

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

50 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 89 Number 20

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

## Lockdown drills held at Towns County Schools



Photo by Lowell Nicholson

TCSO Chief Deputy Terry Conner, Sheriff Chris Clinton, Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and SRO Donnie Jarrard.

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Schools, in concert with the Towns County Sheriff's Office, locked down classrooms for an active shooter drill on Wednesday, March 14.

Teachers and students are required to lock their classroom doors if alerted to an active shooting, and to arm themselves with anything at hand and turn off the lights in the classroom.

Towns County School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong was on hand to observe the drill.

"I thought it went well, everyone did what they were supposed to do," said Dr.

Berrong. "It's important to do drills like this and involve as many people as we can so everybody is on the same page, in case something like this ever happens in Towns County."

"I thought it was great that our police officers were here just going through the building, making sure they're familiar with the building and where the classrooms are."

Sheriff Chris Clinton and many of his deputies were involved in the drill, not only observing, but also checking the doors to make sure they were locked and checking that the lights were off.

"What we're looking at from our standpoint is that the teachers are protecting our students, and basically, we're

buying time," said Sheriff Clinton. "Every quarter of a second of time we can buy is potentially preserving lives."

"There is going to be a response time, and we hope it's quicker rather than later. Every second we can buy and our staff at the school can buy protecting our students, that's what we're after."

Added Sheriff Clinton: "In the situation of an active shooter, the more time you can buy to get here, the better."

The teachers and the deputies are connected through a service called Crisis Go, allowing everyone in the system to communicate information to each other in the event of an emergency situation.

See Drill, Page 6A

## EMC Board analyzes power usage in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Assistant Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – In January, the 52,000-plus customers of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC helped the company set a new peak demand record for the most power used in a given hour at 229 megawatts.

The enormous energy consumption of that one hour of power in early January reflected the sustained cold temperatures – as few as 3 degrees in January – during the wintry months of 2018.

Members of the BRMEMC Board of Directors discussed this and other items in their monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 13.

Many residents experience an unwelcome surge in their energy bills in

the wintertime, which can be enough to deter some folks from continuously running their heat.

However, just as wood and gas heating costs go up in winter, so does the cost of power in homes with electric heat, simply because people use more to keep their homes heated.

The EMC gets its power from the Tennessee Valley Authority, which set a record of its own in January.

"When arctic temperatures sweep through the area, residential and business heating units work overtime to maintain the indoor temperatures desired by the occupants," per a TVA news release. "Not only do the heating units run for longer periods of time, but some units also switch on internal

heating elements to produce additional heat.

"This causes the demand for electricity to increase substantially during these times of abnormally cold weather. For the Tennessee Valley Authority, this places a strain on their generating facilities to produce enough electricity to supply their 9 million-plus customers in seven different states."

"On Jan. 17, as the average valley temp dipped to 12 degrees, TVA set an all-time record for supplying 706 million kilowatt-hours of energy over a 24-hour period. The peak demand for that day was 31,639 megawatts, which was their 12th-highest winter peak on record. As a point of reference, this amount of energy would supply Las

See BRMEMC, Page 6A



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms with EMC Directors Danny Henson, Jeff Ledford and Young Harris.

## Dr. Darren Berrong highlights upcoming budget details

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Next year's school budget is being prepared by the Towns County Board of Education office for final approval in the coming months.

"The only increase to the budget we're going to have is the construction cost we're going to have this summer," said Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong. "Although that's kind of conflicting, because the majority of that we are getting back from the state through the capital outlay program that we're involved in."

The school board is figuring approximately \$6 million for all the work on the buildings.

"We are going to be replacing the entire roof of the middle and high school, replacing the HVAC units in both the middle and high school," said Dr. Berrong. "We will be replacing all the ceiling tiles inside the school, as well



Dr. Darren Berrong

as putting LED lighting inside the school.

"Depending on how the bids come back, we may also be putting in some new wiring and other things."

The capital outlay program is a state reimbursement program that will pay a portion of cost back to the schools, though the schools must pay all expenditures before submitting for reimbursement.

"You start gaining funds

from the state to help pay for things to replace them as they get older," said Dr. Berrong.

Since the school system's fiscal year ends in June and the construction projects run in the summer, it makes it harder to budget what the school will pay out in June or July.

"Even though the budget looks like it is going up by \$6 million, it's not," said Dr. Berrong. "We have to look at this summer's projects and next summer's projects."

The main school building was built in 1976, which qualifies it for modernization grants for schools that are 40 years or older.

"We're hoping to get back anywhere from \$3.5 to \$4 million for these projects," said Dr. Berrong. "We applied for modernization and got that modernization grant."

The teacher retirement system has increased the percent from 16 percent to 21 percent.

See Budget, Page 6A

## Hiawassee to talk water insurance in March 26 meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

The City of Hiawassee is looking into contracting with a water insurance company called ServLine to cover the cost of leaks for water customers.

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and the city council will be welcoming a ServLine representative in their March 26 council work session at 6 p.m. inside city hall.

"It'll probably be right at \$2 that would be added to every customer's bill (each month), and that would insure any kind of water loss that the customer incurs," said Ordiales. "So, if your water heater explodes and you go through 10,000 gallons of water, this insurance would pick up the cost of that water, and you would not be responsible for it."

If the council approves the program in an upcoming regular meeting, all Hiawassee water customers would be



Liz Ordiales

automatically opted in to the insurance, though they could opt out at any time.

"Our current policy is that we adjust leaks that are customer responsibilities," said Ordiales. "We give them one adjustment a year, to whatever it costs us to produce the water. Should something happen a second time, it's on them."

"If we go with this program and you're signed up on it, this will pick it up the first time, which is good for everybody. It's good for you

because you're not responsible for it, and it's good for the city because we get paid for the water."

Continued Ordiales: "Right now, we're adjusting it, but you're still paying for it. You're still paying for the cost to produce it, so this would take care of everything."

Ordiales also mentioned the ServLine program from the Georgia Rural Water Association, which she contacted at the beginning of 2017 to talk about extensive water leaks around the city.

The GRWA recommended ServLine then, though the city waited until after last year's election to get settled in and look deeper into the service.

"We're just trying to provide protection for our customers so that they're covered in case of a leak in their home," said Ordiales.

Mayor Ordiales invites everyone to attend the March 26 meeting.

See Hiawassee, Page 6A

## Whitt shines spotlight on education in monthly meeting

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County High School English teacher Brooke Whitt talked with the Mountain Movers and Shakers on March 16 about Senior Capstone Projects, the Teacher of the Year award and being STAR Teacher.

Every year, each school in the system selects a Teacher of the Year, and one of the selected instructors goes on to represent the county for a chance to be awarded State Teacher of the Year.

Some qualities that determine Teacher of the Year are: the instructor inspires students of all backgrounds, plays an active and beneficial role in their community, and

they must plan to continue teaching.

Whitt said that her colleague, Debi Williams, was named System Teacher of the Year, and that she is competing at that level of competition.

This year's STAR Student for Towns County is Zach Davenport, and he selected Whitt to serve as his STAR Teacher.

STAR sands for Student Teacher Achievement Recognition, and STAR students must perform well academically and better than any of their peers on the SAT.

The requirements for being the STAR Teacher include: teaching the STAR Student at one point in time, and that the student sees



Brooke Whitt

the instructor as making a significant contribution to their development.

"I was completely taken aback," said Whitt. "I

See Whitt, Page 6A

## Appalachian Trail kiosk unveiled on Hiawassee Square

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

A small crowd gathered to watch Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Mayor Pro Tem Anne Mitchell unveil the recently constructed Appalachian Trail Kiosk.

The new kiosk in Hiawassee Town Square was unveiled at 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 18.

Mitchell has been working on this project for quite some time, between applying for grants, considering designs, getting the kiosk built, and saving the project from getting lost in the hustle and bustle of city hall business.

"The previous administration applied for



Photo by Mark Novak

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, Jerry Carnes and Anne Mitchell taking in the brand-new Appalachian Trail sign during an unveiling ceremony on the Hiawassee Town Square on March 18.

a humongous grant to put a kiosk down at Mayors Park,"

said Mitchell. "Well, we got the little grant for \$2,500 and

See Kiosk, Page 6A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Inside

Arrests	2A
Chamber	7A
Church	4B
Classifieds	6B
Opinion	4A
Legals	7B
Obits	5B
Sports	2B

Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,677.47
Chatuge	1,919.59
Nottely	1,764.13

Barcode: 0 4879 19315 9

Baseball

Mar 20 Tallulah Falls 4:30 PM

Mar 22 @ Hebron Christ. 4:30 PM

Soccer

Mar 22 vs. George Wash. 5 & 7 PM

Stop the Bleeding Program

See page 2A

Book Sale for Chatuge Auxiliary

See page 5A

Head Start and Pre-K Registration

See page 3A