

Luckenbach...from Page 1A

so, it really appealed to me.”
The Girls State Program is sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary, and according to alaforveterans.org, it’s a platform for female high school juniors to develop “leadership skills, confidence and an action-based understanding of the government process” to give them “a lasting foundation for success, both personally and professionally.”

Georgia Southern University in Statesboro hosts the program each June for one week, and Luckenbach was there from June 9-14 this year. There, Luckenbach took part in a large self-governance exercise wherein students divided themselves equally into two parties and set about

forming the government of a mythical state at the local and state levels.

Girls State is designed to be educational in a hands-on way so that students better understand how American government works and what role the U.S. Constitution plays in the American way of life.

“I experienced what government was like without actually being in it,” Luckenbach said.

“I think, now, it helps me relate to things that are happening in politics. I can understand how bills are made and how they are passed and how they are vetoed. And I think having that firsthand experience is really, really good as an American.”

“Now, I completely understand. It’s not like sitting in a classroom and having someone explaining it. You’re actually involved in it. So, it’s a completely different learning process, which I found extremely helpful and I’m sure will be useful in the future.”

There is a program for male high school juniors called Boys State that the American Legion has been putting on for several decades, though there were no takers for the 2019 Boys State Program.

The Boys/Girls State programs are offered to students locally every year. For more information, call the American Legion Post 23 at 706-896-8387.

Bradshaw...from Page 1A

mind,” Bradshaw said.
The commissioner met with the schools recently and started discussing ideas about possibly hosting the 9/11 memorial tribute on campus in 2020.

“I want to do it a little different next year,” Bradshaw said. “I want the students at the school to be involved. It’s very important that our youth are brought up and learn about the dangers in the world and how important it is that we live in such a free country.”

Also in the meeting, Bradshaw spoke about the new Fire Station that is being constructed in Young Harris and some of the features that will be available there.

The county is saving money on the firehouse by building it using detainee labor, and Bradshaw said they are making good progress.

“But what I did want to mention that I don’t think I have mentioned before is that we are doing a helicopter pad down there,” Bradshaw said. “So, if somebody lives in the Young Harris area, and God forbid they have a heart attack or have to be flown out on the county helicopter that we pay for – that might save a life instead of getting inside the ambulance and driving all the way across to Hiawassee.”

“I’m very, very excited about that. That is a good thing for the folks over there in Young Harris.”

In other business, Bradshaw went ahead with a resolution abandoning Olin Hughes Road, which he had tabled in August until the



Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland

September county meeting.

“We held a public hearing before the county meeting last month, and I tabled that because I wanted to find out everything I can find out,” Bradshaw said. “I wanted an opinion from our county attorney, because he’s the one that has to defend anything that we do.”

“And he gave me his opinion, and that is to abandon the road. We have no records where we have ever maintained that road.”

Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland announced in the meeting that the Fire Department had received a grant for just over \$309,000 to purchase county equipment such as air packs for firefighters.

The county is going to match the grant with \$15,000 for a total of more than \$324,000 to help purchase whatever equipment is needed.

Copeland recognized David McDonald of Congressman Doug Collins’ office for helping the county obtain the grant. McDonald was in attendance at the county meeting that evening.

Crissy Figg of Towns County 4-H spoke about the program and what it offers local children in the way of leadership and speaking skills.

The Towns County 4-H Club has around 220 students enrolled, and this year, Eastgate Life Academy joined the 4-H program, Figg said.

John Whalen and his wife Rosemary Whalen from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Post 7807 joined Bradshaw in the meeting to talk about Operation Care Package.

Whalen and his wife, both retired Army vets, said they wanted to do something for the troops overseas, so they started Operation Care Package with the local VFW Auxiliary.

Whalen and Bradshaw are planning to schedule a day for the Whalens to set up a room at Foster Park to allow the community to bring donations for the care packages.

“Our ultimate goal is to send every troop that is in the field a care package from the United States – from us, from home,” Whalen said.

Anyone wanting to aid the effort and donate items for Operation Care Package can contact or visit VFW Post 7807 in Hiawassee.

Bradshaw will hold his next regular commission meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 5:30 p.m. inside the county courthouse.

BRMEMC...from Page 1A

Trimble announced a clean bill of financial health for the EMC, reporting that operating revenues for the nearly \$98 million nonprofit company were actually up about \$1.7 million for Fiscal Year 2019 that ended June 30.

The CPA said the increases were due mainly to improved electric sales plus outside compensation for sending EMC employees to aid reconstruction efforts in middle and south Georgia following Hurricane Michael.

EMC leadership views the increased revenues as a combination of natural fluctuations in weather, continued system growth and good financial stewardship via conservative budgeting, which the EMC hopes will help the co-op continue to pay down its \$110 million in debt and counteract inflation for years to come.

A few co-op members, however, think the EMC could be using its increased revenues to offset or avoid an upcoming “revenue-neutral rate adjustment” that will take effect Oct. 1.

Historically, fixed costs have been built primarily into metered electric rates, benefiting members who use less electricity at the expense of higher-energy users, who, regardless of income, end up paying more than their fair share to maintain the fixed costs of the co-op, according to the EMC.

The EMC contends the rate adjustment is designed to better isolate and recover fixed costs while simultaneously creating a fairer distribution of fixed cost charges by lowering the metered electric rate and raising the customer charge to have no effect on average-use power bills.

In each of the past three years, including in 2019, the federally-owned Tennessee Valley Authority approved the EMC’s proposed revenue-neutral rate adjustments, though this year’s adjustment stands apart because of a recent change in TVA’s financial planning.

As previously reported, the TVA Board decided not to impose an expected rate increase on local power companies in 2019, so the corresponding revenue-neutral rate adjustment approved by the EMC Board in

May will be the only change to member bills starting in October.

Had the TVA rate increase gone into effect, as it had every year since 2013, everyone in the residential and GSA1 (larger residential and smaller business) rate classes would have started seeing the same \$1.54 per month increase across the board on their October electric bills.

And now, most members will still see slight variances in their bills due to the corresponding EMC rate adjustment, just not to the same extent.

Essentially, the adjustment is revenue-neutral for the EMC in that it will not increase the amount of money collected by the co-op, and it will be bill neutral for average users who consume about 907 kilowatt-hours per month, keeping average-use member bills from undergoing any change.

Due to the way the rate adjustment lowers the metered electric rate to pull out fixed costs, above-average electric consumers will save more than the \$1.54 adjustment to the customer charge, translating to above-average users seeing slight decreases in their total power bills every month.

Below-average users, however, will experience a slight increase in their electric bills ranging from a few cents a month up to nearly the \$1.54 per month, according to the EMC.

This last point is largely what prompted members Randy Mazie from Union County and Lucille Heil from Towns County to address the EMC Board in the Sept. 16 meeting.

Mazie and Heil view the impending rate adjustment as being discriminatory against lower-use residential members, particularly those with lower incomes, fixed incomes, people who utilize solar power to cut down on costs, etc.

That Monday, they urged the EMC Board to forgo its current rate adjustment approach in favor of an across-the-board rate adjustment that would be both revenue neutral for the EMC and bill neutral for members.

For example, Mazie said the EMC could accomplish a revenue-neutral rate adjustment by transferring \$1.54 from the

bottom line of each member’s electric usage over to the customer charge portion of their bill for a net zero impact on all residential and GSA1 member bills.

This approach would definitely work to stabilize fixed-cost recovery in an inflationary environment and era of increasing energy efficiency, but it would not tackle the issue of making the distribution of fixed costs fairer across the membership, said EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms.

Also in the Sept. 16 board meeting, directors discussed several bids for the major purchase of a new systemwide electric metering system to replace the one that’s currently in use, opting to go with Landis+Gyr for a 10-year purchase price of \$8.5 million.

The EMC’s current meters will no longer be manufactured after this year, and the transition to and installation of the new system – which will effectively have a shelf-life of at least 20 years – will take place over the next several years.

Of the many benefits outlined by EMC Director of Engineering Daniel Frizzell in the meeting, the new system will be able to seamlessly integrate with current technologies used by the EMC, and the co-op will finally be able to remotely connect and disconnect metered electric accounts.

Directors also approved a request by Frizzell to hire a new broadband employee, as the co-op’s fiber optic business is continuing to grow.

Frizzell pointed out that each of the EMC’s two existing field services technicians is performing about 150 fiber installations per month, which Director Cory Payne said made sense, as fiber connectivity has consistently been the No. 1 concern brought to him by members.

The EMC Board approved the co-op’s 2020 health insurance renewal through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in the Sept. 16 meeting.

Medical insurance premiums have gone up about 5% since the board approved 2019 premiums last year, and in 2020, it will cost the EMC roughly \$2.63 million to provide health insurance to the EMC’s 192 employees and dependents, totaling about 550 people.

Hiawassee DDA elects officers, sets schedule in inaugural gathering

**By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer**

Members of the brand new Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors held their inaugural meeting on Monday, Sept. 16, at City Hall.

The newly formed Hiawassee DDA consists of City Council-approved board members Herb Bruce, Judith Weible, Tamela Cooper, Lindie Wright, Theresa Andretta and Maggie Oliver.

Mayor Liz Ordiales is also serving on the board, and Denise McKay is director for the new DDA.

Looking back on the origins of the DDA, the City Council and Ordiales recruited board members earlier this year after speaking with folks who either live in the city limits or own and operate a Hiawassee-based business.

And the DDA Board kicked off its Sept. 16 meeting with the election of board officers.

After discussing the positions, board members selected Bruce to serve as DDA chairperson, Cooper as co-chair, and Andretta as secretary/treasurer.

McKay is currently employed as the joint economic development director for Towns County, Hiawassee and Young Harris, and she will help guide the efforts of the Hiawassee DDA moving forward.

Initially, McKay came on board to help the city execute its Five-Year Strategic Plan, which Ordiales introduced in 2018.



Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay

“The first day will be the eight hours of training we have to complete,” McKay said. “The second day, we get to go out and see the Madison DDA in action.”

Also during the meeting, board members agreed to meet the second Monday of every month at 3 p.m. for their regular meetings inside City Hall.

The DDA will meet next on Monday, Oct. 14, at 3 p.m.



Hiawassee DDA Board Members Maggie Oliver and Herb Bruce in their Sept. 16 inaugural meeting. Photo by Chad Stack

Sheriff’s Office makes eight more drug arrests over five days

**News Special
Towns County Herald**

With eight more drug arrests last week, the Towns County Sheriff’s Office continues to make good on its pledge to get drugs off the local streets.

On Sunday, Sept. 15, deputies responded to a residence off Valley View Drive in reference to a domestic incident, which upon further investigation led to the arrest of the following suspects, all of Hiawassee:

Charles Marion Adams III, 61, on a charge of manufacturing marijuana; Debra Adams, 60, on a charge of distribution of Schedule IV drug Xanax; and Nathan Adams, 18, on charges of possession of Schedule IV drug Xanax and drugs not in original container.

On Wednesday, Sept. 18, deputies arrested Joseph Larry Maney, 38, of Cleveland, at a residence off Huey Lane in Hiawassee. He was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug-related objects, and obstruction of a law enforcement officer.

Maney was wanted on a probation violation warrant out of Hall County.

Also on Wednesday, Sept. 18, Sheriff’s Office investigators and deputies obtained and executed a search warrant at a residence off Scataway Road.

Upon completion of the search warrant, deputies arrested the following suspects, both of Hiawassee:

Brittany Wright, 32, on charges of possession of Schedule IV drug Xanax, possession of drug-related objects, and drugs not kept in original container; and Jamison Chadwick Williams, 42, on charges of marijuana possession and seven counts of firearm possession by a convicted felon.

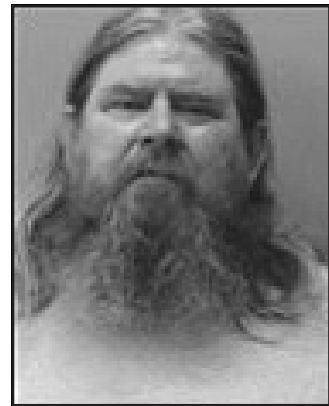
Williams is also being held on a Jackson County probation warrant.

On Thursday, Sept. 19, investigators and deputies obtained and executed a search warrant at a residence off Sunnyside Road. An officer with the Hiawassee Police Department provided information that assisted Towns County deputies in obtaining the search warrant.

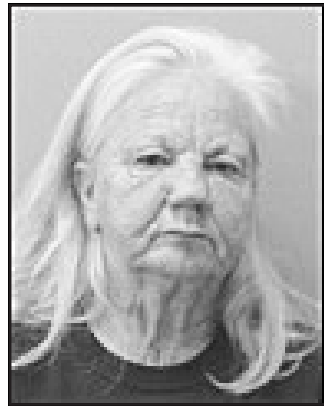
The following Hiawassee-based suspects were arrested upon completion of the search warrant:

Bobby Croy, 46, on charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of Schedule II drugs, and possession of drug-related objects; and Ryan Croy, 26, on charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of Schedule II drugs, and possession of drug-related objects.

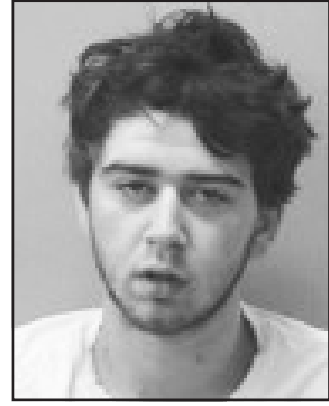
Investigators and deputies with the Towns County



Charles Adams



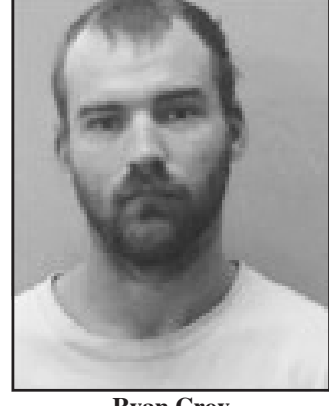
Debra Adams



Nathan Adams



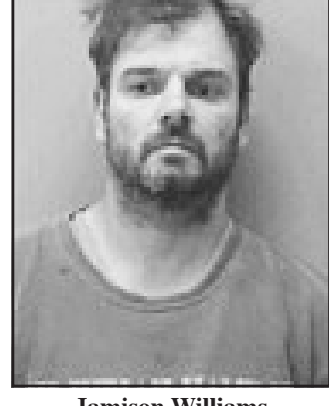
Bobby Croy



Ryan Croy



Brittany Wright



Jamison Williams



Joseph Maney

Sheriff’s Office will continue their strong effort to seek out the drug suspects within the county, and additional arrests will be forthcoming.

The above cases will be

forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney’s Office for prosecution. All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Barry Evans and Southwind return to Mountain Home Music

Barry Evans with the Southwind Band from Woodstock, GA, will be appearing at Mountain Home Music Theater on Saturday, September 28 at 7 PM.

Barry plays lead guitar, sings and MCs. His brother is on electric drums, with his sister-in-law on double decker piano, Jimmy Hooper on guitar and Mike Cunningham on bass and singing. This group has

played professionally for 28 years and does a great job on music from the 60s and 70s.

Showtime is 7 PM. Admission is only \$8 for adults and children 10 and under are admitted free!

Mountain Home Music Theater is located 2.5 miles west of Hiawassee on Hwy. 76. Look for the red building and flashing sign! For more info call 706-896-3624. NT(Sep25,19)SH