

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 96 Number 08

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Deputy shot in traffic stop; suspect at large

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – The Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Towns County Sheriff's Office are seeking the public's help in locating a man who shot Deputy Austin Bradburn following an early morning traffic stop Friday.

At press time Monday, Bradburn was still being treated at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville for a gunshot wound to the leg that was not considered life-threatening, and he is expected to recover, according to law enforcement officials.

The suspect has not been identified but is described as a

white man of about 6 feet in height and weighing between 170 and 180 pounds. He was wearing a black beanie, gray hoodie and black athletic pants at the time of the shooting, according to the GBI.

This incident unfolded just after 2 a.m. on Dec. 13 when Deputy Bradburn spotted a silver Honda four-door sedan – 2010 or similar model – with no tag, prompting him to initiate a traffic stop on Plott Town Road in Young Harris, near the Union County line.

The driver of the Honda stopped but immediately got out of his vehicle and approached Bradburn. The man did not obey commands given by Bradburn, who then un-

successfully attempted to tase the suspect, according to the GBI.

A fight over Bradburn's gun ensued, resulting in Bradburn being shot through-and-through his left leg, after which the suspect drove away in the Honda, leaving Bradburn's gun at the scene.

Towns County EMS and law enforcement responded to the scene and provided care to Bradburn, who was subsequently life-flighted to Northeast Georgia Medical.

A former deputy for the Union County Sheriff's Office, Bradburn swore in as a Towns County Sheriff's Deputy on Oct. 8, according to a Facebook post featuring Sheriff Ken Henderson welcoming

his new deputy aboard.

On social media Friday afternoon, Bradburn shared a graphic image of his gunshot wound and thanked "all my other fellow officers who arrived on scene to administer help and who are looking for the suspect," as well as "everyone who has messaged me to check on me."

He also gave a special shout-out to fellow TCSO Deputy Cameron Adams, whom he described as "not only my partner but my brother in blue."

Deputy Adams applied a tourniquet to Bradburn's leg to stem the bleeding while they waited for EMS to arrive following the incident. *See Deputy Shot, Page 7*



Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson welcoming Deputy Austin Bradburn, a Blairsville resident, to the agency in October. Photo/Facebook

Bradshaw named GMRC Elected Official of Year



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw receiving his Elected Official of the Year Award from GMRC Executive Director Heather J. Feldman. Photo/Submitted

News Special
GAINESVILLE – Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw was pleasantly surprised to receive the 2024 Elected Official of the Year Award during the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Annual Meeting at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Venue on Friday, Dec. 6.

Chosen annually by the senior management staff of the GMRC, the award is presented to an individual who has demonstrated leadership, support and vision for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission.

Bradshaw has served on the GMRC Council for eight years and currently serves on the Executive Committee. He

will be the incoming Secretary for the GMRC Council on Jan. 1, 2025.

"Commissioner Bradshaw sets an outstanding example of the strong determination, bold ideas, and the incredible amount of grit it takes to get things done in government," said GMRC Executive Director Heather Feldman.

"He has taken his duties as a GMRC Council Member to heart and is often a trusted confidant in both offering his suggestions and support when needed to push the GMRC forward," Feldman concluded.

For his part, Bradshaw humbly accepted the award and remarked that it has been "a privilege to work with GMRC."

"I am honored to be affiliated with such a fine group of people with a serving heart," Bradshaw said. "The services that are offered to counties and cities make an extremely important and positive impact on the quality of life not only for Towns County but for all the counties within their region."

Other awards presented included: Appointed Official

See Bradshaw Award, Page 7

Buchanan Family Lights spread Christmas joy



It takes seven or eight months for Robert Buchanan to fully assemble and then pack away his impressive Christmas display on Scataway Road. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For over 35 years, resident Robert Buchanan has done his best to light up the night sky with a magnificent local display celebrating Christmas. And his family tradition continues strong in 2024.

The Buchanan Family Christmas Lights showcase

thousands of lights, decorations, a mailbox for letters to Santa, free candy canes and all the old favorite Christmas tunes as visitors view the lights in fascination.

Spanning two homes, Buchanan strings up approximately 150,000 lights – the big tree alone contains 34,000 – and hundreds of decorations that shine each night from Thanksgiving through New

Year's at 469 Scataway Road in Hiawassee, with the joyous display growing every year.

As to why he puts in so many months of work year in, year out – which includes a laborious take-down process – Buchanan joked last week that he must be "just nuts, I guess."

"I love Christmas; I love being outdoors, and I like the lights," Buchanan said. "It all

See Buchanan Lights, Page 7

Council to adopt rollback; discusses 2025 election



The Hiawassee City Council and Acting Mayor Jay Chastain Jr. in their December regular meeting. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiawassee City Council is expected to rollback the city millage rate for 2024 property tax bills in a called meeting this Thursday, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m. inside City Hall.

Council members initially reviewed the rollback rate of 1.557 in their November work session. In their Dec. 3 regular meeting, they opted to accept the rollback – the rate calculated to offset inflationary growth in the housing

market – in the called meeting set for this week.

Discussing the recent contract termination by the Towns County Board of Elections to run city elections, City Attorney Thomas Mitchell said in the work session that the action was related to "hardship" regarding running a special mayoral election in a busy presidential election year.

Mitchell has presented the option of signing a new intergovernmental agreement for the Elections Board to resume conducting city elections starting in 2025.

Acting Mayor Jay Chastain Jr. broached the issue again on Dec. 3, relating that Mitchell had spoken with Elections Board Member Steve Harper, who said he felt confident the board would approve the agreement but was waiting for a review by County Attorney Robb Kiker.

The council made a motion to accept the agreement provided it remains unchanged and is given the green light by Kiker. If the agreement is changed on the county's end, it will return for further council

See City Council, Page 5

Historical Society honors members, rings in holidays



The Historical Society's outgoing Membership Secretary Mary Ann Miller received a plaque this month thanking her for her years of service, from President Tyler Osborn on behalf of the organization. Photo/Submitted

News Special
Towns County Historical Society members held their monthly meeting on Monday, Dec. 9, at their meeting space in the Old Recreation Building in Hiawassee.

The meeting was filled with festive cheer, meaningful honors, and updates on ongoing projects as the organization celebrated its accomplish-

ments and prepared for the year ahead.

President Tyler Osborn opened by providing an update on the Society's "Letters to Santa" project at the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights. Through the Historic Presley Post Office, children – and even some adults – have been writing letters to Santa. To date, over 140 letters have

been received and are being individually answered in partnership with Santa.

Osborn reflected on the historical significance of the Historic Presley Post Office, most recently located at Courthouse Square and now at the Pioneer Village in the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

This year, the Society revisited the post office's history and recognized the instrumental contributions of Allen Saylor and Dan Simpson in restoring this rural gem – the only historic post office preserved in Towns County.

The Board of Directors officially signed a proclamation dedicating the post office in honor of Saylor and Simpson.

"Fourteen years ago, they took on a project that would shape the course of our organization," said Osborn, who expressed heartfelt gratitude for their efforts before adding, "I just wish we could have done this while Dan was still with us so he could accept this honor."

A plaque and a copy of the proclamation will be placed in the historic post office.

See Historical Society, Page 12

12 Pages

Vol. 96 No. 08

Lake Levels

TCHS Student of the Week

See Page 2



Arrests - 2 Opinions - 4
Chamber - 6 Legals - 11
Church - 8 Obits - 9
Classifieds - 11 Sports - 10

Blue Ridge 1,669.69
Chatuge 1,917.95
Nottely 1,762.07

2025 Proposed County Budget

See Page 5

Coffee/Donuts for First Responders

See Page 6



The support you need for your next big dream.
Talk to me today about your loan and line of credit options.

Tina Denton | 706-435-1104 | Hiawassee Main Office | NMLS #744611



© 2024 United Community Bank | NMLS #421841 | ucbi.com/borrowing
This is not a commitment to lend. Normal credit criteria apply.



United
Community

City Council...from Page 1

consideration.

Hiawassee is currently being run by Acting Mayor Chastain after the resignation of former mayor Liz Ordiales earlier this year. Chastain is a longtime member of the City Council who took over mayoral duties in June as mayor pro tempore on the council.

City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick has sent the council the call for election for the regular election in November 2025, when the mayor seat would normally be up for grabs. The call must be published before Feb. 1, and voting to move forward will happen at the January meeting.

In other business, Mitchell suggested that the city lease the Paris Business Center spaces – and other properties that the Downtown Development Authority manages – to the DDA, allowing for subletting. The issue was ultimately tabled, as Mitchell felt the DDA should be the first to approve the agreement.

To match the rates of nearby cities, the Building and Planning Committee proposed fee increases of between \$10 and \$50 for a range of permits regarding residential, commercial and trade construction in terms of electrical, plumbing, deck building, garages, mechanical, etc.

Councilwoman Nancy Noblet, who serves as Building and Planning Chair, worked with Building Inspector Randy Day to come to the final fee determinations, which the council approved this month. This is the first time permitting fees have been updated since 2017.

Since the onset of COVID-19, Hiawassee has broadcast its public meetings on Facebook Live. Lately, “several” council members have approached Chastain and asked to put a stop to the practice. Noblet, for one, said that people have called the meetings a “clown show,” and expressed discomfort with the sentiment.

According to Noblet, Facebook commenters often claim difficulty hearing and seeing meeting speakers. She suggested that if anyone wants to stay up to date on council happenings, they should attend the meetings or come by City Hall to pick up meeting agendas and minutes.

In the work session discussion, Chastain added that he would be “more than happy” to continue the broadcasts but said that better technology would benefit the streams.

Attendee LaJean Turner said the livestreams were useful for elderly and infirm residents to “attend” without being physically present, among other reasons.

At the regular meeting, it was revealed the broadcasts would continue, with the stipulation that the council look into procuring an “owl” camera – one that swivels toward speakers – whether by purchasing better technology or by borrowing it. Livestream comments will also be turned off.

Water Superintendent Carl Grizzle shared during the work session that since Nov. 1, 17 leaks have been found and sealed, and he revealed that anytime a leak happens near state roadways, he must contact the Georgia Department of Transportation before cutting into the road.

Economic Development Director Denise McKay informed the council of a grant opportunity for the infrastructure needed on Whiskey Mountain at no cost to the

city. The development would include some workforce housing: three-bed, two-bath triplexes for less than \$290,000. Rather than rentals, these would be “owner occupied” homes.

The Building and Planning Committee was expected to approve Phase I of the building plans in its Dec. 17 meeting that occurred after press time, and the council approved an application of the preliminary grant request and a letter of support for the Whiskey Mountain Project on Dec. 3.

During the Public Comments portion of the work session, Ordiales informed the council that the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC installed a pole at Lloyd’s Landing for internet access but that the electrical setup still needed to be performed.

Eat, Drink & Be Merry at Towns County GOP Meeting

The Towns County Republican Party will have our December meeting as a Christmas party, celebrating the Holiday and the election. The meeting and celebration will be held Thursday, December 19th at the TCGOP Headquarters. Doors open at 5:15 PM with the celebration starting at 5:45 PM.

We are asking you to bring a canned good appropriate for a holiday meal as an entrance fee so we can take them to the Food Pantry, allowing less fortunate people to enjoy the celebration of this season. Please bring a dish to share with friends. The TCGOP will supply the drinks, punch, eggnog, hot cider and more. Also, we are happy Elvis will be with us to share songs and lead us with Christmas karaoke.

Throughout the evening, “Pierot’s Points” will feature GOP trivia so brush up on your history of Presidents and their administrations; prizes will be given to winners. No Googling the answers during the party!

“Caleb’s Corner” will center around what he, as a young adult, sees as a New Years wish for 2025.

All and all it will be a joyful celebration; we will celebrate the Reason for the Season with carols, fellowship, entertainment, food and drinks; who could ask for anything more!

Hope to see you there but if not, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! For further information contact Betsy at 904-382-1912 or Nancy at 229-938-9349.

Recycle Cardboard and Glass in Towns County



Lots of boxes are being delivered right now before the holidays. Please remember to break them down so they fit better in your vehicle and take them to the Towns County Recycle Center on Sunnyside Road. They do accept cardboard boxes not broken down if you cannot.

Also take your glass bottles and glass jars to the dumpster parked on the way out of the covered recycling center. All colors go into the dumpster—just remove any caps.

Recycling keeps all these materials, plus plastics #1 and #2, out of the garbage being transferred, thus saving taxpayer dollars for other work in the county. Thanks for being good stewards!

Deputy Shot...from Page 1



TCSO Deputy Austin Bradburn thanked his “brother in blue,” TCSO Deputy Cameron Adams pictured here, for staying by his side in the hospital on Friday. Photo/Facebook

lowing the shooting. Further, Bradburn said Adams traveled to the Gainesville hospital Friday and “stayed by my side even after working all night.”

“I will be okay just got some recovering to do,” Bradburn wrote, adding, “If you have any information, follow the instructions below. Please let’s get this guy!”

Anyone with information that could lead to the apprehension of the suspect is being asked to call 911 or the GBI Tipline at 800-597-8477; go online to <https://gbi.georgia.gov/submit-tips-online>; or make a report via the See Something, Send Something mobile app.

GBI Region 8 Special Agent in Charge Kim Williams can be reached at kim.williams@gbi.ga.gov. The investigation is active and ongoing.



Karaoke every Friday night from 7-10 p.m. at the VFW Post on Sunnyside Rd in Hiawassee. Come join us for some fun! It is open to the public.

Bradshaw Award

...from Page 1

of the Year to Bryan Lackey, City Manager, City of Gainesville; GMRC Employee of the Year to Faith Bryan, Information Services Director; Council Member of the Year to Bill Chafin, Hart County Private Sector Representative; and the Chairman’s Award to Jim Conley, Mayor, City of Blairsville.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is one of 12 planning and development districts in Georgia focused on providing technical assistance to 12 counties and

37 municipalities in the areas of planning, economic development, information services and technology, and workforce development.

The purpose of the GMRC is to promote regional cooperation, to coordinate the activities and policies of member local governments, and to provide assistance to local governments.

For more information, visit www.gmrc.ga.gov or contact Heather Feldman at 770-538-2626.

Buchanan Lights

...from Page 1



Baby Jesus will appear in the Nativity at the Buchanan Family Lights on Christmas Day. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

just goes together. This started when I was a kid, and it’s grown into this over the years. I try to add something new every year. This year I worked on switching out the old-style incandescent lights to LEDs.

“I usually start putting the lights up around the last of August. I was a little late starting this year, so I’m still now just finishing it up this week. And it’s just me. I use a 12-foot stepladder and a 15-foot fiberglass pole, and I put up one string at a time. It’s a lot of work.

“I’m out here virtually all the time from August through March when I take it all down. I usually light everything up from about 5 p.m. when it starts getting dark until about 10 p.m.”

And it’s an expensive tradition. On top of all the lights, extension cords, candy

canes and decorations, there’s the cost of electricity. Buchanan had the electric company install outdoor power supplies several years ago to mitigate the danger of fire; with over 800 extension cords, one must be prepared for any eventuality.

“I do have a donation box down here, but you don’t get much,” Buchanan said, noting that’s not why he does the lights anyway, which have become a tradition for many area families. “I do it for the people who come to see it.

“I want the community to come out and enjoy it. The kids love it. It stays busy. We really don’t know how many people come by to see it, but one year my dad counted 34,000 car lights that season.

“ABC is going to repair the episode of ‘The Great Christmas Light Fight’ we were featured in, sometime this December. And Chris Harvey of FalconVue Aerial made a drone-captured video that can be viewed on YouTube.”

Regarding how long the tradition might continue, Buchanan said that “it falls under the category of if I can, I will.”

Be sure to check out the Buchanan Family Lights after dark; just keep going down Scataway Road until you see the lights – they’re impossible to miss.

BINGO

Pat Haralson
Civic Center
165 Wellborn Street
Blairsville, GA
Doors Open - 6 PM
Games Start - 7 PM

Benefits

Castoff Pet Rescue

Cruisers break bread in Christmas Party tradition

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – There was plenty of happiness and cheer during the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club's year-end Christmas Party at Cook's Country Kitchen on Friday, Dec. 13.

Every year, the group gathers to break bread and celebrate their philanthropy in the community; the Cruisers raise tens of thousands of dollars a year for a variety of local causes, like veterans in need, student scholarships and Christmas shopping for kids, as well as donations to other groups.

Also part of their Christmas tradition is a White Elephant-esque "present raffle" in which members make a game out of giving each other gifts.

As a 501(c)(3), club members consider themselves a charity group first and foremost, but it all started with a love for vehicles. Whether muscle cars, vintage hot rods, lowriders or just snazzy modern rides, the one thing that unites the club is a respect for classy automobiles.

Indeed, many of the gifts purchased for men included car products; Marcus Tuschel received a bottle of wax, and Tommy Jones made sure to hide this bucket of car care goods so that other Cruisers wouldn't be inspired to "steal" the gift.

That was all part of the game. Every Christmas gathering, presents are handed

out via tickets. A number is called, and whoever drew that ticket gets to choose a gift set aside for a man or woman. If another person wants a gift claimed by somebody else, he or she can take it.

It's all in good fun, though. The Cruisers and their spouses are a good-humored bunch, and although there were several playful jabs as somebody opened their gift slowly or another threatened to snatch the prize, laughs were shared by all.

But several things rested heavy on their hearts that evening. For one, it's expected that Club President Dick Couture will retire after seven years in the position, and Second Vice President Brian Grubbs is almost certain Couture will say no to an extension.

"We're getting older," Grubbs admitted, revealing that it was hard to find someone with the "time and energy" to devote to being club president. Not only that, but they need to be a bit tech-savvy, according to Board Chair Wayne Tanner, saying that "nobody else knows computers."

There is a concern, no matter how light, about the continued existence of the organization. For his part, Tanner believes the younger generation isn't interested in cars the same way "old men" might be, but there's a bit of a misconception around that.

Some of the Cruisers have found that people assume the organization is focused

primarily on antique rides – it's not. There are those in the group who admire modern makes and models, like "a nice Honda" or various pickup trucks.

That's why there was a renewed interest in really getting out in the community and drumming up some interest from the younger generations. Talk is set to continue at January's club meeting regarding what to do going forward.

But for Friday night, the Cruisers were content to enjoy the presence of friends and family and dine on good food. Courtesy of the staff at Cook's Country Kitchen, guests had their supper taken directly to their tables.

The meal included delicious holiday fare like sweet potato casserole and cranberry sauce along with veggies such as black-eyed peas and green beans. There was also a pick of chicken or ham, which, for the daring, could be doubled up.

"(It's a) good meal," Tuschel remarked with a warm smile, joking that he was a "growing boy" before digging into his dessert of peach cobbler. At the end, he and his fellows applauded the cooks and waitresses for a job well done.

As far as further business, Jones announced that some 100 kids were able to go Christmas shopping with the Cruisers this year, and Grubbs encouraged whoever could go out the next day and support Shop With a Cop on Dec. 14 to do so.



Blairsville Cruiser Marcus Tuschel opening a car-related gift during the club's annual Christmas Party last week. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

The Cruisers look forward to another year celebrating fellow motorheads and doing good for the community, whether that be

assisting kids, veterans or other folks just needing a helping hand.

To learn more about the organization, to assist

its fundraising efforts or to consider joining, head to www.blairsvillercruisers.com and check out the Blairsville Cruisers Facebook page.

Historical Society...from Page 1

face in their honor.

The meeting also recognized retiring Membership Secretary Mary Ann Miller for her years of service. Miller, who has been on the board since 2017, was honored with the title of Honorary Lifetime Member.

"She has been the backbone of many of our initiatives, including planning events like the Haunted Jailhouse," Osborn shared.

Miller will continue contributing by creating newsletters and graphics for the Society.

"She has been an inspiration, and many of the ideas and projects we have done have been hers; we could not do what we have done without her, and if anyone deserves this, it is her. And we could not let her go – we wanted to make sure she sticks around," Osborn said.

Also that night, the Society elected its Board of Directors for 2025: President Tyler Osborn, Vice President Jerry Taylor, Secretary Brandy Cox, and Treasurer Patti Wilson will continue their roles, while Ginger Rogers was elected to replace Miller as Membership



Allen Saylor and Carol Simpson (wife of the late Dan Simpson) received a copy of the Historic Presley Post Office proclamation from Historical Society President Tyler Osborn.

Secretary.

"We look forward to having Ginger join us," Taylor said. "She has big shoes to fill, but I know she can do it!"

The evening concluded with a special program featuring local author Brenda Kay Ledford, who gave a special reading from her book "Christmas in Matheson Cove," inspired by her Appalachian childhood memories.

Festivities ended with Jerry Taylor leading the group in a selection of holiday songs on an antique reed organ, in-

cluding "Deck the Halls," "Joy to the World," and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

The Towns County Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and sharing the rich history, culture and heritage of Towns County.

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at 900 N. Main Street in Hiawassee, and all are welcome to attend. For more information, visit www.townscountyhistory.org.



Once again, Cook's Country Kitchen served as the celebratory backdrop for the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club Christmas Party, on Dec. 13. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks