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Sons of American Revolution recognize firefighters Copeland, Sellers

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Representatives of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution honored Harold Copeland and David Sellers with Good Citizenship awards in the July 21 regular meeting of Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

Copeland continues to serve as the county's first full-time fire chief, and Sellers retired three and a half years ago as a Towns County fire captain.

In the meeting, Bradshaw revealed that he and the Sons had wanted to recognize the two men back in April, because "without these guys, we wouldn't have the fire department we have today," but that the pandemic got in the way.

"We've been putting this off for a long time because of COVID," Bradshaw said to attendees last week. "You're all wearing masks, and we've learned to deal with it and are learning to cope with it and spread out and do all the things we're supposed to do."

Jared Ogden, Sid Turner and David Cook of the Blue Ridge Mountain Sons attended the meeting to make the awards, which included presentations of certificates and medals to Copeland and Sellers.

Turner is also a member of the Towns County Historical Society, and he was impressed with a talk Sellers gave in February about the development of the Fire Department, "and how they basically started from next to nothing and built it up into the really nice, modern fire department you have today."

"There's two people that

have done more for that than anybody else, and I want David Sellers and Harold Copeland to come up – we have a Good Citizenship medal for both of them," Turner said.

Added Ogden, "We certainly appreciate everything that y'all have done and are doing, because right now, with all the activity, the backlash against authority – you guys don't think about that when you rush to do the job."

"Your job is to stop the fire or do whatever the first responders do, and it takes a lot of courage. When the rush is there, you do the job, and that speaks highly. That's a hard thing to do, and most people don't understand that you take the risk every day. Thank you."

For their part, the two honorees expressed appreciation

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L-R: Jared Ogden, Harold Copeland, David Sellers and Sid Turner during the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution presentation of Good Citizenship medals to the two firefighters at the Towns County Courthouse. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Ide offers COVID-19 update; Bradshaw optimistic on county finances

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

In his July 21 regular meeting, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed local Health Department Office Manager Laura Ide for a COVID-19 update.

"I wanted her to come and talk about COVID," Bradshaw said. "We've got a testing site here in Towns County, which really I didn't think we would ever get, but we're very fortunate. We pushed the right buttons to get it to happen."

Ide credited Bradshaw with securing the specimen collection site at the Towns County Health Department, which arrived after the commissioner put in a call to District 2 Public Health Offices in Gainesville.

Office Manager Ide said it had been "a crazy time at the Health Department," noting the revolving door of protocol changes "when all of this started for us ... at the very beginning."

She acknowledged the continued uptick in Towns



Towns County Health Department Office Manager Laura Ide spoke on COVID-19 in Commissioner Bradshaw's regular meeting last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

County confirmed positive cases, which at the time of the July 21 meeting stood at 84. By press time Sunday, the number of cases had risen to 100, meaning about eight in every 1,000 residents had tested positive for COVID-19.

"Our county is one of six testing sites in our 13-county Public Health District 2, and it was chosen to serve the northern

area of the district," Ide said. "It is supported by staff from our neighboring counties, as well as other counties as needed."

Ide estimated that the Towns County Health Department had tested over 1,000 people to date, though some of those people were actually re-tests following up after confirming positive.

See COVID Update, Page 6A

Better late than never, TCHS Class of 2020 to walk Friday night

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School Class of 2020 will come together one last time for Commencement Exercises Friday, July 31, at 7:30 p.m. in Frank McClure Memorial Stadium.

The event was postponed from May due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Towns County Schools have made sure that the graduates will get an official ceremony to celebrate their time in school.

And yes, the ceremony will feature traditional student speeches and 59 graduates speaking the football field to accept their diplomas as family members watch from the bleachers.

Principal Roy Perren said the event will implement COVID-19 precautions to be as safe as possible for attendees, taking place outdoors in the stadium instead of the usual

indoor venue at the Recreation and Conference Center.

"Congratulations to the Class of 2020," Perren said. "You all have been through a lot as you ended your senior year at Towns County High School. We are excited to be able to have this 'real' graduation ceremony for our seniors and their families."

"In this time of COVID-19, we know that many are anxious about being in crowds. We need the help of everyone involved to have a safe event. We moved the ceremony to the football field in order to allow for social distancing."

"Please practice social distancing. Please sit with your family group and keep your group at least 6 feet away from other groups. Please wear a mask unless you have a medical condition that will not allow you to wear a mask, or you conscientiously object to wearing a mask, we ask that you wear a face covering."



TCHS Principal Roy Perren

"We do want you to know that we will have graduates spaced 6 feet apart on the field and will not require them to wear a mask during the ceremony, though they certainly can if they choose to do so."

School officials wanted to make sure students wanted to see graduation, Page 6A

Novel coronavirus remains top of mind for area residents

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Many of the larger businesses in the area began requiring masks last week out of an abundance of caution amid rising COVID-19 numbers, and it's apparent that people are still concerned about the various costs associated with the virus.

Leroy Flowers of Kennesaw believes that the main goal and focus of the pandemic should be on employment, since so many people have lost their jobs of late.

"As far as COVID goes, I think we have been worked up," said Flowers while shopping at Linda's on Saturday, July 25. "We have been in a panic and not focusing on the economy."

"My son is still out of a job because of this virus, and he is hurting for money. He's not alone, either. I have seen more people walking these streets than I ever have before."



Face coverings are now mandatory at many local businesses, including the Dollar General in Young Harris. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

If we don't do something soon, it might be worse than we thought.

"I think the government needs to find a way to get people working again. Even

if there has to be new safety, companies should not be allowed to continue being closed, especially ones that are involved in construction and

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Community happy to attend classic car museum soft opening

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – The Memory Lane Classic Car Museum hosted a soft opening on Saturday, July 25, at which Museum Owner Jerry Smith told those gathered for the occasion he was happy to be part of a community with such inviting people.

"Everybody has been so nice, everybody I have run into," Smith said. "I cannot tell you what a wonderful feeling it is to be wanted and just accepted. It feels like I have known all of y'all my entire life. It is just a good feeling, and I hope we live up to everybody's expectations. We will do our best."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw offered comments that day on the significance of the museum, which will be donating 100 percent of proceeds to area organizations.

"The economic impact this is going to have on our community and our area is going to be unbelievable," Bradshaw said. "Every day



Memory Lane is every classic car lover's dream, with enough eye-popping vehicles to keep people coming back time and again, especially since the selection will rotate. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

and every week, I meet a lot of people that I haven't met before."

"When I met Jerry and June, I'll be honest with you – and this might sound cheesy or corny – but I felt like I was around my family. That is how nice, caring and loving they are. They are a great fit for Towns County."

Residents like John Case, who has lived here for 30 years, feel welcoming of the museum

and the Smiths, even if the attraction is likely to make the North Georgia Mountains even busier over time.

"This is a tremendous addition to our area," Case said. "For a host of reasons, we have been stunted (in this location); there hasn't been anything. This building was so many different venues over the years, and they covered all of them. This is a tremendous asset to our area." See Car Museum, Page 6A

Early in-person voting continues now through Friday next week

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The first week of early voting for the Aug. 11 Republican and Democratic Primary Runoff Elections went well for a runoff, resulting in about 530 in-person votes and, due to COVID-19, an above average 528 mailed absentee ballots received as of Friday, July 24.

Early in-person voting runs now through Friday,

Aug. 7, taking place weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office located in Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee next to the courthouse.

As previously reported, voters can cast ballots even during lunchtime, though importantly, there is no required Saturday scheduled for weekend early voting due to the runoff nature of the election.

The election features four runoff contests that were undecided in the June 9 General Primary, including three races to decide Republican nominees for the offices of Towns County Sheriff, District 50 State Senator and U.S. Representative in the 117th Congress from the 9th Congressional District; and one Democratic race for 9th Congressional District.

For Towns County Sheriff, Kenneth "Ode" Henderson is squaring off

against Daren "Bear" Osborn for the Republican nomination, with the Aug. 11 runoff winner currently being set to appear unchallenged on the Nov. 3 General Election ballot.

For District 50 State Senator, Republicans Stacy Hall and Bo Hatchett are vying for their party's nomination, with the Aug. 11 runoff winner also set to appear unchallenged by party opposition in November.

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