

# Towns County Herald

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## Empty Stocking Parade brings spectators, toy donations

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

With nothing but leftovers remaining from Thanksgiving, a new Christmas season can begin in Towns County, which kicks off the same way each year – with the Sheriff's Office Empty Stocking Parade.

The 2020 parade took place on Saturday, Nov. 28, traveling as always from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds through downtown Hiwassee, ushering in Christmas cheer while raising awareness for the Empty Stocking Fund.

This initiative helps to provide Christmas morning experiences to underprivileged children in the community by soliciting monetary and toy donations for kids who would

otherwise do without presents under their Christmas tree come Dec. 25.

"It was a great turnout, and we want to thank all those who helped in so many ways," Sheriff Chris Clinton said of the parade. "I personally want to thank the people of Towns County for showing their love and concern for the less fortunate children of our community."

"Each year we have raised the donations needed to make sure hundreds of Towns County children received gifts on Christmas morning. We could not do this without your support. God bless our community. I pray each family has a very Merry Christmas."

The event attracted many participants who built floats for

the parade, as well as resident spectators who lined Main Street to celebrate keeping the tradition alive.

This year, businesses and groups like Appalacheian Shrine Restore, the Appalacheian Shrine Club, Moss' Cutting Edge Services, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Turpin's Wrecker and many others entered to make the parade a sight for locals to see.

Bellcreek House of Prayer Pastor Timothy Gerrin brought his church out for the first year as a way to show support for the fund and spread the church's Christian message.

"This means a lot to me," Gerrin said. "At one point in time, I was in a place where my mom and dad had to have

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Santa was joined by reigning Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Carly Woodard on the Lions Club float in the 2020 Towns County Sheriff's Office Empty Stocking Fund Parade Saturday. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Community members thankful for family, health and freedom

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In recognition of Thanksgiving last week, people in the community shared personal reflections on what they were thankful for in their lives and what they appreciated most about their country.

Shopping at Ingham Saturday, Kevin Cochran of Towns County encouraged others to appreciate their loved ones, especially during trying times.

"I'm thankful for my family above all and all that we have come through so far," Cochran said. "It has really been a rough year, and we have been tested with a few things. My mom had COVID but she came through, and we are very thankful for that."

"With all the bad, it is good to be appreciative every now and then. I can't



Cooler temperatures have become more regular in the mountains, making coat wearing common again. COVID masks probably keep people's faces warmer, too. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

speaking for the entire country or community, but I think family comes first. No matter who you are or what you believe, you have to take the time to

appreciate those that love and appreciate you.

"As a country, we need to strive to just be thankful."

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## Buchanans begin monthlong Christmas display on Scataway



Robert Buchanan made this Snoopy plane new for his 2020 Christmas lights extravaganza down Scataway Road in Hiwassee. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

For more than three decades, the Buchanan family of Scataway Road has put up thousands of Christmas decorations and lights around their home to spread holiday cheer.

The lights have garnered quite a following over the years to become a tradition and

attraction noted by many Towns County, but people all over North Georgia and Western North Carolina.

Displacitor Robert Buchanan has loved the colorful lights ever since receiving his first set as a wee lad, and his passion for a festive Christmas has grown into something truly unique he shares with a supportive community each

year. "We have always loved lights," Buchanan said. "It got big enough for people to start driving by in the '90s. We have a new plane (piloted by Snoopy) this year that I made just a few weeks ago."

"I have always had lights since I was a kid, and I still have the original string from when I was a baby. I don't use them

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## Hamilton Gardens ends year with Christmas flower sale



L-R: Joan Crothers, Grace Howard and Linda Jones of Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge enjoyed a Christmas gathering Nov. 27. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge volunteers hosted their final event of 2020 on Friday, Nov. 27, a Christmas-

themed greenhouse flower sale with snacks, wine and a silent auction for a lovely social event by the fire.

"Our plants are going fast," Gardens Executive Director Grace Howard said.

"This is just an event that we decided to do this year at Christmas since we didn't have a fall event. We did something like this a couple of years ago, but it dropped 17 degrees the

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## Young Harris library closes doors 'temporarily' for financial reasons

News Special  
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS – For over 40 years, Mountain Regional Library has been providing quality library services to the citizens of both Towns and Union counties. However, the financial commitment of operating two branches in Towns County can no longer be met.

Due to this unfortunate circumstance, the Mountain Regional Library branch of the Mountain Regional Library System has had to close temporarily, ceasing all in-person services effective Dec. 1.

Administrative functions

performed at Mountain Regional Library will continue as normal.

Mountain Regional Library is located equidistant between Blairsville and Hiwassee, making it easily accessible for anyone located in the area or traveling between the two towns.

The Young Harris library also serves as the headquarters location for the Mountain Regional Library System, which includes Fannin County Public Library as well.

Lack of in-person services at Mountain Regional Library will not mean library services will be unavailable for



Heath Lee  
Mountain Regional Library  
Director

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## Over 7,000 people attend Mountain Country Christmas

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds welcomed a whopping 7,000-plus people to the opening weekend of the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights that started Thanksgiving Night.

Open Thursday-Saturday each week through the end of December, the walking Christmas lights show features a full selection of craft vendors, a live Cowtown creamery exhibit, a large rocking horse, thousands of lights and, of course, Santa Claus.

And Towns County residents will want to take advantage of the special Community Residents Night on Dec. 3,

where everyone who lives here will be admitted for free.

Mountain Country Christmas runs every Thursday and Friday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Admission is \$6, and free for children 12 and under.

Under the event add to the enchanted Christmas theme, like Skip and Gloria Kempf, who handcraft lights, wreaths and other decorations to make houses festive for the holidays.

"We were here for the Fall Festival and the Fair for the last five years," Mrs. Kempf said. "I do everyday things like burlap or beaded dolls, things for the Armed Forces, and stuff like that. The snowmen are the

little festive thing we put up. I try to do something different each year.

"We just do it to meet people and as a hobby. It really isn't a lot of work once you get into it and really work on it. We have been doing it for five years, so it has grown. I have always been a crafty person, but just for the family. I have always loved Christmastime, and I just did this one year and it evolved."

David and Mary Beth Lamb make boardgames and other wooden crafts that help families make the most of the season with loved ones.

"It just depends on how detailed it is, it can take me anywhere from a couple of

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Through December, Santa Claus is making a special appearance each night of the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

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