

# Runoff Election...from Page 1A

For U.S. Representative in the 117th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Matt Gurtler led with 21.31 percent of the vote in the Republican race, followed closely by Andrew Clyde with 18.62 percent in the nine-person field of candidates.

As the top two in the primary, Gurtler and Clyde are headed for an Aug. 11 Republican Party Primary Runoff Election to decide which candidate will move on to the Nov. 3 General Election.

On the Democratic ticket for the 9th Congressional seat, Brooke Siskin and Devin Pandey are headed for a runoff as well. Siskin received 41.48 percent of the districtwide vote to Pandey's 32.88 percent, though in Towns County, Siskin carried the least number of votes with only 20.38 percent local support.

For 50th District State Senator, Republican Stacy Hall led the field with 24.4 percent of the districtwide vote. Joining Hall in the Aug. 11 race will be Republican Bo Hatchett, who won 23.46 percent voter support.

On the Democratic ticket, Dee Daley ran unopposed for 50th District State Senator, meaning Daley and the winner of the Republican nomination will go head to head for the seat on Nov. 3.

For Tax Commissioner, Democratic Incumbent Bruce Rogers and Republican challenger J.C. Berrong both qualified unopposed and were set to compete for the seat in November.

However, Berrong's recent passing triggered a special qualifying period to replace him as a candidate, and Michael Ray Anderson of Hiawassee was the sole qualifier the day of qualifying on June 1. He will appear as the Republican candidate on the November ballot to face Rogers.

Also in the General Primary, the county's 1-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax passed with 63.49 percent of the overall vote and 2,876 votes in favor.

The estimated \$12 million SPLOST will begin collections Oct. 1 to go largely toward financing major renovations and an addition to the Towns County Courthouse, which dates to 1964, as well as other items.

SPLOST collections will occur over the next six years, with the referendum calling for the issuance of a SPLOST-backed General Obligation Bond not to exceed \$8 million to facilitate the courthouse renovations.

Towns County will receive 82 percent of total

SPLOST collections, and the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris are each set to receive 9 percent of collections for use on various projects.

In a city referendum, 57.01 percent of Hiawassee voters rejected fluoride being added to the drinking water provided by the city, which serves the majority of county residents. The vote margins were 144 for and 191 against fluoride.

Fluoride is not currently being added to the city's drinking water, though the Georgia Environmental Protection Division requires water treatment facilities to add fluoride to drinking water unless a referendum is passed – which it now has – and a subsequent ordinance is enacted to exclude it.

For the office of Towns County Coroner, Tamela Cooper defeated Incumbent Harold Copeland in the Republican Primary, securing 53.29 percent of the vote with 2,041 votes to Copeland's 46.71 percent and 1,789 votes.

Cooper has no Democratic challengers heading into the November election and is set to be sworn into office to start 2021.

For County Board of Education, Caroleen Woods defeated Steve Green with 56.24 percent of the vote and 2,104 of 3,741 total votes cast. Woods will be sworn into elected office in 2021.

Also for County Board of Education, Incumbents Brandon Grimsley and Stephanie W. McConnell ran unopposed and will be sworn back into their elected offices in 2021.

For Georgia House of Representatives District 8, Stan Gunter defeated Steve Townsend to clench the Republican nomination. Districtwide, Gunter received 65.29 percent of the vote with 9,917 votes to Townsend's 34.71 percent.

District 8 consists of Towns, Union and Rabun counties, as well as a portion of White County, and Gunter won Towns with 65.55 percent of the vote to Townsend's 34.45 percent.

Dave Cooper ran unopposed for the District 8 seat on the Democratic ticket, and he will square off against Gunter in the Nov. 3 election.

The remaining Towns County referenda having to do with freepoint exemptions passed with greater than 60 percent support, which will allow businesses to temporarily store certain goods and raw materials without being subject to property taxes on those goods and materials, at least for a time.

These exemptions will aid existing small manufacturing businesses in Towns County and help to attract new ones, Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw said.

The following local incumbents all qualified unopposed and without party challengers ahead of the General Primary: Commissioner Bradshaw, Probate Judge David Rogers and Superior Court Clerk Cecil Dye. They are set to be sworn into office in 2021.

For U.S. Senate, Incumbent David A. Perdue qualified unopposed and will be the Republican nominee in November.

Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff fended off six competitors to win his party's nomination for the Senate race, and he will be headed for a General Election contest with Perdue.

For Public Service Commissioner, Republican Incumbent Jason Shaw and Democrat Robert G. Bryant qualified unopposed and will face off in the November General Election.

Also for Public Service Commissioner, Republican Incumbent Lauren Bubba McDonald Jr. qualified unopposed. Daniel Blackman defeated John Noel to earn the Democratic nomination, and he will face McDonald Jr. in November.

On the Nonpartisan General Election Ballot, two Georgia Supreme Court seats were up for election, and both incumbents Charlie Bethel and Sarah Hawkins Warren defeated their opponents.

For Court of Appeals Judge, Incumbents Trenton "Trent" Brown III, Christian Coomer, Sara Doyle, Elizabeth Dallas Gobeil, David Todd Markle and Carla McMillian all ran unopposed and are set to be sworn in.

Incumbent Joy R. Parks ran unopposed for Judge, Superior Court of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, and she is set to be sworn in for a new term.

Donald J. Trump won the Republican nomination in Georgia for the Presidential Preference Primary, and Joe Biden won on the Democratic side – both were the only candidates still in the race for their respective parties at election time.

For coverage of Republican and Democratic Party Questions, as well as precinct-level results for Towns' three polling places – though all voters voted out of the Hiawassee precinct on Election Day due to complications from COVID-19 – see full election results inside this week's newspaper.

# Shake Rag...from Page 1A

been used by residents as well as by people accessing Bell Mountain via a U.S. Forest Service road at the top, but the number of visitors has increased since the park opened four years ago.

Then as now, many of the more than 20 homeowners on Shake Rag Road believed the road was not up to the task of safely conveying a steady stream of tourists with access to Bell Mountain Park, even with the extensive roadwork undertaken by the county.

"Shake Rag Road is a 10-foot-wide, steep mountainous, country lane," Shake Rag Road resident Catherine Luckenbach-Hansen wrote in a letter to the Herald. "For decades, Shake Rag Road was a private road, meant only for residential access, meeting up with a crude, dirt, 'off-road' Forest Service trail that led to the top of Bell Mountain: a 'Dead End' for any car or driver not equipped with four-wheel drive and some serious off-road skills."

"Travel on Shake Rag was truly limited, in most respects, to residents only. This all changed four years ago. With no public hearing held for the residents of Shake Rag Road, and no notification, 'prescriptive easement' was put into action by Towns County's then-Commissioner Bill Kendall. Gravel trucks and asphalt rollers started their parade up our once quiet residential road, on a mission to build a public park at the top of Bell Mountain."

"The rest is history. We fought it and lost. Our 10-foot-wide, 6 percent grade – frankly, it may be less on given switchbacks – road is now visited by hundreds of cars each week. Their destination: Bell Mountain Park and Historical Site. The 'quiet enjoyment' of our property – gone!"

In their June 12 meeting with Bradshaw, property owners Lee Steinberg and Kaaren Nelsen joined Luckenbach-Hansen to express their concerns. Luckenbach-Hansen had been to see the commissioner before, as had Nelsen about traffic, but it was Steinberg's first visit to his



Lee Steinberg joined two of his neighbors in meeting with Bradshaw to discuss the various problems they perceive on Shake Rag Road. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

office.

Together, the three enumerated several complaints they say have been ongoing for the last four years, including a steady stream of all-day traffic, even into the night, making it difficult for them to "make it to our driveways" due to the volume of cars and width of the road.

Other complaints include cars being run off the road and onto their properties, a constant stench of burning brakes, nonstop litter, loud car stereos matched only by the noise of automobile and motorcycle engines "stressing to make it up the mountain," numerous accidents, and a general "deterioration and erosion of the road and surrounding mountainside."

The homeowners have asked Bradshaw to consider a list of four things when it comes to Shake Rag Road and Bell Mountain Park:

- 1) "Shut down of Bell Mountain Park until the safety and security of Shake Rag Road residents and visitors to the park is established."
- 2) "Conduct traffic and public safety impact assessment" by an independent agency.
- 3) "Conduct environmental impact assessment including watershed" by an independent agency.
- 4) "Proper engineering of an alternate road to access

Bell Mountain Park that will withstand a constant and heavy travel load along with enforceable safe travel speeds."

Furthermore, the property owners asked the commissioner to undertake these initiatives "with consideration to the homeowners' right of quiet enjoyment."

Bradshaw – who swore into office as the new commissioner in 2017, after the park was already built – explained that he would take their wishes into consideration and try to work with the homeowners, but he wanted to make clear that he would not be shutting the park.

He also said that the county would postpone upcoming roadwork to repair several places on Shake Rag Road until he could get an engineer out there to examine the road, as the homeowners said they were concerned about runoff impacting their well water and encroachment on their properties.

Luckenbach, Steinberg and Nelsen said Friday they had sent a letter and open records request to the commissioner, though it had yet to arrive in the mail. They left a copy of the records request Friday, and Andrea Anderson of Bradshaw's office said she would respond to the request within three days.

# Rodeo...from Page 1A

Brooks said he believes rodeo culture to be engrained in longstanding American traditions, as cowboys are commonly seen as the original American heroes.

"I think the mystique of the cowboy is still around," Brooks said. "I know I grew up wanting to be a cowboy, and I was lucky enough to be one. I think the Americana Western Lifestyle is still very much

alive, and people identify it as American or the American Dream. It is what we look to that symbolizes the American Spirit."

"There is still a lot of agriculture across the rural areas of the United States, and I think people like to gather and watch these contests and the competitors trying to earn money and go to finals at the end of the year.

"You really have two things going on: the contest between the cowboys, and the people in the stand. We just want to make sure it is run fairly and equal for the contestants, but also entertaining for those watching."

For more information on tickets and the rodeo, visit GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.

# Mural...from Page 1A

side by side, and ArtWorks (Gallery) was going to do the final one."

Unfortunately, with COVID-19 causing shutdowns everywhere, Young Harris College students were unable to paint the windows.

Enter Luckenbach to save the day, who received inspiration for the project after seeing a mural artist at a Downtown Development Association meeting she attended.

"I just got an idea of what I thought would be a good representation of what our town would be," Luckenbach said of her painting. "It didn't look anything like the artist's, but it

made me start thinking about what embodies Hiawassee. I have been doing art as long as I can remember.

"I actually studied at the Savannah College of Art and Design over the summer. I didn't do art there, I did fashion marketing, but you have to take basic art classes like the Principles of Art, which was my favorite. I do art all the time just to relax – it is kind of my thing."

Luckenbach plans to attend Young Harris College to earn a degree in marketing, with dreams to pursue fashion marketing.

"I really do love fashion marketing, so I would love to

# The Berrongs return to Mountain Home Music Theater

Mountain Home Music Theater presents their staff band, The Berrongs w/ Crew, on Saturday, June 20th at 7 PM. Jimmy Hooper and Billy Nicholson will be here!

This band has opened the show for Crystal Gayle, Joe Diffie and others at the

Georgia Mountain Fair with lots of standing ovations. Tickets are \$8.

Mountain Home Music Theater is located 2.5 miles west of Hiawassee on Hwy. 76. Look for the red building!

For more info call 706-896-3624.

open an online store or build a brand or even work for a company to help build their brand," Luckenbach said. "I actually love graphic design, and I am hoping to take some graphic design classes next semester."

"I would love to do some of that and maybe even minor in graphic design so when I am marketing, I can do a little bit of both."

The paintings were a community project, Ordiales said, and she hopes to get more artwork up to make the area more appealing.

"This was just an effort that Hiawassee Hardware supported by supplying us with the plywood," Ordiales said. "It was another community effort. We figured we would work together as a team and make that a little more presentable until it got worked on."

"Hiawassee Hardware got the plywood, we got the paint and prime. Then, we took three over to the school, and the two from Young Harris never made it, so that is what Corrina did. It is just a nice place for people to have a break and have a lunch there."