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Jarrard retires after 28 years, says 'I'm going to miss the people'

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

With the retirement of Young Harris City Clerk Shirley Jarrard, the Enchanted Valley has lost a tireless public servant.

Twenty-eight years, three mayors and countless council members later, the Towns County native served the last day of her long career at City Hall on Dec. 31, 2019.

And according to those who knew her best, Shirley Jarrard will truly be missed.

"Shirley has been the lifeblood of the city for 28 years," Mayor Andrea Gibby said. "Without her steady presence, we would not be the city that we are."

Added Gibby, "She taught me about municipal government, about working on the local level, about community being family. Thank you for everything, Shirley! We love

you."

Jarrard's friends at City Hall, including the mayor, council members and city employees, joined her for a retirement party immediately after her last regular meeting with the Young Harris City Council adjourned on Dec. 3, where those gathered shared fellowship, cake and refreshments.

"I wish I knew half of what she knows about the city and how it runs," said longtime City Councilman Matt Miller, who came aboard as an elected official the same year Jarrard started as city clerk. "We will miss her."

"The institutional knowledge she brought to the job made all of my fellow council members' lives easier. She did a great job representing the city. I wish her well in retirement and hope she enjoys it."

As Miller pointed out,



Shirley Jarrard, center, surrounded by her City Hall family for a retirement reception following the December meeting of the Young Harris City Council. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Jarrard will be missed not only for her hard work and dedication to the job but also

for her friendly disposition and steadfast presence at City Hall, having served as both city clerk

and finance officer all 28 years of her city career. Jarrard got her start under Mayor Carlless Sampson on Dec. 17, 1991, following 11 years at the City of Blairsville. See Jarrard, Page 6A

Bradshaw says FY19 under budget, 'good economy' to benefit 2020

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw amended the county's 2019 budget and adopted the tentative 2020 budget in a special called meeting in his office on Tuesday, Dec. 31.

At the end of each fiscal year, Bradshaw and his office staff review that year's budget numbers to make necessary amendments before heading into a new fiscal year, and the 2019 year-end budget amendments had to do with the county's General Fund.

"We might have an overage of one department and (be) under in another department, so we just move the money around so that we stay in budget," Bradshaw said.

The General Fund is expected to come in under budget by about \$80,000 to



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signed the 2020 county budget in a called meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 31. Photo by Chad Stack

\$100,000, Bradshaw said, adding that they are still waiting on some departmental reports to turn in their final calculations and bills.

One example of an amended General Fund item was the Towns County

Sheriff's Office, which required a \$56,000 budget amendment due to the purchase of two patrol cars, Bradshaw said.

"They didn't go over budget \$56,000, they just got two cars that weren't in the

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Brasstown Valley Resort celebrates New Year's with 'Silver Jubilee'



As usual, New Year's revelers enjoyed themselves as they helped usher in 2020 at Brasstown Valley Resort last week. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Brasstown Valley Resort hosted its annual New Year's Eve party

last week, ringing in 2020 with an unforgettable gala event while toasting to 25 incredible years celebrating the New Year's tradition.

On Tuesday, Dec. 31, the

resort launched its yearly New Year's event with the theme of Silver Jubilee to mark the 25th anniversary of the lavish party.

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Flu widespread in Georgia; Health Department urges vaccination



By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Already 15 influenza-associated deaths have been reported in the state this flu season, compared with just four deaths over the same period last flu season and one death the season before that, according to the latest data from the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Six of the recent deaths occurred in a single week, between Dec. 22 and Dec. 28, 2019, and of the 20,038 specimens tested in clinical laboratories around the state, 3,031 have come back positive for the flu – roughly three times

the number reported this same time last year.

The Department of Public Health tracks influenza infections every year, counting each flu season as starting around the beginning of October and lasting through the middle of May the next calendar year, though people can catch the flu year-round.

Outpatient visits involving flu-like illnesses in Georgia are currently well above the regional baseline, making it clear "there's a lot of people coming in for care for influenza-like illnesses," said Dave Palmer of District 2 Public Health, which encompasses

Union and Towns counties.

"Right now, influenza is widespread in Georgia," Palmer said. "It's way above the baseline. Activity is high. If folks have not had their flu shot, there's still time to get it."

Available now at doctors' offices, the Health Department and many local pharmacies, the flu shot is considered the best protection against influenza, with each vaccination typically covering several strains of influenza.

"A lot of the strain of flu that we're seeing right now is the B strain, and we're seeing a lot of flu in younger people,"

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Food Pantry welcomes donations to serve residents, families

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Food Pantry is a crucial source of food for an untold number of families all over the county, and that need only seems to increase throughout the holidays and cold winter months.

"The numbers for the holidays generally rise around here," said Food Pantry Coordinator Richard Thomas. "Most of the weeks we have around 120 people that will come through. Again though, around the holidays we have an increase."

"For Thanksgiving, we had around 180 people come through, and for Christmas, we had 210 or so. After the holidays, those numbers dwindle back into the 120 area. That is actually a combination of distribution and people who come in throughout the week to fill out our forms."

People looking for a way to give back can donate to the food pantry by writing checks



Elaine Dotson, Richard Thomas, Frances Norton and Teresa Stephens all work out of the Towns County Food Pantry building in Young Harris. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

to the organization or dropping off items at the office, with there always being a need for food, money and other donations.

"There's no way to pinpoint a certain one, two or three items," Thomas said. "We are in need of everything, but toiletries help us, and food

donations help us.

"We also really appreciate monetary donations because it gives us the money we need to go and buy the food that we can package in these boxes, and it works better for us because we know what food we need to buy, so money donations help

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Colt Ford to play Anderson Music Hall with Confederate Railroad Jan. 11

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Anderson Music Hall is all set for a packed house on Saturday, Jan. 11, when country singer Colt Ford returns to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds for one of 18 stops on his upcoming tour.

Ford, an Athens native and former professional golfer, is currently on tour following the release of his seventh album titled "We the People."

Opening the show on Saturday will be Confederate Railroad, starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are still available and can be found at

georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.

Ford said Hiwassee was a stop on one of his first tours at the start of his music career, and he is happy to be returning to the North Georgia area where much of his loyal fanbase resides.

He last visited Hiwassee in January 2016 and is excited about coming back. Ford said that, with Hiwassee being so close to Athens, it's always a sold-out show because of all the fans that travel from Athens and other surrounding areas.

"I'm from North Georgia, I love the area," Ford said. "I love performing in my home

state. The fans are always great, and I really appreciate all the love and support they have shown me over the years."

It's no understatement to say that Ford sports a unique musical style that can be polarizing to fans of country music and hip hop alike, which he seemingly blends to create his own distinctive stage presence.

Over the years, he has been labeled as a country rapper, but Ford said he is a country music singer and songwriter and is trying to carry on the tradition of his favorite country music singers.

Calling attention to the

history of country music, Ford said his style of recitation has been around much longer than he has, referencing songs like "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" and "I Wanna Talk About Me."

"I have always just considered myself as just a country artist," Ford said. "That's all I have ever said I was, that's all I have ever claimed to be."

Born Jason Farris Brown on Aug. 27, 1969, Ford said he decided to live his boyhood dream of becoming a country music star in 2008, following a 10-year professional golf

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Colt Ford

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Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,668.88
Chatuge 1,918.30
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Chamber 5A
Church 3B
Classifieds 5B
Opinion 4A
Legals 5B
Obits 4B
Sports 2B

BASKETBALL
Jan 7 @ Home 6PM
Girls vs Rabun Gap
Boys vs Riverside
Jan 10 @ Athens Acad. 6 PM
Jan 11 vs. Geo. Walton 5 PM

S.A.F.E. Thrift Store
Clothing Sale
Jan 9 • Blairsville

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