian (Nicholas Sherman, age 12) and Atreyu (Sara

Dilbeck, age 16), two youths who are brought together by the power of a magic book.

The production brings to life memorable characters Bastian and Atreyu along with their companions Falkor, the luck dragon (Noah Hornsby, age 16), Artax, the talking horse (CJ Smith, age 16), and the Child-like Empress (Hannah Herndon, age 5). Directors Kelly Hornsby and Kimberly Fleming are proud of the hard work the children have put into the play. Many of the children have had

to balance their work on the production with school, dance, Boy Scouts, and myriads of other activities.

The Neverending Story starts February 8th and runs until February 17th, Friday - Sunday. Tickets and times are available through the BRCT box office located at: Blue Ridge Community Theater, 2591 East First Street, Blue Ridge, GA 30513 (across from Swan Drive-In), 706-632-9223. You can also visit our website at www.BlueRidgeCommunityTheater.com. NIFeb6X1JCA