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Wright's legacy continues with Shop With A Hero

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – For years, Shop With A Cop was an annual passion of Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, and a year after his passing, the first responders of Towns County and the children he so loved to make happy continued the tradition, renamed Shop With A Hero, in his memory on Tuesday, Dec. 20.

This year, 29 students from Towns County Middle School traveled to Walmart in Blairsville to shop for gifts for themselves and their families for Christmas.

While the event has been known as Shop With A Cop since its inception, all those involved with the program decided a name change was just what was needed, since it was Chief Wright's wish to include more departments, not just the police force.

"It was Chief Jimmy Wright's wish that we change the name to Shop With A Hero,

and that's what we've done," said Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Walls. "All the public service people here, we all want to work together to keep this going in his memory, because that's what he would have wanted us to do."

Representatives of Towns County Fire & Rescue, including firefighters and EMS workers, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Towns County Sheriff's Office, 21st Century Afterschool program, Mountain Realty, community volunteers, and of course, the Hiwassee City Police Department all came out to support the program in honor of Chief Wright's memory.

While Chief Wright's children were unable to make the event this year, some of Wright's family made it out for a very emotional day, though the smiles on the faces of kids ringing up items they'd been wishing for all year seemed to make it all worthwhile.

For the "heroes" of the day, the event was just as touching, as

each and every first responder present did their best to honor the warm and loving spirit of Chief Wright by providing support and showing the kids that every person has something good to offer to the community.

"I think that all of the public service people here today realize that we're setting an example for the youth by being here today," said Chief Walls. "We need to make sure that we're setting a good example so that they know that we do care about them. We're not just here to enforce the law during the times when they do something bad. This is so they'll realize that there is good in everybody."

This year, Family Connection Director Amy Gibby Rosser took charge of the program, making sure that every child had a hero to shop with and that the day would be spent the way that Chief Wright would have wanted it, with plenty of smiles to go around.

"I think this year was See Wright, Page 5A



Towns County schoolchildren recently enjoyed shopping with local first responders, those who put the "hero" in Shop With A Hero. Photo/Lily Avery

Probate Judge Rogers swears in Towns County officials



Towns County Probate Judge David Rogers spent last week swearing in recently-elected county officials. Here is Cliff Bradshaw as Towns County Commissioner on Thursday, Dec. 22. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner-elect Cliff Bradshaw was sworn into office at the Towns County Courthouse

on Thursday, Dec. 22.

Magistrate and Probate Judge David Rogers officiated the ceremony in front of more than 20 of Bradshaw's family members, friends and future constituents.



Towns County Tax Commissioner Bruce Rogers

Rogers and Bradshaw have been close friends for some time, so Rogers shared a few words on behalf of the commissioner-elect, promising those in attendance that Bradshaw was the right man for the job.

"It's an honor to be able to do this," said Rogers. "We've known each other for a long time, and I couldn't think of a better man to do this. He's going to do

See Sworn In, Page 5A



Towns County Coroner Harold Copeland



Towns County Superior Court Clerk Cecil Dye



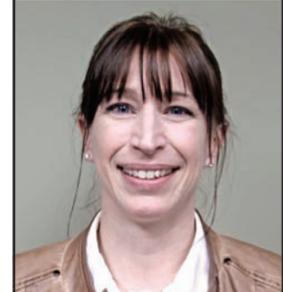
Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton



Towns County Probate Judge David Rogers



Towns County Board of Education Dr. Kilee Smith



Towns County Board of Education Laura Banister

Drug court graduates show addiction can be beaten

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE—Grown men and women shed tears of joy during last week's graduation ceremony of the North Enotah Drug Court, celebrating together the triumph of the human spirit over addiction.

This is the seventh graduation overseen by the program since the summer of 2015, and five individuals from Union and Towns counties held their heads high and shared thanks last Thursday as they witnessed the culmination of more than two years of their own hard work – they had earned new leases on life.

The motto of the program is "A Life Transformed," and that is exactly what happens when

graduates submit themselves to the rigors of the program, which includes two years of unannounced surveillance visits, three days a week of classes with homework, and often drug screenings, the requirement of a steady job and more.

Getting accepted into the program, which doesn't take drug dealers or violent offenders, is the start of a second chance that each participant must decide they want to earn.

Otherwise, they go to jail.

And on Thursday, Dec. 22, five program participants joined the ranks of more than 20 others who in the last year and a half, but have not overcome

See Drug Court, Page 5A



Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge Stan Guter oversaw the graduation of five individuals who completed the requirements of the accountability program

Towns County Sheriff's office welcomes K-9 Deputy Hunter

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton recently announced that his department had added a new member to the staff, a K-9 named Hunter.

Hunter is an 18-month-old Belgian Malinois trained in the detection of illegal drugs, and the sheriff believes that Hunter, teamed up with his handler Deputy Jay McCarter, will be an asset to Towns County in investigations of drug activity.

According to a TCSO news release, since being deployed with Deputy McCarter, Hunter "has proven to be an effective partner in the fight

See Hunter, Page 5A



Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton with Cpl. Jay McCarter and K-9 Deputy Hunter, an 18-month-old Belgian Malinois.

Commissioner Kendall approves budget in last County regular meeting

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall held his last regular meeting as commissioner on Thursday, Dec. 15, in which he adopted the 2017 Budget as presented.

Previously reviewed in both the October and November commission meetings, Commissioner Kendall officially approved the 2017 Budget with only minor alterations from the 2016 Budget.

The 2017 Budget has a beginning balance of \$3.1 million, and takes into account \$9,458,934 in revenues and

See Kendall, Page 5A



Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall discussing the annual budget in his last regular meeting before leaving office.

Free fairgrounds Gospel concert a hit with the locals

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fairground's "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!" hosted a night of free concert for all Towns County residents, as well as a Gospel concert for all patrons to enjoy on Thursday, Dec. 22.

In conjunction with Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason made the decision to offer admittance into the holiday light show to residents free of charge as a way to give back to the locals for the yuletide season.

"Mr. Kendall wanted to have a free Towns County citizens night," said Thomason. "So, we picked a night, the two



The Rumpf family, along with the Davenport Brothers, performed in concert at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Thursday, Dec. 22. They played both Gospel and Christmas music.

of us together, and we thought it was a great idea to let the people enjoy it that live here in Towns County.

"We had a really good

turnout for it and everything was great. We're very thankful that people came out and enjoyed it and had a good time right before

See Fairgrounds, Page 5A

2 Sections	12 Pages
Lake Levels	
Blue Ridge	1,666.69
Chatuge	1,917.28
Nottely	1,759.76

Inside	
Arrests	2A
Church	2B
Classifieds	4B
Opinion	4A
Legals	5B
Obits	3B
Sports	1B

Happy New Year