

Josh Davis of UCHS talks CTAE with Movers and Shakers

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Photo by Lily Avery

Josh Davis of Union County High School

Union County Schools CTAE Director Josh Davis discussed the ins and outs of the program and what he hopes to see in the coming years in a conversation with the Mountain Movers and Shakers at Sundance Grill on Friday, Feb. 9.

CTAE, or Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, is a program in Georgia geared toward providing students with pathway opportunities that lead to college, career opportunities, apprenticeships or the military post-graduation.

At Union County High, the CTAE program has taken off at an amazing rate, making it one of the top programs in the area with a newly renovated facility, INCubator Edu program, and continued community involvement.

According to Davis, CTAE programs in general are essential to providing students with soft skills, or employable skills, that they will utilize later in life once they continue on into adulthood.

"We're talking about things like communication, teamwork, shaking hands, looking people in the eyes when you're talking to them, proper use of cellphones, dressing appropriately," said Davis. "All of those different things that we see in the business community that students are coming out of high school not knowing how to express those things in the right way."

"It's a nationwide epidemic now. We can't longer ignore it. We can't put the blame all on parents or educators or the students themselves. These are the things that we are trying to engage in with our CTAE program in Union County."

Davis went on to explain that, while the program is geared toward potential education or career paths for students to pursue in their postsecondary education, or out in the work force, it is also meant to serve as a conduit to teach students those soft skills, which they can then implement

moving forward.

"One of the biggest misconceptions with the program is that we're pushing students to choose a career when they come out of eighth grade and into the high school level," said Davis. "We're not really doing that."

"We're just wanting these students to experience and get some exploration while they're in high school, so they can see if maybe they really want to go that route or not. We also want to teach them technical skills while they're in high school, to be successful in those careers once they graduate."

In the coming year, Davis hopes to see the CTAE program in Union County continue to expand and grow in popularity throughout the community so that both the students and area businesses can become more successful via employability.

One way that Davis is seeking to address that is through a new mock interview scenario that he wants to introduce to the program within the next year.

With the interview, students would be given the opportunity to learn and practice participating in a job interview to hone in on good interview etiquette.

"Mock interviews is something that I want to build

and create at Union County High School," said Davis. "It would be awesome for graduates from the high school to have a mock interview experience, where we bring in the business community and let them go through and interview with these students."

Students are also given opportunities to job shadow, undergo internships and participate with events in the business community to further promote soft skills and appropriate communication skills outside of the classroom.

According to Davis, if the school system can provide students with opportunities to learn these skills before leaving Union County Schools, then their chances of being successful are higher, which is what the CTAE program is all about.

"In Union County, in Towns County, and all across this area, if you've engaged with students, we have some very bright students," said Davis. "They do need us to push them a little bit and make them see and make them engage in these soft skills."

"These are the things that they need us to encourage them with in order for them to be successful and in order for them to be the future workforce and future leaders that we need them to be."

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a conversation about what's next and how are we going to get there."

Continued Mayor Gibby: "Several years ago, when the Department of Community Affairs came, they came back with some broad suggestions from the community. So, we can pull all that out, and then our thoughts, and start coming up with a bigger master plan on how to get to where we want to get to."

The mayor and several members of the city council expressed an interest in wooing businesses into the city, since infrastructure needs have been taken care of throughout the city.

There's even a chance to cultivate more of a "village" type environment, said Mayor Gibby, taking into account the impending Young Harris Bypass that will be arriving with the expansion and relocation of Georgia 515 in a couple of years.

"We're not quite ready for this, but the mayor in Hiawassee and I have been having a conversation about, would it be possible to have a joint development group, authority, committee?" said Mayor Gibby. "We haven't figured out what it should be."

Also in the meeting, City Attorney Marvin Harkins updated the council on the state of the newly proposed city charter, which State Rep. Matt

Gurtler submitted last week for approval by the Georgia General Assembly.

The current city charter was first enacted in 1978 and has been amended at least 12 times in the past 40 years, according to Harkins, making it difficult to track.

For example, the city limits have been amended multiple times, which could lead to confusion over the city's boundaries.

The new charter is based on a model provided by the Georgia Municipal Association, and there are several noteworthy changes to the charter.

Mayor and city council compensation will be set by ordinance from here on out, not by charter amendment.

Clearer language has been employed elsewhere in the charter, ensuring that the

mayor retains her ability to hire and fire city employees, that council seats remain nonpartisan, and that the city continues to conduct annual independent audits, to list a few examples.

Furthermore, according to Harkins, "The 1978 Charter allows the council to appoint a replacement in the final six months of the four-year term of a council member. Vacancies during the prior 42 months must be filled by special election, at considerable cost to the city."

"The proposed charter allows the council to appoint a replacement within the last 24 months of the vacant term."

Those interested in checking out the new charter can follow its progress through the Georgia General Assembly at Legis.GA.gov, under HB 845.



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Mayor Gibby with City Attorney Marvin Harkins in the Feb. 6 regular city meeting.

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public hearing before the final adoption of the ordinance.

Also in the Feb. 6 regular city meeting, the council approved a contract with the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute for grant money totaling \$30,000, which includes a small local match, to complete a strategic plan for the city.

The council held a first reading of the Motel-Hotel Ordinance, which will change the way the city distributes its Hotel-Motel Tax to better favor the city upon adoption.

In a Jan. 29 council work session, Mayor Ordiales and the city council discussed in detail the items to appear on the Feb. 6 agenda, which resulted in the Feb. 6 regular meeting passing by in record time.

"I'm exceptionally happy that these meetings are going the way that I envisioned them going," said Ordiales. "My goal is to have all the conversations, city input from the citizens, discussions among the city council, all of that — because it's needed, we need

input from the city — at the work session.

"From there, we iron out what it is that we're going to talk about at the city council meeting, and I will let them know at the work session, 'I'm going to ask for your approval on such and such a subject,' so they know what's going on."

"They've got a week to contact me or anybody to figure out if the vote is right. Hopefully, by the time the city council meeting rolls around, we're good. The February city council meeting lasted 18 minutes start to finish... That's great, that's the way we want to do it."

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to be a huge endeavor getting all of this stuff back into the classrooms."

Due to these renovations and their expected effect on the use of school buildings, Dr. Berrong and the school board have decided to alter the school's schedule to accommodate these renovations.

In anticipation of such a decision, the BOE already started school earlier than usual for the 2017-2018 school year, so as not to limit the students' academic year.

"We've sat down and looked at the calendar for next year and taken into account that we're going to have a lot of construction this summer," said Dr. Berrong. "We are looking at bringing teachers back on Aug. 9."

"We brought teachers back on July 31 this year, and students will not start until Aug. 16. That gives us two extra weeks to complete the construction work. We started this year early so that we could get out a week early, so we're going to start two weeks later so we can get these construction projects done."

As it stands, the BOE is looking to shorten Thanksgiving break back



Photo by Lily Avery

Towns County Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong

down from five days to three days, remove the two-day fall break in October and any other in-between days in hopes of creating enough time for the summer 2019 construction as well.

"By doing this, we still have construction projects that we need to do next summer," said Dr. Berrong. "So even though we're starting late, we'll still need to get out of school as fast as we can possibly get out of school next year, and still make sure that the students get all of the days that they need to."

"This means that the calendar is going to need to

be altered in other places as well, not just when we start and when we end school."

Dr. Berrong and the board have not made a final decision at this time and will continue to discuss the logistics of the 2018-2019 school year in the coming months.

The Towns County Board of Education hosts its monthly work session on the first Monday of every month inside the board office, and the regular monthly meeting on the second Monday of every month in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium.

All meeting times begin at 7 p.m.

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Ken Camp of the championship. "We're excited, because this will be the first time these guys will get to go against a school with less than 800 students, because everybody in the national tournament is 500 and under."

Regional Academic Team matchups don't take into account school size, so Towns County, with its small number of students, has had to get used to competing against much larger schools.

This could give the team a decided edge going into the Small School National Championship, though everyone realizes that they will also be facing the best of the best small schools.

"I think it gives us an advantage, because a lot of these smaller schools, they're used to competing with each other, whereas we're the smallest school in our area," said Teammate Kendall Floyd. "We don't get the opportunity to compete with other schools our size, so I think that gives us

an advantage going in."

Each of the team's 12 members looks forward to making the trip to Chicago, and everyone involved hopes to take home a big win on the national scene come late April.

"To be exemplified for being the best of what you are, and being offered this opportunity, is just awesome," said Connor Kelley, as his friend and teammate Chase Rogers added, "The opportunity to meet and compete with people from all across the country."

Coaches Camp and Becky West are thrilled that their students are getting the chance to put Towns County on the map for Academic Team, and the two coaches are proud of the team's accomplishments no matter how they do at nationals.

"We see a way for a community partnership with this," said Coach Camp of their fundraising efforts. "We want to show our appreciation to the whole community and try to do

our best to win this thing."

As previously reported, any donations that community businesses or individuals might make to defray travel and registration expenses would be much appreciated by the team.

"This is a great opportunity, and we don't want to miss it," said Teammate Chase Crawford. "It's something that really doesn't happen to people that often, and the fact that it's happening to us is amazing. As much help as we can get to achieve it, the more the merrier."

For more information, please call the high school at (706) 896-4131 and ask for Ken Camp or Becky West.

"More than anything, we're glad that we're going to be able to represent Towns County on such a huge, massive scale, because we're going to a place where we've probably never heard of any of the counties," said Kelley. "To them, we're not just some small school in the middle of nowhere — we stand with the elites. We're up there. We can represent the school."

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constant outpouring of support for its residents each month.

"Texana has a lot of rich history," said Cox. "It used to be self-sufficient. There were businesses in Texana, stores and all kinds of stuff."

"We want to bring that back so that our children know that history. We're trying to bridge that gap between our elders and our young people. So, we're trying to come up with programs in order to do that."

One of the key programs that the community club hosts each year to promote community engagement and youth involvement is a summer camp at the Texana Community Club. This is open to kids of all ages, at little or no cost to those who attend. And, according to Cox, the summer camp has now garnered participation from those outside of the community as well.

"We have 35 or 40 kids that come to the camp each summer," said Cox. "They go swimming. They go on trips. They do arts and crafts. It's for six weeks during the summer and at a cost of \$50 per child."

The community club hosts fundraisers to help cushion the cost of the summer camp to make it more affordable for children to attend. Many of these fundraisers include fish fries, hot dog sales, garage

sales and other similar activities throughout the community.

"If you hear that we're doing any of those things, please come by and support us," said Cox. "That's how we get the program going, that's how we keep the building in working condition with the lights and the water."

In addition to promoting youth growth, the community club wants to continue supporting those in the community by offering classes and activities for senior citizens in the area as well.

According to Turner, there are many who cannot make it to the senior center to take advantage of those programs and facilities, and Texana wants to fill in the gap for those elder citizens.

"We want to expand

not only our summer youth program, but we also want to have programs for our seniors in the community and surrounding areas," said Turner. "Although we have a senior center downtown, we're learning that if the seniors don't have transportation to where the services are, then you still have issues."

"So, we're trying to find ways to address that program and find a solution for our elderly population."

At this time, Texana Community Club does not have senior programs available, but hopes to raise enough money to fund a program in the near future.

To keep up to date on the Texana Community Club, or to find ways to get involved, the organization can be found on Facebook by searching under the club's name.

Things that give a show pzazz - props and costumes

What would a comedy be if it didn't have over-the-top props and costuming for those zany characters to use? Those are some of the challenges for Prop Mistress Cindy Malovany and Costumer Landi Marrella in 'Til Beth Do Us Part, opening at the Peacock in Hayesville on March 2.

New to the whole theatre experience is Prop Mistress Cindy Malovany, who was asked by Guest Director Natalie Moses to help out with gathering props. "There are lots of things both for the set and for the actors to handle," says Malovany. "I love to shop and it's a challenge to find just the right thing." On the other end of the spectrum, Landi Marrella who volunteered at the Peacock all last year, is now considered a veteran costumer. "Every production has unusual challenges - the actor who has to drop his trousers, or the guy who has to wear a woman's costume, or how to handle a lightning fast costume change - and 'Beth' is certainly no exception!" says Marrella. In training for fu-



(L-R): Cindy Malovany, Landi Marrella, Cathy Mulvey

ture productions, is first-timer, Cathy Mulvey, assistant to Laurel Adams, the Stage Manager for this show. "This is fascinating work: I never knew there was so much that went on behind the show the audience sees!" says Mulvey. She says she learns something new every rehearsal; perhaps the opportunity of Stage Manager awaits. And every one of these ladies loves her job.

'Til Beth Do Us Part is a laugh-filled comedy written by the same team of writers who gave us Doublewide, Texas two years ago and plays March

2-4; 9-11 at the Peacock, 301 Church Street in Hayesville. Evening performances are 7:30 and Sunday matinees are 2:30. Seating is reserved and tickets are available now: \$18 adults, \$9 students, group discounts available. Season Packages are still available at a good discount!

Call or visit the box office weekdays 10-2 p.m. (828-389-2787), or visit Tiger's Mercantile in Hayesville or order online at thepeacocknc.org. The Peacock is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider. NFB14ZBCA