

Towns County Herald

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Hurricane Irma largely misses county, everyone thankful

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

After hours of watching the destructive path of Hurricane Irma throughout the Caribbean, Irma reached Florida in the early morning hours of Sunday, Sept. 10 as a Category 4, destroying homes and causing power outages for more than 6 million people.

Georgia and Alabama residents watched in shock, horror and amazement as Irma barreled her way up the Florida coastline, diminishing in strength and destruction as the storm made its way north. Lessening to a tropical storm when it reached Georgia on Monday, Sept. 11, Irma brought heavy rain and wind, knocking down trees and creating mass power outages across the state.

While the storm weakened even further to a



Towns County
Sole Commissioner
Cliff Bradshaw

tropical depression by 11 p.m. later on Monday, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared all of Georgia to be in a state of emergency, causing school cancellations all across the state, including Towns County.

Although the North Georgia Mountains received strong gusts of wind that sent trees toppling and caused outages in power, Towns County was fortunate to not withstand any severe damage. According to Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, all damage sustained in the county was minimal at best, something he is very grateful for.

"We were very lucky," said Commissioner Bradshaw. "We had very little damage compared to what it could have been. We did have down trees in random areas all over the county. We got most all of that up. There were power outages here and there and cable television outages. But, as far as I know, everyone is up and going again and the outages didn't last very long."

"The 911 and the phone systems were down for several



Blue Ridge Mountain EMC workers fixing a broken power pole on Fodder Creek Road in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

hours earlier in the week, but they got that fixed very quickly and efficiently. We are very fortunate. I'm not aware of any

structural damages, I've heard of a few smaller buildings that had some minimal damage but I haven't heard of any major

damage." Through Tuesday, Hurricane Irma traveled. See Irma, Page 6A

Veterans meet to remember 9/11, POWs and MIAs at VFW



Members of the Veterans of American Wars Post 7807 saluting Old Glory during a remembrance of American prisoners of war and those still missing in action. Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Friday, Sept. 15, later on black and white flag symbolizing America's Prisoners of War and Missing In Action flew high above the VFW Post 7807, just below

Old Glory, as Towns County Veterans stood in salute for their fellow soldiers.

"A lot of folks may not think this is important," said Scott Drummond, U.S. Coast Guard veteran. "But what we, as veterans, do for our country and what we do for

our community is of the utmost importance.

"We can't forget that." Each year on the third Friday in September, America remembers those who have made unimaginable sacrifices to protect the freedoms and

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Landfest lands at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Thousands of Bluegrass fans flocked to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds last week for the 2017 Dailey & Vincent LandFest in the Mountains and On the Lake, held from Thursday, Sept. 14 through Saturday, Sept. 16.

Well-known Gospel, Country and Bluegrass artists, such as the Del McCurry Band and Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver Original Band, took the stage at Anderson Music Hall to headline the three-day festival, along with hosts Dailey & Vincent, for a weekend that no one is soon to forget.

"This festival has been wonderful," said Hilda Thomason, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds general manager. "We had a great attendance all three days. Even though the storm hindered us a little bit because some people didn't get to come because they had damage and flooding in different places. So, we



A little girl singing to a large crowd at the 2017 Dailey & Vincent LandFest inside Anderson Music Hall. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

probably had about 100 people who bought tickets who weren't able to attend.

"We had people from all across the United States and foreign countries come to the festival. We had people here

from Switzerland and Canada. They came from everywhere. Over the three days, I'd say we had close to 4,000 people. It was incredible."

Previously held in Denton, North Carolina, Jamie

See Landfest, Page Back A

North Georgia Stars meet for dancing and ice cream

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As Nov. 4 draws near, those involved with Enotah CASA's Dancing with the North Georgia Stars are putting their best foot forward, gearing up for the event.

The dancers and their friends and supporters gathered for an ice-cream social at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church to preview the dances on Sunday, Sept. 10.

This event, which hosted its debut last November, will be the second of its kind this year, with the first held in Dahlonega.

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Kris Berrong and Angela Puleo showing off dance moves ahead of the big November 4 event. Photo/Lily Avery

Reece Society to celebrate 100 years since poet's birth

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Choestoe - Native poet, novelist, and letter writer Byron Herbert Reece was born 100 years ago this month, and his namesake society will be celebrating the milestone on Saturday, Sept. 23.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society will hold a special Centennial Festival of Remembrance at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday, and they'll be offering plenty to do for the whole family.

Festival hours will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and attendance is free, with Evie's

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John Kay and Sanford Freeman of the Byron Herbert Reece Society with the new polished black granite marker at the Reece Trailhead. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Lumpkin traffic stop leads to record meth bust in Suches

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

SUCHES - A multimillion-dollar methamphetamine operation has been shut down in Suches, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Sheriff Mason said a multiagency effort including the Federal and Georgia bureaus of investigation and others led to the largest drug bust in the history of Union County.

The takedown of the multimillion-dollar meth ring began when a weekend traffic stop in Lumpkin County led to the discovery of almost 16 kilos of methamphetamine.

Angel Luis Rivera-

Santiago, 42, of Norcross, and Victor Rafael Aponte, 30, of Dahlonega, were arrested at the scene of the traffic stop.

Their arrests led to a search warrant at 990 Flanders Road in Dahlonega, where 25-year-old Valentine Duarte-Vejar, also of Dahlonega, allegedly fled the home brandishing a firearm, authorities said.

Duarte-Vejar was taken into custody without incident, according to authorities, who added that a few grams of cocaine and approximately \$166,000 in cash was confiscated at the scene.

A total of three arrests led to a search warrant in Suches in rural Union County at 843 Cooper Creek Road, a brick residence just past Lake

Winfield Scott, Sheriff Mason said.

It was here that multiple agencies converged on what authorities call a methamphetamine laboratory, used to convert liquid methamphetamine to crystal form, authorities said.

"I would like to thank the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office for the hard work that was put into this major drug bust," Sheriff Mason said.

Authorities discovered a handgun and 15 kilos, or 33 pounds, of crystal methamphetamine at the Suches lab, Sheriff Mason said.

In addition to the 30-plus kilos, or 70 pounds, of crystal methamphetamine discovered

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An interior view of a meth cookhouse in Suches. The individuals involved were not local.

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Softball
Sept 19 @ Athens Christ. 4:45 PM

Football
Sept 22 @ Athens Academy
7:30 PM

Misty Mountain Quilt Guild
presents
Quiltfest 2017
September 22nd & 23rd

Puttin' on the Dog
Benefiting the
Towns & Union County
Humane Society
September 23rd