

Towns County Herald

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Middle school hosts drive-thru honors to conclude year

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Middle School hosted a drive-thru end of year event and honors ceremony for students May 26-28, and the kids were excited to see their teachers again, especially the eighth-graders, who will be moving on to Towns County High after summer break.

The event served multiple purposes, allowing the school to receive school property like laptop computers back from students, and to give students anything they might have left behind, while also celebrating the work that each student has done throughout the year.

"We had a one-day notice to pack it all up and get every kid a laptop and

make sure they could get on their Google account," TCMS Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs said of campuses closing for COVID-19. "Teachers did a fantastic job with getting the kids ready between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. that day.

"When they sent us home, we all thought that we would be coming back in a few weeks, and it has been a few months. I think everyone has done this really well.

"I was added into every teacher's Google Classroom, so I went to hang out. It was just remarkable to see the different things they were doing to connect with the students. There are countless ways to communicate and try to keep it lively for the students to stay focused."

Students received certificates for their

achievements and got the closure they needed before making the next best step in their educational journey.

"We wanted to award them for what they have done," Hobbs said. "We gave out AirPods and Amazon gift cards and other things like that. We just wanted to do something for students that have done what we have asked them to do, and we are very proud of all of them."

The transition to online learning was a challenge for the school and students alike, but the kids worked with teachers to make the situation run smoother.

"It was difficult, but we got through it," Eighth-Grade Teacher Heather Nichols said. "I learned how to use Zoom and all this other stuff. There was an

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Elizabeth Edwards said goodbye to Towns County Middle School last week during a drive-thru honors ceremony at the school; she'll be starting her freshman year in the fall.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Last week to vote early in primary; Election Day is June 9

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Early in-person voting for the June 9 General Primary, Presidential Preference Primary and Nonpartisan General Elections ends Friday, June 5.

This week, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., locally registered voters can cast their ballots at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office.

As of Saturday, May 30, 745 people had voted early in person. In terms of absentee ballots, about 3,400 of 10,500 active registered voters had requested one as of Friday morning, with 1,946 having been returned.

The Board Office is located in Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiwassee next to the Towns County Courthouse, and it will be open to voters even during lunchtime. Be sure to bring a photo ID to vote.

The high number of mail-in absentee ballots being cast this year due to COVID-19 has prompted the State



Election Board to approve an emergency rule giving local election officials the option of opening mailed absentee ballots days before Election Day to allow more time for counting.

Normally, absentee ballots may only be opened on Election Day, but following the emergency rule, the Towns County Board of Elections will begin counting absentee ballots on Friday, June 5, at 10 a.m., "and will continue

with said process daily until completed."

"The early processing of absentee ballots shall be a controlled process to maintain the secrecy of all votes cast on the ballots and to protect against the collection or disclosure of any balloting information prior to close of the polls at 7 p.m. on Election Day," the Board Office said.

Since this is a primary, voters must declare a political

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Peggy West-Driskell donates \$50,000 to Hamilton Gardens

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County resident Peggy West-Driskell made an incredibly generous donation of \$50,000 to Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge last week in hopes of supporting the gardens

she loves. She met with volunteer members of the gardens on May 29 to present the donation, which will be put to good use in the near future.

West-Driskell grew up in Butler, where her family was into gardening, and it was there that she found her passion for

plants and the outdoors. "All my life I lived in the country - I was a country girl," West-Driskell said. "My momma loved flowers, and they built me a playhouse when I was a little girl, and I always planted flowers.

"It is just God's beautiful

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Peggy West-Driskell, fourth from left, met with Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge volunteers on May 29 to donate \$50,000 toward the gardens.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

City Hall talks budget, liquor petition, reopening and more

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The city of Hiwassee streamed a budget public hearing from the City Hall Training Room via Facebook Live last week to go over details of the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Proposed Budget.

In the May 26 hearing, officials summarized the roughly \$4 million budget, which is in line with recent past budgets and features around \$3.3 million in operating expenses and about \$700,000 in various reserve funds.

As usual, the Sewer Department and Police Department are operating in



Hiwassee Water Department Manager Carl Grizzle working on a town square excavation Friday.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Young Harris discusses plans to purchase old bank building

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Young Harris City Council hosted a called meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, May 26, to talk about an upcoming property acquisition and the Young Harris College water situation.

Council Member John Kelley started the property discussion off by highlighting a real estate issue that has been discussed during closed sessions in past council meetings.

The city is planning on buying the old bank building near the Mountain Regional Library on Main Street to serve as the new City Hall, but there have been a variety

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Young Harris City Councilman Dr. John Kelley spoke Tuesday on the upcoming old bank building in the May 26 called meeting.

Photo/Zoom Screenshot

EMC to hold big meeting Sept. 24; candidate forms due June 24th

News Special
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS - Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 24, at the Towns County Recreation Center in Young Harris.

In-person voting will tentatively begin at 4 p.m. followed by the business session at 5 p.m. All members are invited to attend.

This year marks the 82nd Annual Meeting of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

BRMEMC's Board of Directors made selections to the Nominating Committee and Credentials and Elections Committee during the Tuesday, May 19, board meeting.



The Nominating Committee is comprised of these members:

Cherokee County, North Carolina: Bruce Little, 828-837-9335.

Clay County, North Carolina: Guy Grant, 828-421-8819; and Bobby Shook, 828-389-3866.

Fannin County: Chris Collins, 706-835-6300.

Towns County: Alan Rogers, 706-994-7785; and Jason Dyer, 706-781-8063.

Union County: Gregory Buchanan, 706-745-1423; Paul Luke, 706-897-8215; and Luke Colwell, 706-897-4097.

Members of the committee have information packets on the responsibilities of a board member along with director candidate forms for those who may be interested in being nominated.

This information is also available on the EMC website on the Board Candidate Info page under the About Us menu, and available for pick up at the

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Area movie theaters work to recover from COVID-19 impacts

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, area theaters continue to suffer from low attendance due largely to a lack of new movies coming out of Hollywood, though it is likely many people are staying away due to a fear over the novel coronavirus.

Fortunately, theaters that have reopened appear to be doing everything they can to keep people safe, like making sure to follow the new restrictions put in place to remain open after being forced to close for a while following one of Gov. Brian Kemp's

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VIP Fieldstone 6 Manager Noah Calhoun and employee Dora Freyre are always happy to greet customers coming to enjoy a movie at the local theater.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,687.59
Chatuge 1,926.05
Nottely 1,777.30



Towns County Election Results Newspaper will be available on Wednesday, June 10th after 10 AM. See our special election results insert for details and results from the Primary Election. Election results will also be available at www.tcherald.net