

## Buchanans...from Page 1A



The Buchanans' Christmas Lights can be found at 469 Scataway Rd. in Hiawassee, just past North Mt. Zion Church of God. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

help from his mother, Della Mae, though she couldn't help as much this year due to an injury she sustained early on when getting one of the displays ready.

Robert's dad, James, has also helped in the past, though sadly he passed away in April of 2015.

Every year, Robert likes to add a few new pieces to the overall display, and he worked hard from the third or fourth week in September until Thanksgiving Night, when he was able to switch the lights on.

The lights will be viewable until just after New Year, and the Buchanans invite everyone in the community to come out and marvel at the Christmas lights, which are on display seven days a week from right around dark until about 10 p.m. or 10:30 p.m.

"Everybody is welcome," said Robert Buchanan. "These lights are here for the community to come and enjoy, so come on out."

Christmas music featuring some of Robert's favorite holiday tunes accompany the display, and plays until about 9 p.m. each evening.

Santa Claus — the Buchanans' neighbor, Mike West — is available to take children's Christmas requests and pose for pictures every Friday and Saturday night, through Christmas, of course, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., weather permitting.

Santa has been visiting the Buchanans' Christmas Lights for about 15 years, and he has his own covered booth



Robert Buchanan is the driving force behind the Christmas extravaganza, which features more than 100,000 total lights and over 1,000 extension cords. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

to sit in to take requests. As to why he's done it for so long, he says it's all for the sake of the children.

Visiting the lights is completely free, though there is a donation box to help Robert with the extensive power bill he incurs during the holiday season. Donations also go toward replacing bulbs, extension cords, strings, staples and other materials used to make the light show a reality.

Matthew Sims lives just down the road from the Buchanans, and he and his 4-year-old boy walk over to see the lights every night.

"It's well worth the drive out here to come and see this,"

said Sims. "Robert puts a lot of work into it when he starts putting them up. The kids really like it."

Chris Harvey of FalconVue Aerial made a drone-captured video for Robert featuring his light show, offering him a perspective of his lights that he'd never seen before in all of 20 years constructing the massive display.

That video, for anyone wanting to relive the experience or get a sneak preview before witnessing the real deal at 469 Scataway Rd. in Hiawassee, can be found on YouTube by searching for Buchanan Family Light Display.

## Navy Veteran Joseph P. Castronovo receives Quilt of Valor

On November 18, 2016, with his wife Margo, friends and members of the Seabee Island X-3 Veterans organization present, it was an honor for the Misty Mountain Quilts of Valor Outreach members Bonny Garret and Linda and Jim Gorman to present a Quilt of Valor to Mr. Joseph P. Castronovo, a U.S. Navy Vietnam Veteran. Mr. Castronovo was presented his quilt in a ceremony at Dan's Grill, Blairsville, GA.

Joseph Castronovo joined the U.S. Naval Reserves in December 1966, completing his basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. He served in Davisville, RI from January through April 1968. In June 1968, Mr. Castronovo was assigned to Phu Bui, Vietnam and served in Vietnam until October 1968. He was then transferred to Danang, Vietnam from April 1969, through December 1969. BU2 Joseph Castronovo was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy on November 30, 1972. Mr. Castronovo received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering in 1974, from the University of Florida and had a successful career in the water and wastewater management in Texas, Oklahoma and Iowa.



Margo and U.S. Navy Veteran Joseph P. Castronovo

After retiring, Mr. Castronovo and his family moved to Blue Ridge, GA.

Medals and awards include National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal w/Fleet Marine Force Combat Insignia, Vietnam Campaign Medal w/device, and Sharpshooter Badge.

Quilts of Valor are presented to those veterans and

active duty military who have served in combat zones. Information about Quilts of Valor may be found at [www.qovf.org](http://www.qovf.org).

The patriotic quilt presented to Mr. Castronovo, represents a thank you to him for what he has done to defend and protect our nation. Each Quilt of Valor presented is registered with the National Archives.

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## Band...from Page 1A



The Towns County band programs have become known for their passionate students and continued commitment to a tradition of excellence.

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School Band will be performing its 2016 Winter Concert on Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium at Towns County Schools.

Four groups will be performing that evening to form the Winter Concert: the High School Color Guard will dance; the sixth-grade band will perform; the seventh- and eighth-grade band will play; and the high school band will also perform.

Members of the Indian Raider Marching Band are coming off of a successful season, as they performed their halftime show in November to win First in Class at the 2016 White Columns Invitational.

With that win came a massive trophy, though Band Director Derrick Nolen said that the students care more about their actual accomplishments than winning trophies.

One thing to note about the Indian Raider Band is that, while Towns County may be smaller than other schools in its class, not many Class A schools in the region have a band program that's comparable to Towns County's.

"We don't see too many bands that play on the field just because most of the schools we play have a smaller student population, and they just don't have the numbers or have the program put together enough to have a field band and to do it well," said Nolen.

Added Nolen: "Our school size is just as big if not smaller than some of those other schools, so it's really a testament to the kids to be able to have the participation in it to be able to not only field the show, but to put it together pretty successfully. With how the past couple of years have gone, they're definitely punch-

ing above their weight for most of the stuff that we do."

As for the Dec. 6 concert, the music selection will certainly be festive, but will also feature a wider variety of pieces to keep audiences from sitting through a straight hour of Christmas music.

"Usually we try to keep to an hour or less, so it's not going to be taking up all night or anything like that, even though we've got four groups performing," said Nolen. "This year, and this is something a little bit different, but starting off the program, our Color Guard is actually doing a dance part of it."

Band kids of all ages have been working hard on this music, some since the middle of October, and they're looking forward to a strong community turnout.

"The students are excited to do it, and we're proud of them, because this time of year especially, they've got so much going on," said Nolen. "We finish marching season in November, and then they play for Veterans Day, they do the (Sheriff's) Christmas Parade, they do the (Young Harris) Tree Lighting. They just have a lot of music that they've been working on."

Those in band, as Nolen puts it, strive for and indeed have helped to create a tradition of excellence for themselves, and it's all thanks to their continued passion for music and performance, which will certainly be on display in the Tuesday, Dec. 6, Winter Concert.

## Kittens for adoption



The sweet little kitten Santa is holding is one of several you can see at Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital (706-896-1244) on Hwy. 69/17 during their office hours. You can also go online at [whollycats.org](http://whollycats.org), [petfinder.com](http://petfinder.com), or [rescueme.com](http://rescueme.com) or on the facebook page for Nancy Ede. Her phone number is 706-835-1828. Wholly Cats (Nancy Ede) has lots of kittens and teenagers available for adoption.

This photo was taken at the annual PUP photos with Santa held November 19, 2016. PUP (Prevent Unwanted Pets) helps Towns County residents to spay and/or neuter their pets or doorstep animals they are feeding. "The kindest way to end overpopulation!" Call PUP at 1-888-496-2387.