

Egg Hunt...from Page 1A



Children lined up before the start of the big hunt on Saturday, April 15, at the ballfields below the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Mountain Fairgrounds, featured a hefty turnout this year.

Nearly 200 children between the ages of 4 and 9 gathered across the green top with their parents, ready to hit the field and grab as many plastic eggs as possible, many in search of the grand prize.

"This is my first year organizing the Easter egg hunt," said Matt Youngblood, Towns County Recreational Department Director. "Me and Tyler Garrett hid 3,000 eggs, spread amongst two fields. So, there were 1,500 on each field. We had 28 prize eggs mixed in with the eggs that were hid for the kids.

"We split the kids up into two age groups, 4 years old to 6 years old, and then 7 years old to 9 years old. No parents were allowed to hunt eggs.

"We had several churches here and people from the community came and helped out as well. It was a great event. It went real smoothly."

While there were 3,000 eggs scattered across the field, it did not take the youngsters long to find them - a record six minutes, to be exact - snatch them up, and report back to their parents to divvy up the prizes.

"It took two hours to set them out, and six minutes for it to end," said Youngblood. "I had a good time with it today. I didn't really know what to expect, how many kids were going to show up or anything like that.

"A really cool thing was, there were two kids who both got to a prize egg at the exact



Some people even dressed up for the occasion

same time. I was worried there was going to be fighting and arguing over who got it but I was surprised.

"They were both very nice about splitting the prize basket. One of the kids took a couple of things and the other kid took a couple of things, without a big fight. It was good. It was nice to see good character coming out in these kids."

Egg hunting was not the only activity for kids on Saturday morning, as several churches in the area provided extra accommodations for children and parents, including refreshments, Easter basket toys, an activities table and free Bibles for those interested in learning more about the reason for the Easter holiday.

The churches involved in this year's Towns County Rec Egg Hunt were Enotah Baptist Church, Macedonia Baptist Church, Connerstone Baptist Church, Woods Grove

Baptist Church and McConnell Memorial Baptist Church.

Now that Youngblood has experienced his first egg hunt, he is already thinking about next year, with plans to make it bigger, better and even include more adult-friendly activities.

"Next year, we'd like to figure out a way where we don't have it on the same day as other events," said Youngblood. "I think it's good for kids to have this kind of stuff growing up.

"We're going to try to start implementing things for adults, too, not just with the hunt but throughout the year, such as adult league basketball or softball.

"It's been great. (Towns County Sole Commissioner) Cliff Bradshaw has been very supportive and helpful. We can't wait to get things rolling. I'm looking forward to everything that's yet to come."

EMC...from Page 1A

Nelms maintained his previously stated position, that his immediate goal was to figure out a way to increase the fiber take rate among members who already live within reach of the service.

Instead of taking on new debt to expand the fiber network, Nelms said that he wants to increase the current take rate to generate revenue to pay for future fiber expansion.

Another of Nelms' goals that also relates to his position on fiber is for the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to increase its equity position to be more in line with other EMCs nationwide.

Borrowing money to build on its existing fiber network instead of increasing the customer base within reach of existing fiber infrastructure would actually run counter to the goal of building the EMCs equity.

"Right now, our equity position is roughly about 30 percent, whereas the median for the nation is in the 40s," said Nelms. "We already have \$116 million in long-term debt.

"In order to cross another 5,000 or 10,000 homes, I would be required to take out another fairly large mortgage just to build out, with hopefully getting my 30 percent take rate where I'm going next. That's my biggest concern.

"I want to make sure I have my marketing in place for my existing infrastructure before I take that big leap forward and spend the millions of the members' dollars to extend that service, and then just get the 30 percent take rate again."

Nelms also defended his decision to recommend a 30-year loan to build a new substation, stating that he would rather shoulder the burden of paying for the substation be spread out over the life of the equipment, than for current members to have to see big rate increases to cover the costs.

When asked about what the EMC is doing to sell the old headquarters building, Nelms said the EMC is carefully considering next steps.

Interestingly, the Georgia Department of Transportation has involved the EMC in its plans to widen/relocate Georgia 515 between Blairsville and Young Harris.

The big EMC parking lot across from the old headquarters building will need to be acquired



BRMEMC Treasurer Chris Logan



Noel and LaJean Turner

for the project to accommodate one of the roundabouts for the Young Harris bypass, and Nelms said that pretty much all of the power poles along the widening/relocation portion of the project will need to be replaced.

Operation Round Up is still in the works, with plans calling for a nonprofit entity to be charged with allotting donations from members who opt-in to give money to causes to be determined down the road.

Also discussed in the town hall was the policy concerning opening board meetings to the membership. The policy in question will be called, "Member Attendance at Board Meetings."

Once in place, Board Vice President Steven Phillips said that members will be able to sign up to attend board meetings.

Phillips said that members will need to sign up in advance of meetings due to space constraints

in the board's meeting room, and that, in the interest of time, those who wish to address the board will need to sign up in advance to speak, supplying the topic to be discussed at signup.

Nelms reminded those in attendance that the annual meeting will take place at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center in Union County on Sept. 9, instead of its usual location at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds in Hiawassee.

Also in the meeting, Board President Mickey Cummings and Nelms bragged on the caliber of the EMC's employees, and Cummings thanked everyone for coming.

At the end of the meeting, Phillips let everyone know that they could contact the EMC board with more questions by visiting the company website, https://brmemc.com/Board_Directors.

Chinkham...from Page 1A

expressed her gratitude for Chinkham and her actions, of course, and for Vardo and Ledford for teaching CPR through their combined efforts to all the kids of Towns County Schools.

"In all my years of teaching, that was the highlight of my teaching career," said Ledford, who has had plenty of highlights with five consecutive cross country state championships. "To have a kid to have the courage to react and to do it - I still struggle with the words to tell her how proud I am of her."

Clearly, both Vardo and Ledford are proud of their student, who said she plans to pursue a medical path on down the road of life.

And Towns County High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs is proud of Chinkham as well, and thanked the board of education for supplying the equipment on which schoolchildren practice CPR.

"To me, there's nothing more important than teaching real life skills to these students," said Hobbs. "Whether they're going to college or technical school, or just going straight

into the workforce, we just want them to be prepared for life."

Each student at Towns County High School receives CPR training prior to graduating, as part of Coach Ledford's personal fitness and health class, and with Vardo as a part of the Health Sciences curriculum.

As for Chinkham, she's glad to have played the role she did in saving a life, and is thankful herself for her teachers and others.

"I just thank God that I was able to be there at the right time, and was able to learn and know what to do in that situation," said Chinkham.

Arrests...from Page 1A

"The way it will work is, there will be an extra officer working probably four days a week from 2 p.m. to midnight.

"They'll be there in addition to the day shift and night shift officer. That fifth officer is going to be able to just focus on drug interdiction, on traffic - they won't have to worry about answering calls."

Of course, the new officer will still act as backup to calls that require his or her assistance, but Smith said the primary focus of this new officer will be "proactive work, not reactive to 911 calls."

This will be the first time in Smith's memory that Hiawassee PD will have five full-time officers, as the department has typically had four in the past, including the chief's position.

Hiawassee Police Chief Arvel Walls is recovering from an extended illness at home, and Smith is eager to continue the good work of past Hiawassee police chiefs as he stands in as acting chief for the city.

Furthermore, he plans to continue his department's intense focus on catching as many drugs as possible coming through the city.

"A lot of things tie back to drugs," said Smith. "When we make a lot of drug arrests, we see a decrease in property crimes like burglaries and thefts. By tackling the drug problem, we're also helping with other things as well.

"We don't have very much violent crime around here, person on person crime. I would say that the biggest crime in the area is drug use."

Hiawassee Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales has expressed her confidence in Smith's ability to lead the police department in Walls' absence.

"As expected, Paul Smith has embraced his new assignment and is doing a phenomenal job," said Ordiales. "The transition has been seamless. We're in good hands. We wish Arvel a speedy recovery."

The following individuals were arrested for felony drug charges in March, according to Smith, and are presumed innocent until proven guilty:

Sharon Allen, 35, of Hiawassee, Possession of Methamphetamine, three counts Possession of Controlled Substance, Distribution of a Controlled Substance, three counts Drugs to be Kept in Original Container and Crossing the Guard Line with Drugs.

Kelly Braiser, 22, of Cullowhee, NC, Possession of Methamphetamine and Possession of Drug Related Object.

Kevin Caldwell, 29, of Hiawassee, Possession of Methamphetamine and Possession of Drug Related Object.

Angela Capozzoli, 44, of Young Harris, Obstructing Law Enforcement Officer (Felony), Fleeing/Attempting to Elude Police and Possession of Controlled Substance.

Thomas Couret, 46, of Murphy, NC, Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute, Possession of Drug Related Object and Possession of Marijuana less than 1 ounce.

Willis Dyer, 58, of Hiawassee, Possession of Methamphetamine and Possession of Drug Related Object.

Misty Ekeberg, 37, of Hiawassee, Possession of Methamphetamine.

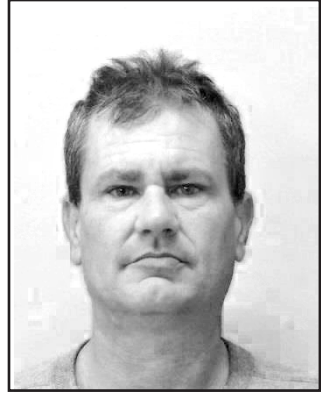
Tammy Leonard, 47, of Gainesville, Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Marijuana less than 1 ounce and two counts Possession of Drug Related Object.

Barry Murrell, 40, of Hayesville, NC, Possession of a Controlled Substance and Drugs to be Kept in Original Container.

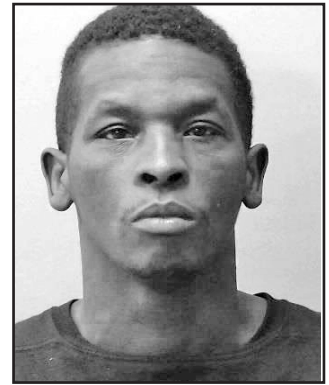
Charles Norton, 29, of Hiawassee, Possession of Marijuana greater than 1 ounce, Distribution of Controlled Substance and two counts



Sharon Allen



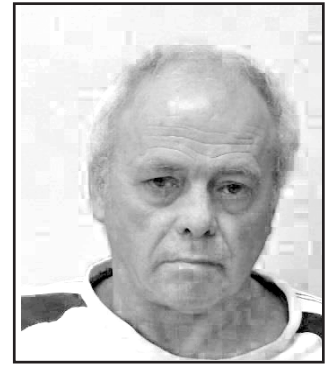
Thomas Couret



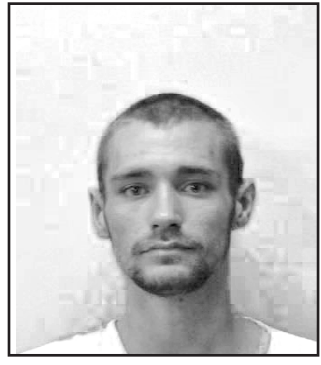
Barry Murrell



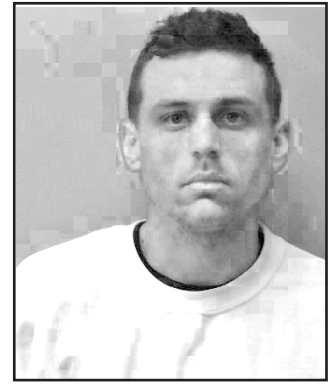
Charles Norton



Willis Dyer



Kelly Braiser



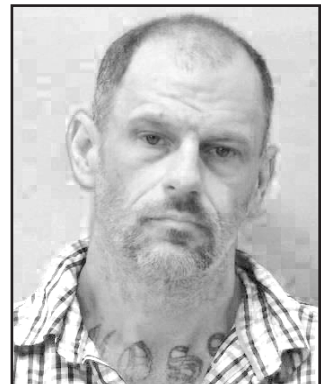
Kevin Caldwell



Misty Ekeberg



Michael Rice



Richard Stokley



Tammy Leonard



Angela Capozzoli

Possession of Drug Related Object.

Michael Rice, 65, of Hiawassee, Possession of Marijuana greater than 1 ounce and Possession of Drug Related Object.

Richard Stokley, 43, of Young Harris, Possession of Methamphetamine and

Possession of Drug Related Object.

Multiple felony drug arrests have already been made in April, though Acting Chief Smith said that Hiawassee PD doesn't expect April to be a record breaking month like March.