

Barge...from Page 1A

Pleasantly surprised, Barge expressed his admiration and respect for all of the faculty and staff at UCES because he saw "some truly amazing classrooms, an outstanding media center, and some really great students who are really well behaved."

After the tour of the school, Barge, who is challenging Gov. Nathan Deal for Georgia's Republican nomination for governor, shared his ideas and thoughts on how to make Georgia's public school systems more proficient and increase the quality of education for school children in Georgia.

As Georgia's next governor, Barge hopes to streamline state government and avoid duplication of services in all state agencies.

He also plans to increase funding for education in Georgia. Barge believes that by achieving a higher quality of education at the state level, everyone benefits.

Barge said his priority is making sure the state provides the best education it can for Georgia's school children.

Barge believes that the quality of education in Georgia has suffered because public education is not being adequately funded.

According to Barge, in Georgia, "revenue has continually increased every month for the last three years, and the projections indicate that at this



Dr. John Barge gets an up close look at Union County Elementary School. Photo/Lowell Nicholson continued level, by the end of this year, the state will have close to \$1 billion in revenue increases."

Inexplicably, these increasing "funds continue to remain absent" in regards to the funding of public education in Georgia.

Barge feels this is a grotesque misuse of state appropriated funds, especially since he believes that "education is the single most important investment we can make."

Barge adds that the fact that two-thirds of all school districts in the state have had to cut

their school calendars, decreasing the amount of instructional time that children are receiving, pinpoints the problem.

According to Barge, politicians, not lawmakers, are adding to the lower quality of education in Georgia.

Public schools are at the mercy of politicians who are in charge of appropriating public school funding.

Eighty percent of all districts within the state have furloughed teachers, which again causes a decrease in the education the children are receiving across the state.

"We have withheld way too much money from our public school system," Barge said. "That has led to the point where two-thirds of our schools are not in school the minimum 180 days a year.

"That is not good for our kids. It is not good for our teachers to be furloughed. It is not good for teachers to lose their jobs," Barge said.

Barge said that the economy suffers as well from underfunded education.

"What business wants to locate in an area where the school has cut their calendar by 10 or 15 or 20 days a year?" Barge asked.

State cuts have an immediate impact on school-age children, Barge said.

That factor alone truly troubles Barge.

"When politics start dictating how to fund schools, that negatively impacts children and their right to a quality education," Barge said.

Barge is running for governor on a platform of being an advocate for Georgia's school children.

As governor, Barge believes he can improve educational quality: restore funding to public education; ensure that people in charge of various state agencies have the qualifications necessary to do the job; and realize the restoration of ethics in the state government.

UGH Auxillary's auction a big hit

By Azure Welch
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

For two days at Union General Hospital last week, the old lobby area of the hospital shimmered and shined with jewels.

Hosted by the Women's Auxiliary of UGH, Robin Gerard brought his varied array of earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and numerous additional items directly to the savvy buyers of Union County.

Benefitting not only from a portion of the proceeds generated by the sale, the hostesses (and the shoppers) also benefited from Gerard's more than twenty years in the fashion jewelry business working with some of the major players in the fashion world, such as, Givenchy, Lagerfeld, Liz Claiborne, Nine West, Guess, and the Disney company.

However, in 2007, Gerard was in China on a design trip, and ended up with Guillain-Barre Syndrome after suffering from what was originally a food-borne virus.

Guillain-Barre syndrome is an autoimmune disorder that affects the nerves to such a degree that some people who develop this disorder become paralyzed, and this was the case for Gerard.

Although, Gerard had to endure paralysis from the neck down, an extensive hospital stay and a lengthy and intensive rehabilitation, this is also the same time that he felt that life changes were in



Robin Gerard shows off his classic jewelry designs. Photo/Azure Welch

order. Because of the toll taken on the physical and emotional health of individuals with Guillain-Barre Syndrome, it is medically advised to reduce the stress in one's life, and for Gerard it meant leaving the corporate world of fashion.

Nevertheless, Gerard utilized his wealth of experience and artistic talents to others. As a result of the wonderful assistance Gerard received from the hospital staff, and in particular the hospital volunteers during his extensive hospitalization and rehabilitation, he turned his focus towards fundraising for non-profit organizations.

Gerard was the featured artisan at the Cherry Blossom Festival this year in Macon, GA. All of his jewelry is "one of a kind jewelry," and unless

he is requested to make an identical piece, "every piece of jewelry is different from the piece before," according to Judith Girous.

Girous also was participating in the jewelry fundraiser, "but mostly to assist Robin when he needs it," but a table of hand-made scarfs, hats,

bags, and various other items was all done by Girous.

Gerard's inventory of jewelry at this fundraiser was varied and extremely well crafted, and best of all of the jewelry for sale is made by hand using silver, and "at least 99 percent of the time, real quartz and/or Swarovski crystals" according to Gerard.

But the best part of all is that the prices are affordable, as in the majority of rings and earrings were only \$5, and a pair of earrings was free with every necklace purchase. The quality of the jewelry is above the standard, and with Gerard's experience, he is able to incorporate current fashion and color trends.

Benefiting from the sale of Gerard's jewelry is the Union County Hospital Women's Auxiliary, and the portion received by the Auxiliary will allow the group to continue funding local scholarship needs in addition to helping the Auxiliary to fund purchases needed for the nursing home, and an array of various other community projects.