

BRMEMC

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reviewing our internal protocols and procedures to ensure we are as protected as feasible from any future incidents.

“Once we have a more accurate picture of the details of this crime as well as our planned course of action, we can provide updates as appropriate.”

In its coverage of the 2018 Annual Meeting that appeared in the Sept. 12 edition of the newspaper, the Towns County Herald reported in error that customer banking information had been the target of the attack.

As stated in both the annual meeting and in the statement available online, “this crime appears to have been focused on the bank accounts of the EMC, not personal or financial member information.”

And while the cybercrime is still under investigation, the EMC did say in the Frequently Asked Questions portion of its online statement that the perpetrator apparently gained access using a method known as “spear phishing.”

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, regular “phishing” consists of “a virtual trap set by cyber thieves that uses official-looking emails to lure you to fake websites and trick you into revealing your personal information.”

What happened at the EMC in July, however, has been described by law enforcement officials as a “more mischievous type of phishing.”

“Instead of casting out thousands of emails randomly hoping a few victims will bite, spear phishers target select groups of people with something

in common,” according to the FBI. “The emails are ostensibly sent from organizations or individuals the potential victims would normally get emails from, making them even more deceptive.”

So, how does “spear fishing” work?

“First, criminals need some inside information on their targets to convince them the emails are legitimate,” according to the FBI. “They often obtain it by hacking into an organization’s computer network or sometimes by combing through other websites, blogs and social networking sites.

“Then, they send emails that look like the real thing to targeted victims, offering all sorts of urgent and legitimate-sounding explanations as to why they need your personal data.

“Finally, the victims are asked to click on a link inside the email that takes them to a phony but realistic-looking website, where they are asked to provide passwords, account numbers, user IDs, access codes, PINs, etc.”

Spear phishing can also trick people into downloading malicious programs using links embedded in emails, which can lead to computer takeovers and greater internal access.

But to reiterate, according to the EMC, “the crime appears to have been focused solely on our internal banking accounts. At this time, we have no evidence indicating that any of our members’ personal or financial information was compromised.”

Concerning the question

of how much money was stolen during the attack, the EMC has said that, for now, “due to the criminal investigation pending, specific details of this crime cannot be divulged.”

The Sept. 11 board meeting marked the first occasion for the new directors – Jack Lance Jr. of Union County and Gayland Trull of Fannin County – to come together with their fellow board members, including returning director Roy Perren, inside EMC headquarters.

It was also the first meeting chaired by new Board President Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina.

Also that evening, the board welcomed Woody Trimble of accounting firm Jackson Thornton, and he presented the EMC’s audit report for the most recent fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

In his presentation, Trimble gave the EMC a clean opinion, meaning that the financial records provided by the EMC were free from any misrepresentations.

In other business, Nelms and the directors talked a bit about the upcoming fiber broadband expansion pilot program.

Program particulars are still being ironed out, but at the moment, the EMC plans on spending \$500,000 this year to bring fiber broadband to a number of member homes.

So far, 25 areas have been identified as potential markets for this pilot fiber push, and as many as 1,000 homes could receive fiber as part of the pilot program.

The EMC will provide more details on its broadband expansion plans in the coming months.

S.A.F.E. opens new thrift store on Pinebrook Drive



The S.A.F.E. Thrift Store ribbon cutting celebrating the newly relocated store at 27 Pinebrook Drive in Blairsville. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Many people gathered at the new S.A.F.E. Thrift Store in Blairsville on Sept. 14 to celebrate alongside the organization for a ribbon cutting to mark the success of the new location at 27 Pinebrook Drive.

Members of the organization were joined by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, which helped to set up the ribbon cutting and celebrate the opening of a new milestone in the organization’s overall goal.

This ribbon cutting took place on Friday, Sept. 14, and featured refreshments as members of the community came to socialize with each other prior to the cutting of the ribbon.

“We are so glad to have the opportunity to open this store,” said Store Manager Britany Green. “It will help us reach the goals we set as an organization.”

With all attendees focused on the celebration, Chamber President Steve Rowe called the ribbon cutting to order.

“We are so grateful that S.A.F.E. has allowed us to be part of the ribbon cutting of their new store,” said Rowe.

“I have been involved with S.A.F.E. for quite a while, and for those that do not know it, at the old building, they kept all of this stuff in a garage.

“Of course, even back then, they did this for the victims that they are working to protect. S.A.F.E. is all about the residents and their shelters.”

All participants moved outside the store to participate in cutting the ribbon as one united group, and the honor of cutting the ribbon went to Robin O’Neill, former S.A.F.E. store manager and current volunteer coordinator.

“It has really been a privilege to work for S.A.F.E. since the beginning,” said O’Neill. “It was a huge undertaking to move from a two-story to our new store. I hope that everybody will continue to participate and support the shelters that we serve.

“Everything we do here will go strictly to fund the shelter, the Butterfly House for the children, and any resources within or outside the shelter. We are thrilled about what happened here and our current success.”

Although the ribbon cutting officially occurred on Sept. 14, the store opened at the end of August.

The store offers a range

of goods that individuals have donated to the organization, including shirts, pants, jackets, scarves, hats, socks, movies and a variety of other items that are available for all age groups.

The new thrift store is located off Gainesville Highway going toward Vogel State Park.

S.A.F.E.’s mission is to provide support, advocacy and emergency shelter for victims of domestic abuse, child abuse and sexual abuse.

The organization operates shelters for the people that come to them for help, and they keep details confidential to protect the families.

“We help those that need it and need to keep it confidential,” said Green. “The shelters serve as a safe haven for these people that have experienced abuse, and this includes the Butterfly House for the children.”

S.A.F.E. stands for Support in Abusive Family Emergencies. The group always welcomes help and donations to its causes, and there are plenty of volunteer opportunities at the stores.

For more information on how to donate or volunteer with S.A.F.E., visit safeservices.org.



Britany Green and Robin O’Neill of S.A.F.E. inside the new store on Friday, Sept. 14. Photo by Jarrett Whitener