

Barrett...from Page 1A

Barrett's list of academic achievements and extracurricular activities is extensive, including being a consistent AB Honor Roll student, a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Future Farmers of America, Leo Club, and Future Business Leaders of America.

Though it has been a while since she last competed, this is not Barrett's first pageant. When she was younger, Barrett was crowned the first Little Miss Georgia Mountain Fair, a title that seemed to foreshadow her inevitable coronation as Miss Georgia Mountain Fair.

"My favorite part of the whole experience was definitely meeting all these wonderful girls," said Barrett. "There was some tense competition because they were all so nice, and I know some of them. For instance, I've grown up with two of the girls."

"It was wonderful to have the opportunity to really get close to those girls and learn more about them and see what beautiful girls we have in our area."

As part of her queenly duties, Barrett will serve as

an ambassador at festivities involving the fairgrounds. Barrett will also have the opportunity to participate in the 2017 statewide pageant competition, "Fairest of the Fair," held in Atlanta.

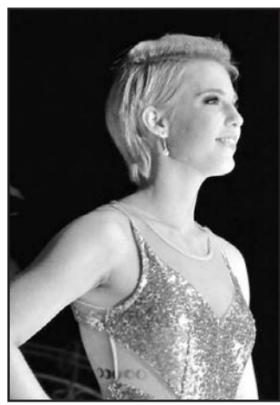
"Yes, I am going to compete," said Barrett. "I'm really nervous about it. I've heard there's some good competition, but I'll do my best."

As Madison Mueller, last year's Miss Georgia Mountain Fair, passed the torch off to the new queen, she offered words of encouragement and advice, with the reminder that having fun is the most important part of the job.

"This is a little bittersweet, but it was an amazing year," said Mueller. "I had tons of fun. It's truly a once in a lifetime experience. I'm excited for her reign, though."

"She's going to have an amazing year getting to spend time with these people. The most important thing is to have fun because that's what it's all about."

The First Runner-Up for the 2016 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair was Sydney



GMF 2016 Runner-Up Sydney Carver

Carver, representing Young Harris.

Ashley Smith, from Hiawassee, was awarded Second Runner-Up.

Brooke Reynolds from Hayesville, North Carolina, won the Miss Congeniality honor for the evening.

First Runner-Up Sydney Carver was originally considered for Miss Georgia Mountain Fair 2016. However, due to academic obligations, she was unable to accept the title.

Ethics...from Page 1A

"In what matters (building permits, sign applications, setting rate schedules, street projects, etc.) is it allowable for a councilmember to participate when such discussions or votes affect that councilmember's employer?" said Edwards in her request.

The Ethics Committee, consisting of Linda Nichols and Robert Nichols, said that the answer to the issue "is clearly stated in the code."

"No city official, prior to discussion or vote on an issue, should fail to disclose substantial personal or financial interest in the issue, or fail to recuse himself from discussion or vote on the issue," read the Ethics Committee response.

Further, the Ethics Committee discovered several past instances of apparent violations of the city's Code of Ethics Ordinance in this particular regard, with a councilmember who happened to be employed by the college voting on matters of the college.

The committee suggested that the council review past minutes and make sure that current councilmembers were aware of the city's ethics code sections dealing with prohibitions and conflicts of interest.

The crux of the issue is, should the four councilmembers recuse themselves from discussion and voting on matters concerning the college, no business between the city and college could ever be conducted, as there would be no voting majority.

In the most recent meeting earlier this month, the council voted unanimously to redraft the city's Code of Ethics to mirror the State Code of Ethics, seemingly to make the ordinance less restrictive

to allow all councilmembers to vote on matters of the college without violating the ordinance.

Currently, the city's ethics ordinance is based on the Georgia Municipal Association's model, and was re-approved by the city council in December of 2015.

The City of Young Harris is considered a GMA City of Ethics, and it is unclear whether or not an ethics ordinance redraft would jeopardize that designation.

The council may have little choice but to rework the city's ethics ordinance, however, in order to conduct business on behalf of the city with respect to the college, at least without violating an ordinance.

Edwards' January complaint asked for clarification of the code, and the council response appears to show an attempt to clarify the ordinance through modification so as to remove any shadow, i.e. conflict of interest or appearance thereof, from when said councilmembers are called upon to vote on business between the college and the city – though whether or not this particular redraft will accomplish that is unknown at this time.

Earlier this year in February, the council heard the complaint and ruling of the Ethics Committee regarding conflict of interest, and there was discussion in March between councilmembers who said they would like to look into rewriting the ordinance, according to Young Harris City Hall.

The council's interest in the redraft seemed to have chilled for a few months, until it came time to vote on matters concerning a development

company called Provident Group, which has come to the city trying to build a dedicated student housing facility for the college on Main Street, according to city hall.

In the July regular city council meeting, the council voted on a pair of issues concerning the proposed building, including a unanimous vote to hold a public hearing on Tuesday, Aug. 2, at 6:30 p.m., in order to give the public a chance to comment on rezoning the project from General Business to Specialized Institutional.

The other matter concerning the project consisted of a 5-1 vote, with Smith voting no, to table a variance issue for the building.

When reached for comment on the council's approval of an ethics ordinance redraft, Mayor Gibby posed the following question: "If this were any other private developer on private land, would we be rewriting this at this stage?"

On July 7, the Herald emailed the four councilmembers employed by the college, asking about the ethics ordinance redraft, and for their understanding of the January ethics complaint. As of press time Monday, only Councilman Leslie had responded to the inquiry, on July 12, asking for more time to consider the matter.

In other business during the July meeting, the council heard from R.L. Jennings, who conducted the city audit for year ending Dec. 31, 2015. Based on findings of the 2015 audit, Jennings said the city had earned a clean financial bill of health according to Government Accounting Standards.

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Fire...from Page 1A

"Honestly, we need to be writing a thank-you letter, they've just been so generous, the whole county, everybody has," said Weaver. "It's just a miracle. It's amazing in a small town to see how everybody just – I can't even put it into words, to be honest, how grateful they are."

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, but thanks to a rapid response by Towns County Fire & Rescue, everyone walked away that day.

"An alarm came out around 1:30 p.m. of a fully involved structure fire on Bell Street," said Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland. "We arrived on the scene within three minutes. Engine

1, Tanker 1, Tanker 2, Ladder 6 responded, and we got a quick knockdown on the fire."

The chief said that, due to higher than average temperatures and the ferocity of the blaze, one of his firefighters had to be treated for heat exhaustion and transported to Chatuge Regional Hospital, though no one was seriously injured due to the fire.

Sally Varao, co-captain of the local Red Cross Disaster Action Team, said that her folks were dispatched to the fire after receiving a call from 911.

"We were told that there was a family that had been displaced, so we responded to the scene," said Varao. "We met the family, did canteen for the fire department, providing them with much-needed water

because it was an extremely hot day."

Joe Varao and Matt Akins provided that water to firefighters, and Sally Varao spent time with the family to help them figure out next steps.

"The purpose of Red Cross is to meet with the family to help them through their initial emergency needs," said Varao. "That's pretty much your initial two to three days – get you a hotel, get you food, clothing, get you money for that and get you set up, and we provide funds to do that."

"And then, we have a follow-up team that works with families to see if there's any available assistance or referrals in the community."

EMC...from Page 1A

notified that somebody wanted to run, they were nominated. We had nobody go in by petition this year, everybody went in by nominations as far as running for the board."

There will be six names from which to choose during the annual BRMEMC elections of new board members this year.

Over the last two years, members have elected six new directors, and the directors have appointed one new director. This year, they will elect two new directors and vote for the beginning of a new term for Director Ray Cook, out of Brasstown, NC, as Cook is running unopposed after a nominee from Murphy, NC, dropped out of the race.

Cook was selected to fill Kenneth Lance's term, following his resignation last year.

Representing Clay County, NC, R.G. (Gary) Refitt and Adam Cony Payne, both of Hayesville, are seeking the seat of Director Ronnie Burch, who decided not to run for reelection

to the board.

Out of Union County come three candidates: Patrick Malone, Andrew Smith and Gene Mason, all three of Blairsville.

The three hope to replace Greg Owenby, who decided not to seek reelection.

"Our Policy Committee is reviewing the Nominating Committee's process right now, and we're trying to update it to where people will be more informed if they want to run for the board of directors of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC," said Phillips, looking down the road. "So, that's something that Mickey Cummings is looking at right now as the chairman of the policy committee, which we're excited about that."

Along with Owenby, longtime director Ronnie Burch of Hayesville, NC, will be leaving the board.

"I know that, especially Ronnie, as long as he's been on the board, he sure has helped us this year with a lot of the information that he's had as far

as the knowledge of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, and I know that's going to be missed," said Phillips.

Added Phillips: "We're looking for a new future, and I think things are going in the right direction. It seems like the board is fired up, and we've got a new general manager in Jeremy Nelms coming, so things are looking really good at the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC right now."

As chairman of the BRMEMC Board of Directors, Phillips will lead the meeting this year, as opposed to previous years, when the meeting was led by the EMC's attorney.

Furthermore, this year's annual meeting, to take place in Anderson Music Hall inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, will resemble the Town Hall-style of public meeting the board has held in Union, Towns and elsewhere in the past year.

"This year we didn't have time, but next year we feel pretty confident about having the annual meeting at the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC itself," said Phillips.

Indictments...from Page 1A

controlled substance.

Kevin William Rogers, three counts possession of a controlled substance; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; failure to maintain lane; three counts drugs not in original container.

Brent Brandon Hinnant, four counts homicide by vehicle in the first degree; three counts driving under the influence (controlled substance); three counts driving under the influence (less safe) (drugs); driving under the influence (less safe) (combined influence); failure to maintain lane; driving without a license; possession of drug-related objects.

Marion Christopher Woodward, crossing the guard line with contraband.

Laura Marie Johnson, interference with government property.

Kevin Dewayne Crider, burglary in the second degree; entering an automobile; two counts theft by taking; two counts criminal damage to property in the second degree.

Sequoyah The Aquarian, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of firearm during commission of a felony; speeding; defective equipment;

improper tires; driving without a license.

Jacob Darrell Shook, identity fraud; financial transaction card fraud.

Janice Sue Minette, three counts obstruction of an officer; public drunkenness; criminal trespass.

Bonnie Jo Allen, aggravated assault, Family Violence; two counts cruelty to children in the first degree; simple battery, Family Violence.

Sierra Paige Lingerfelt, aka Sierra Paige Worley, Sierra Page Worley, Sierra Page Lingerfelt, financial transaction card theft.

Nathan Christopher Rose, financial transaction card theft.

Shaun Keith Ewing, distribution of methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; two counts obstruction of an officer.

Jacob Robert Long, criminal damage to property in the second degree; false imprisonment; sexual battery; four counts battery; three counts interference with driver's control of vehicle; three counts reckless conduct; simple battery; simple assault; underage possession of alcohol.

Zaki Noah Yusuf, serious injury by vessel; reckless

operation of a vessel; making a false statement.

Ryan Patrick Lisenba, making a false statement.

Steve Phillips, criminal attempt to commit a felony; criminal trespass.

Rory Victor Edlin, failure to register as sex offender.

James John Diskin, burglary in the second degree; theft by receiving stolen property; making a false statement.

Keith Tanner Long, two counts aggravated assault; cruelty to children in the first degree.

Michael Jay Chrisley, burglary in the first degree.

Danny Reid Wood, driving under the influence – per se (alcohol); three counts driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); three counts driving while license suspended; open container; criminal attempt to commit a felony; disregarding traffic control device; making a false statement; use of license plate to conceal identity; operation of unregistered vehicle; failure to maintain lane.

Jeffery Scott Ferguson, driving under the influence (less safe) (combined influence); three counts driving under the influence (less safe) (drugs).

Alexander Cole Sleister, possession of a controlled substance; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce.

Cruiz-in...from Page 1A



All kinds of classics, hotrods, street rods and more can be found on display at the Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In, which this year will run Thursday, July 28, through Saturday, July 30. Photo by Lowell Nicholson.

While many vendors and spectators will be coming in on Wednesday, July 27, to bring their cars and gear, the festivities will not officially begin until Thursday morning.

The first cruise of the weekend, a beautiful 60-mile scenic view of the mountains, will pull out of the fairgrounds at 9 a.m. Another cruise will follow later in the day to tour Granddaddy Mimm's Moonshine Distillery in Blairsville, ending at Harrah's Casino in Murphy, North Carolina.

Also on Thursday, the Cruiz-In will host its annual kick-off party at Ridges Resort, featuring music by Tom Floyd Band and plenty of food to go around.

The fun does not stop there, though. Friday morning

begins bright and early at 8 a.m., where patrons can come out and enjoy a day of folk show exhibits, swap meets, mountain music and checking out automotive part vendors. Pioneer Village at the fairgrounds will also be open so that visitors can experience authentic mountain crafting.

Friday will also play host to the Cruiz-In's downtown parade at about 5 p.m., a line-up of classic cars and hot rods that is sure to turn heads and drop jaws. The parade will be followed by a party at the Lake Chatuge Lodge, which will feature live music by Midnight Express.

And Saturday, the final day, will end the weekend with a bang as the Cruiz-In hosts its Saturday Night Party Cruiz-In in downtown

Hiawassee.

"We see the spectators more and more every year," said Parrish. "We're still getting the large amount of cars every year, ending up with close to 800 cars every year."

"But it's really getting to be so big that we're filling up hotels from Hiawassee to Blairsville, all the way in Murphy, North Carolina, and Helen. But we're getting more people driving up from wherever on Saturday to bring their cars, which is always a good time."

Admissions to the Cruiz-In for spectators are \$10 per day, and children 12 and under receive free admission. The gate fee includes all nightly activities as well.

Chief...from Page 1A

Throughout his career, Chief Copeland has dedicated his life to making others feel safe, just over a year ago working his way up to being the first full-time fire chief in Towns County history.

After giving back to those in the community continuously throughout the years, all those involved with planning the birthday event felt it was time to give something back to him.

Janet Oliva, chair of the Towns County Board of Elections, planned the party with Chief Copeland's daughter, Meka Copeland. Members of Chief Copeland's staff assisted in decorating for the party, decking the space in fire truck ornaments, with red and black balloons scattered around the room.

Brenda Swanson catered the party with homemade barbecue and southern fixings, and Melissa's Custom Cakes in Blairsville made Chief Copeland's birthday cake.

"His daughter and I, we're really good friends, and we decided to throw the party for him," said Oliva. "It was a group thing, really. I brought in the county perspective, and she brought in the family perspective. We thought it would be a nice way to give back to him."

"We're celebrating him – we know him as our fire chief, and he's done so much for the county, and now he's going to be coroner. It seemed like the perfect year to do all of these things."

Chief Copeland and his guests were given the opportunity to enjoy Big H photographs throughout the years, provided by a slideshow presentation projected on a screen in the front of the room.



Fire Chief Harold Copeland celebrated his 60th birthday surrounded by his firefighters, family and friends. Happy Birthday, Chief!

From childhood to becoming a father, then a grandfather, and through his career with the fire department, all facets of Chief Copeland's life were honored that day.

"There are so many stories about Harold, I just don't know where to start," said Joan Arrowood, longtime friend of Chief Copeland. "I've known him forever. One of my favorite times with him is when I told him I was going to run for coroner and take all his signs down so I could beat him."

"I thought it was funny and we joked about it a lot. He's such a good man. He would help anyone he could, he's just one of those people."

"He's always there for people and he makes you feel safe

and welcome. There really isn't anyone quite like Harold."

As Chief Copeland opened presents from his friends and family, tears filled his eyes, as he became overwhelmed with the love and support he felt from everyone in the room.

"When I became chief, I told the boys we were going to have two F's – Fun and Family," said Chief Copeland. "And when we had the Christmas party last year, I added another F, the Future. Because that's what they are doing here, creating the future of the community."

"I'd hoped that, if nothing else, I could teach these men and women those three things. Today, I'm so touched because I feel like I finally have, seeing all of them here together. We really are one big family."