

# Robbery...from Page 1A

Smith asks that anyone with information concerning the armed robbery call the department at (706) 896-2888.

Generally, authorities recommend that businesses keep low cash in registers, make regular bank deposits at varying times, and maintain surveillance and alarm systems on premises.

Chief Smith said that businesses can request police escorts when making bank deposits, and interested parties should call the 911 non-emergency number at (706) 896-7460 to request a police escort for a deposit.



Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith

# Smith...from Page 1A

going to take it over with his assistance. We're going to have to have his help."

Bradshaw, holding back tears, presented Smith with a plaque of appreciation in the meeting.

"This is not enough for what he has done for the children of this county," said Bradshaw. "My oldest son is 25, and he remembers Jimmy so well, and the things that Jimmy has done and said."

"I'm speaking from my experience, but I've heard it from so many people. There are so many kids that have left here, went to college, got a job somewhere, they come back to visit, and they always want to see Jimmy, say hello to Jimmy. That's the effect that he's had on people."

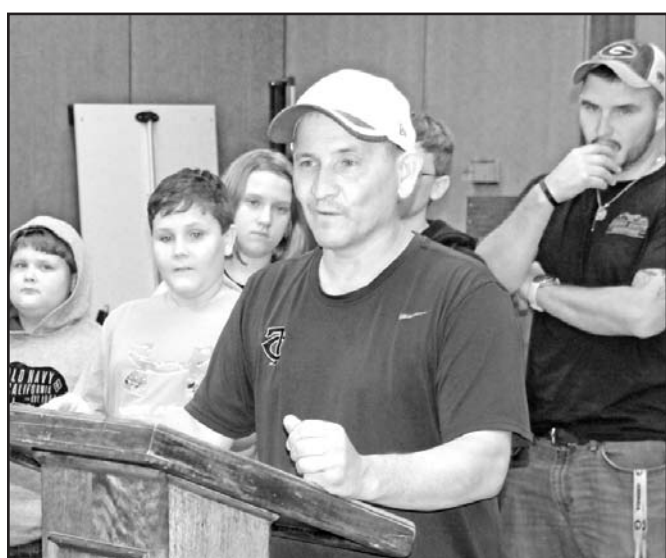
Looking back on his 21 long years and the countless hours he devoted to practice and games and traveling and coach/parent/kid interactions, the list of people Smith would like to thank is just too long.

But he was able to make clear in the Nov. 21 meeting that the whole experience has rewarded him with valuable friendships and treasured life moments that he will never forget, all in the name of joining with others to volunteer so that kids could play football.

"It's been an honor just to do football," said Smith. "Am I going to miss it? Yeah, probably, I'm going to miss it."

Continued Smith: "And my family, by doing this, they were supporting me all the way."

Commissioner Bradshaw reminded everyone present that the Towns County Varsity Indians made it to the state playoffs for the first time in



Smith at the podium in the Nov. 21 county meeting. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

school history this season, and that Smith gets some of the credit there for maintaining a successful youth program.

"There's no question that our year of high school football had a lot to do with Jimmy Smith and everything he's done for this community with football," added High School Head Coach John Cornett, who attended the meeting. "Everyone knows, even outside the state of Georgia, for you to be successful in high school football, it begins with your feeder programs."

After the meeting, Smith gathered with family and friends to reminisce on some of the old times, while his wife, Robin, stood right by his side, supporting him just like all those years in youth football.

"We're going to miss the kids, but it's just time for somebody else to step up and enjoy working with the kids," said Robin Smith. "Jimmy loves kids. It's been his life work, and he's really enjoyed

it."

Also in the meeting, Commissioner Bradshaw approved a federal transit grant application for fiscal year 2018-2019; and he read and signed a resolution approving the state-mandated purchase of firefighter cancer insurance through the Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

The commissioner also read and signed an application for a grant to fund the development of handicap accessible facilities at the Lake Chatuge recreational property off Georgia 288 on Sunnyside Road.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton spoke in the meeting, saying that he was pleased to be teaming up with Commissioner Bradshaw on a policy to allow sheriff's deputies performing out-of-town transports the use of county credit cards for gas purchases.

Sheriff Clinton also coached for Jimmy Smith.

# Fairgrounds...from Page 1A

Craft vendors and Christmas decorations lined the Pioneer Village, filling nearly all of the 68 booths on the grounds, and the lights glistened as children made their way to say hello to Jolly St. Nick himself and parents cozied up with hot chocolate and apple cider.

And down at the Exhibit Hall, guests who are interested in a little live holiday cheer, and a break from the cold, can pop in to hear holiday classics on antique organs, performed by Towns County Historian Jerry Taylor.

With rooms full of antique organs, partially donated to the Fairgrounds and many from Taylor's personal collection, The Organ Loft, Taylor has set the perfect stage to hear beautiful tunes such as "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," "Jingle Bells" and many more.

"The organ collection is the largest collection of antique reed organs in the Southeast," said Taylor. "That means from Florida to Virginia to Texas. It's

available for other people to see and enjoy. This started with the Organ Loft in Young Harris, my personal collection, in 2007. It's when I opened my house as the Organ Loft and it kind of mushroomed from there.

"I started the collection at the Fair in 2016. It was just a one room collection, decorated as a Victorian parlor. The oldest organ in this collection is from the 1840s."

Taylor will be performing his renditions of holiday favorites throughout the duration of the light show, every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., from now until the end of the show on Dec. 30.

New to the light show this year, and making its debut appearance this weekend, will be Eudora Animal Petting Zoo, where patrons can pet camels, donkeys and more, free of charge, or feed the sweet creatures or take a camel or pony ride, for a small extra fee.

Eudora Animal Pet-

ting Zoo will be at the light show every weekend from this week until Dec. 23.

And for those going to the Beach Boys concert this Friday, Dec. 1, admission to "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights" is free of charge with proof of a ticket to the concert.

With such a successful first weekend, Thomason and all those at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds are excited to see what the holiday season will bring to the Fairgrounds, to Towns County and to the beautiful North Georgia Mountains.

"It's wonderful to have all these events going on in the winter time," said Thomason. "We want to bring all the tourism we can to these beautiful mountains."

Tickets for the show are \$5 per person and all children under 12 years of age get in for free. "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights" will be open from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., every Thursday through Saturday, until Dec. 30.



Jerry Taylor shows off an antique reed organ inside the Organ Loft at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo/Lily Avery

# Teachers...from Page 1A

Of course, Vardo is on to something – the middle school just received some excellent news, that it is No. 1 in the Pioneer RESA and among the Top 10 in the state for CCRPI results.

Vardo has been with Towns County Schools since 2005, and he moved from the high school to the middle school four years ago.

He has coached a variety of sports, including high school baseball and football, as well as middle school football, and Coach Vardo said that he couldn't be more thankful for all the opportunities he's had with Towns County Schools.

"I must also mention my other eighth-grade teammates, current and former," said Vardo. "They have made this job a true joy, and I believe that students see that we all enjoy what we do, and it becomes infectious."

"Last but not least, I want to thank our illustrious and wonderful leader, Ms. Erica Chastain. She is a great person to work for. The support and leadership that she provides is what makes the middle school one of the top schools in the state."

Principal Chastain, for her part, also shared her thanks for the leadership Coach Vardo exhibits at the middle school.

"I could not have chosen a better person if I had selected myself to be Teacher of the Year," said Principal Chastain in the November regular meeting of the Towns County Board of Education, during which Vardo received honors for his achievement.

Vardo is married to Sarah



Brooke Whitt getting her TCHS Teacher of the Year award from Dr. Berrong and TCHS Assistant Principal Jim Melton. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Vardo, who teaches Health Sciences at the high school, and they have two children together.

And this year at Towns County High School, English Language Arts teacher Brooke Whitt was chosen by her peers as Teacher of the Year there, and High School Assistant Principal Jim Melton said a few words on her behalf at the November board meeting.

"When I was in high school, she would be the teacher that I would want," said Melton. "She is our literature teacher, mostly seniors. She's in charge of our Senior Capstone Project, and has the community involved 10 times what it used to be."

One of her fellow teachers wrote the following of her, which Melton shared in the board meeting:

"Ms. Whitt should be the Towns County Teacher of the Year because she continuously

demonstrates her commitment to providing the students with a quality education. In addition, she prepares students for real life after high school. She is always willing to come in early or stay late to ensure the success of her students."

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said that the Teacher of the Year board meeting is his favorite every year, "because we have so many tremendous teachers in our schools."

As previously reported, Debi Williams was selected as Teacher of the Year at the elementary school, and also as System Teacher of the Year.

Williams will now go on to compete for the title of Georgia Teacher of the Year, sponsored by the Georgia Department of Education. She has until Dec. 22 to get all her paperwork in for consideration.

# Parade...from Page 1A

beautiful float slowly drive down Highway 515.

And while, for many, this event is an annual tradition some still, like local Roger Lampert with Smart Recovery, were experiencing the extravaganza for the first time.

"This is my first time coming out for the parade," said Lampert. "Last year, I didn't realize it was happening, but this year my granddaughter is in it."

Lampert and his family enjoyed the parade and were able to snatch up plenty of candy throughout the evening as well.

After the floats made their way to Park Sterling Bank, ready to head home or back to the Fairgrounds, many of those lining the streets wandered over to McConnell Baptist Church for free pictures with Santa Claus, hot chocolate, coffee or cider, cookies, fellowship and plenty of good ole fashion holiday spirit.

While the snacks, Santa and festivities make wonderful memories, the real reason for the parade is to help the kids. Each year, the Towns County Sheriff's Office works diligently to gather Christmas gifts for children who, without it, might not experience the joy of seeing presents from Santa under the Christmas tree.

So, to promote this cause, the entry fee into the parade is simple: bring an unwrapped



Who needs a sleigh when you've got a bucket truck, right? Santa? Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Christmas present to fill the wish list of all those who will benefit from the Empty Stocking Fund this year.

After the dozens of floats and participants this year, it is safe to say that the recipients of this year's fund will be smiling from ear to ear come Christmas day.

Although the parade succeeded in drumming up holiday spirit and many Hiawasse and Towns County residents enjoyed a night of Christmas cheer, tragedy struck as those who were on horseback made their way back to the Fairgrounds after the parade.

According to Hiawasse Police Chief Paul Smith, who arrived first on the scene, a Ford Focus hit a horse from

behind. While the rider of the horse and pedestrian were sent to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, unfortunately the horse did not survive the accident.

"The city and county will be working together to prevent this sort of tragedy from happening again," said Chief Smith. "In the future, we will likely escort them back to the start of the parade or provide transportation so that the horse trailers can more easily be brought to the end of the parade."

Ultimately, the scene was handed over to Georgia State Patrol. Charges against the driver, if any, were not known at press time.

# Beach Boys...from Page 1A



The Beach Boys

by an American Rock band), and four reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

The Beach Boys have sold more than 100 million records worldwide, making them one of the world's best-selling bands of all time, and they are listed at No. 12 on Rolling Stone magazine's 2004 list of the "100 Greatest Artists of All Time."

In 2017, a study of AllMusic's catalog indicated the Beach Boys as the sixth most frequently cited artist influence in its database. The core quintet of the three Wilsons, Love and Jardine were inducted into the Rock

and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988.

Reserved Seating for Friday's concert is \$55-plus handling, and tickets to the event are in short supply.

The Beach Boys began as a garage band managed by the Wilson brothers' father, Murry Wilson, with Brian Wilson's increasingly sophisticated songwriting and recording abilities dominating their creative direction.

Emerging at the head of the "California Sound," the band performed original material that reflected a Southern California youth culture of surfing, cars and

romance.

A list of their many hits include "Good Vibrations," "Wouldn't It Be Nice," "I Get Around," "Kokomo," "Surfin' Safari," "Don't Worry Baby," "Surfin' U.S.A.," "California Girls," "Help Me Rhonda," "Barbara Ann," and "Fun, Fun, Fun," just to name a few.

The show is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Don't miss out on the opportunity to see one of the most legendary bands in Rock 'N Roll history.

To inquire about ticket possibilities, call the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds at (706) 896-4191.