

Towns County Herald

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Hamilton Gardens suffers major wind damage in Jan. 11 storm

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Winds from the Jan. 11 winter storm blew trees down all over the area, causing mass power outages and damage in many places around the county, including at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge.

"We had 15 trees down, and it was all across the parking lot and southeast corner of the garden," Gardens Executive Director Grace Howard said. "The wind just ran up over that hill, and it's confined to a fairly small place, so it literally pulled out four of those big white pines that were up there at the root ball, and one of those root balls that's still up there is about 30 feet across."

"They don't have a root system, so it just pulled them right out of the ground. In the process of those four white

pinus coming down, two of them landed in a big maple and tore it all to pieces. The other eight or nine trees just blew over around the same section, so the wet soil was part of the problem with the big winds going in there, and these were big trees."

After assessing the damage, the grounds worked on the cleanup process by having a path cleared for workers to get in and start removing the trees and other debris throughout the gardens.

"Our volunteers and one paid gardener did an amazing job cutting a path out just so we could get some equipment down there," Howard said. "Because we had so many trees down on the path, they had to cut those trees out of there."

"We were getting bids for the work, and it was not cheap. Commissioner Cliff

Bradshaw offered me help and said we can use county workers to help us out up there, but they couldn't do the climbing that we needed."

Howard said the gardens were grateful for the assistance of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and others who helped clear out a bit of the damage so that the grounds could prepare for the next steps of the cleanup process.

"I put in a call Monday morning to the EMC and asked for some guys to help us up there, and thanks to Jeremy Nelms, we were able to move the ball down the line," Howard said. "They had roadway stuff to deal with because the storm on Saturday did a lot of damage."

"They took care of it (last week), and they worked all afternoon to clear out the damage right there in the



This memorial bench at Hamilton Gardens was heavily damaged when a tree fell on it during the Jan. 11 winter storm. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Rotary Club plans 'Meals of Hope,' welcomes guests and Student of Month

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Members of the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawasse gathered for their weekly meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 14, at Brasstown Valley Resort, where they discussed the upcoming "Meals of Hope."

Meals of Hope is an outreach program that brings the community together with local organizations, businesses and volunteers to help end the fight against hunger, Club President Gerry Gutenstein said.

Last year, more than 200 volunteers came out to the second annual event in April to help package tens of thousands of meals for local families in

need. The plan this year is to package 60,000 meals, and Gutenstein said they are once again looking for about 200 volunteers for the upcoming event on Saturday, March 14, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

Gutenstein said Meals of Hope financial sponsorships are available: a \$25 bronze sponsorship provides 100 meals, a \$100 silver sponsorship offers 400 meals, a \$250 gold sponsorship supplies 1,000 meals, and \$500 diamond sponsorship shares 2,000 meals.

Anyone looking to volunteer or purchase a

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Hailey D. Silvey discussed suicide prevention in the Jan. 14 regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawasse.

Photo by Chad Stack

Hiawasse senior Tori Anderson talks global citizenship in China

News Special
Towns County Herald

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School senior Tori Anderson of Hiawasse traveled to China over Christmas Break for a select opportunity to discuss global citizenship issues with students from across the globe.

Anderson attended the 2019 Shenzhen International High School Students Forum in Shenzhen, China. She was one of more than 100 students from around the world selected to attend the Forum.

Students participating in the program hailed from the United States, Western Europe, Scandinavia, Germany, the Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong and China. Rabun Gap's

Director of International Student Programs Ms. Lynda Ann Loring accompanied Anderson on the trip.

Shenzhen Senior High School hosted the forum. The school is the fourth top school in Shenzhen, a bustling city of 20 million, and is highly selective in admission – out of 80,000 who apply to attend, only 9,000 are admitted as students.

The forum featured speeches and roundtable discussions centered on the topics of "Civilization Diversity and the Construction of a Community with a Shared Destiny" and "Relationship between Civilization Inclusiveness and Economic Prosperity."

Anderson presented at a



Tori Anderson roundtable discussion on the latter, and she was also invited to make one of the two forum summation speeches at the

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TVA announces record \$1.8 billion in flood loss prevention in 2019

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Tennessee Valley Authority prevented a record \$1.8 billion in flood losses throughout the Valley last year, according to TVA River Operations Support Manager Darrell Guinn.

Some \$1.6 billion of that flood loss prevention occurred in and around Chattanooga, Tennessee, in February 2019 due to 11.6 inches of rain falling in the Tennessee Valley in about a two-week timeframe.

All the rain that falls in the northeast Tennessee Valley eventually makes its way through Chattanooga, which is the bottleneck of TVA's river system and lake area.

As for Lake Chatuge of Towns County, Guinn said the hydroelectric tributary dam is still operating as expected.

"We've been in a pretty good position with that reservoir



TVA River Operations Support Manager Darrell Guinn

being at normal winter pool level," Guinn said of Chatuge. "The Hiwassee system, just downstream of Hiwassee, is holding a little bit higher than normal winter pool right now."

"We had been spilling

at Appalachia to be a little bit more aggressive in moving some waters through that system, but we don't anticipate any significant levels there ...

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Gowder brothers, Heaton to face federal sentencing in March



Mike Gowder



David Gowder



James Heaton

By Linda Erbele
Towns County Herald

Three Blairsville men are set to be sentenced in March in connection with federal prescription drug crimes, according to court documents made available Jan. 15.

U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story has ordered former hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Blairsville-based

physician Dr. James Heaton to appear at the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville on March 25.

Former Union General Hospital Emergency Room Director Dr. David Gowder, brother of Mike Gowder, will be sentenced in a separate hearing on March 23.

Following seven days of testimony, on Oct. 24, 2019, a federal jury found Mike

Gowder and Heaton guilty on more than 100 counts each related to illegal prescription drug practices.

Heaton was found guilty on 75 counts of dispensing prescriptions to Mike Gowder without a legitimate medical purpose, and Mike Gowder was found guilty on 75 counts of aiding and abetting those

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State senators condemn impeachment, begin 2020 Legislative Session

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

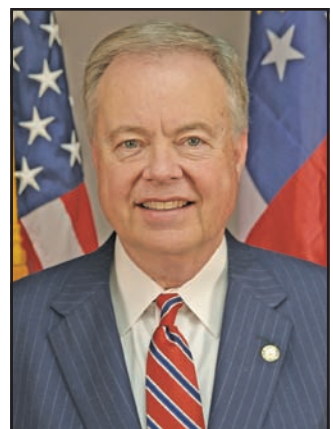
The 2020 Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly convened on Monday, Jan. 13, with legislators eager to get business started at the State Capitol in Atlanta.

Among the pieces of legislation filed before the start of the session was Senate Resolution 538, with a stated aim of "condemning the Congress of the United States for pursuing impeachment proceedings against President Donald J. Trump; and for other purposes."

Republican State Sens. Steve Gooch and John Wilkinson are the first two signatories on the pre-filed resolution, which moved to the Senate Hopper last Friday on its way to a first reading and



State Sen. Steve Gooch



State Sen. John Wilkinson

committee referral. Gooch is the District 51 senator for Union County and Wilkinson is the District 50 senator for Towns County.

Impeachment proceedings began last week in Washington, D.C.

as U.S. Senators took their oaths as jurors in the trial, which was expected to begin after press time on Tuesday, Jan. 21.

"The whole thing seems to be cooked up as a political

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Taylor makes census presentation; Hayden shows off historical sketch

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With the start of a new decade and the taking of the 2020 census rapidly approaching, Towns County Historical Society Vice President Jerry Taylor presented a history lesson last week on the census in Towns County.

The presentation, "On the Census Trail: The United States Census from 1790 to 2020," occurred during the society's first meeting of 2020 on Monday, Jan. 13, at the Old Rec Gym.

For some time, Taylor has worked with the Census Bureau in going door to door to verify addresses, and he talked about some of his more memorable occasions doing so.

The first census that



Marty Hadyen brought his historical sketch to the Jan. 13 meeting of the Towns County Historical Society.

Photo by Chad Stack

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