

TCSO...from Page 1A

taken by everyone to uphold the U.S. Constitution as well as the Georgia Constitution. Next, detention officers took an oath specific to their duties as jailers in Towns County, followed by sheriff's deputies with their specific oath.

"Nine years ago, when I started out I had a vision for the sheriff's office, and the people of Towns County agreed," said Sheriff Clinton. "Four times now, they've chosen to give me that opportunity to serve as sheriff."

"That's why all of you are here today, going forward with the opportunity to continue to be a part of that team. So, I just wanted to share a little bit with you, a little bit of encouragement, a little bit of what I think we need to be looking at over the next four years."

Continued Sheriff Clinton: "I think we would all agree that we've come a long way in nine years. Thanks to every one of you for being a part of that. We're state accredited, we're one of only 21 sheriff's offices in the whole state that can say that. That's something I think you should feel good about that reflects on our employees."

Sheriff Clinton encouraged everyone present to remain vigilant in their duties, and to always remember what it is they are trying to accomplish together.

"When you get up in the morning, when you put on your badge, when you put on the sheriff's uniform, you get in the sheriff's patrol car and you answer the sheriff's phone, you're representing the sheriff's office - you're representing yourself, but you're representing me," said Sheriff Clinton. "I want to ask, and I expect, that you do that in a way that the people of this county be very proud of."

The sheriff added that he looks forward to continuing to improve his office over the next four years, together with the help of his deputies, jailers and civilian staff, and with Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, who attended the oath-taking ceremony in the courthouse.

Sheriff Clinton announced that he would be re-appointing Col. Terry Conner as his chief deputy sheriff, and Commissioner Bradshaw said a few words concerning his upcoming involvement.

"I look forward to working with the sheriff, and working for all of you and with you," said Commissioner



Some family and friends gathered to witness the swearing in of their loved ones, and the event was a happy occasion for all involved with the sheriff's office.



Then-Towns County Sole Commissioner-elect Cliff Bradshaw attended the swearing in ceremony, even sharing a few words with the sheriff and his employees.

Bradshaw to those gathered. "Again, the main thing I've got to say is, thank you for representing our county in the professional manner that you do."

"We pray for your safety every day, and we take it very seriously. Public safety

is a very serious thing, and I realize that as commissioner, so we are going to work with the sheriff's department, and will help in any way possible. We have a great relationship. I'm excited about it, and I'm excited to go to work here in a few days."

Amanda Michelle Ellis, two counts burglary in the first degree.

Lisa Marie Triplett, AKA Lisa Marie Manis, two counts burglary in the first degree.

Eric Michael Stephens, two counts burglary in the first degree.

Matthew Adam Flora, aggravated stalking.

Jamie Marie Nash, criminal attempt to commit a felony; failure to maintain lane.

Willia Jean Owenby, obstruction of an officer.

Noland Winford Parker, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; reckless driving; disregarding traffic control device; failure to maintain lane; improper use of central lane; one count recidivist.

police officer; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); driving with expired license; reckless driving; speeding; improper tires.

Chelsea Nicole Smith, possession of methamphetamine; possession of a controlled substance.

Gwendalynn Fay Smith, two counts making a false statement.

Joshua June Hill, two counts entering an automobile; two counts theft by taking; criminal damage to property in the second degree.

Richard Thomas Ainbinder, theft of lost or mislaid property; possession of a controlled substance; possession of marijuana less than an ounce; possession of drug related objects; possession of firearm by convicted felon.

Indictments...from Page 1A

property improvements; theft by conversion.

Heidi Michelle Holcomb, terroristic threats; disorderly conduct.

Toby Lee Brown, three counts riot in a penal institution; aggravated assault; two counts obstruction of an officer; terroristic threats; interference with government property; battery; simple battery; criminal trespass; two counts recidivist.

Christopher Blake Carroll, two counts theft by taking; burglary; burglary in the first degree; theft by deception; theft by receiving stolen property.

Summer Marie Collier, theft by taking.

Timothy Aaron Giddens, AKA Tim Giddens, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a

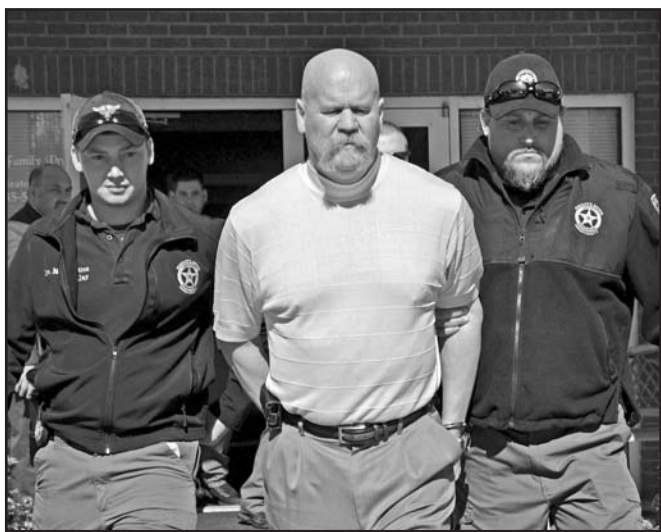
Heaton...from Page 1A

fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance and seven counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances. Three other Gowder family members were arrested in connection with the incidents in question.

When asked in November about these cases in Union County, which did not appear on either of the two sessions of the July Term 2016 Indictments of the Union County Grand Jury, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said that this office was currently going through evidence recently provided by the Union County Sheriff's Office.

He did add that there will be movement on the Gowders/Heaton cases in the "near future," though he said he couldn't comment on when that might be.

The Union County Grand Jury met recently to hand up indictments for its January Term 2017, though the *North Georgia News* had not obtained copies of those documents as of press time Monday, and was therefore unaware of any such movement in the above cases. The scope of the



Dr. Heaton was arrested in Union County on Feb. 4, 2016 at his Blairsville office by investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office.

investigation conducted by the sheriff's office dates to when Dr. David Gowder was arrested in Fannin County in April of 2015, up to and beyond the February 2016 arrests of Gowder, four of his relatives and Dr. Heaton.

According to authorities, a multiagency investigation is still ongoing in the case.

Agencies involved in the investigation at the time of the Union County arrests were the DEA Tactical Diversion Squad, the DEA Digital Forensics Lab, the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency, the Union County Sheriff's Office, and the Cherokee County NC Sheriff's Office.

Barnes...from Page 1A

decided to get married. This year would have marked their 14th anniversary as husband and wife.

As to why he dedicated decades of his life to healing, volunteering and teaching, Shirley said that's just how Jim was.

"He enjoyed it, he had a passion for it," said Shirley.

Barnes spent most of the last 20 or so years as a paramedic with Towns County EMS, which honored Barnes on the day of his interment by posting a firetruck bearing the American flag at the entrance to Mountain View Funeral Home, just off Murphy Highway.

He was extremely dedicated to his job as a paramedic, continuing to work even when his health took a turn for the worse.

Eventually, when he felt he could no longer fulfill his duties as a medical professional, he took over the Towns County Transit program, and he ran that program successfully until he could work no longer, which was about a year before he died from heart failure at his home on Jan. 5, 2016.

Towns County EMA/EMS Director Rickey Mathis remembers the passion that so well defined Barnes all his life.

"I have never seen an individual that was more dedicated to a job and coming to work," said Mathis. "He touched my heart and the hearts of many that worked there. We just wish that everybody could be that dedicated."

Barnes commuted from his home in Blairsville to his job in Towns County, and prior to starting his employment in Towns in the mid-1990s, he worked as a paramedic in Banks County, and before that as a rescue professional in Smyrna and a firefighter for the Cobb County Fire Department.

For more than 30 years, Barnes traveled all over Georgia as an instructor for GEMA, teaching field-delivered training programs to other first responders and rescue workers, courses such



Jim Barnes was a lifelong teacher. Here he is teaching CERT to high school students.

as Crash Victim Extrication and Rescue Specialist, both 16-hour classes, as well as courses in hazardous materials and incident command.

He volunteered thousands of hours over his career to helping various organizations, like the American Red Cross, and even taught CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) classes to students at area high schools.

Barnes was a lifelong student himself, having completed countless hours of training during his years as an emergency medical worker, both to stay up-to-date on the latest techniques and to learn new subjects.

The Georgia Fire Academy and National Fire Academy, the University of Georgia, POST, GEMA, FEMA and the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians are just a few of the organizations and places of learning Barnes frequented for his vast amounts of acquired knowledge.

But there was more to the man than a near encyclopedic know-how of first responder information.

In his personal time, Barnes was a collector. He collected model trains and cars, was an aficionado of emergency light bars, and loved tinkering around with Jeeps.

Following his untimely death, EMTs from Towns

and Union counties served as pallbearers at his funeral, and many of Jim and Shirley's friends left words of kindness in the online guestbook of Mountain View Funeral Home.

They remembered working with Jim and learning from him, reflecting on his kindness and the indelible mark he left upon the lives of others. One person even wrote how they remembered Jim playing "Cops and Robbers" around the neighborhood when he was a kid, and how everyone knew he played one of the good guys because he had a siren on his bicycle.

On the outside looking in, Barnes was hero and friend to the residents and first responders in a great many communities in Georgia.

Closer to home, Jim was a loving husband and lifelong lover of helping others.

The Barnes family would like to thank everyone who helped with the funeral, those from Towns and Union who took part in the procession.

And the *North Georgia News* and the *Towns County Herald* would like to thank Jim Barnes, however late it may be, for his services as a medical professional and teacher, and for helping the often helpless in the many communities in which he served.

Firewise...from Page 1A

that he will be traveling to Virginia before too long to help implement Firewise in communities between here and there along the Appalachian Mountains.

So far, Towns County boasts 20 Firewise Communities, and Elliott, president of the Towns County coalition, spoke on the need for Young Harris to commit to the program. After all, Young Harris has already experienced wildfire, some eight years ago on Cedar Knob Mountain, and the more recent wildfire at Rock Mountain burned more county acreage than the 2008 fire.

Atchison and Courey each told the council a little bit about what they saw as important aspects of the Firewise program. Atchison wants to work within the community to educate residents and tourists in Firewise ways, and Courey said the "Ready, Set, Go!" initiative was an invaluable tool for evacuation preparedness should the need ever arise.

"Anything we can do to get the message across about fire safety is what we're trying to do here," said Riley, who knows all too well that with wildfires, it's only a matter of time until the next one strikes.

The council voted unanimously to become Towns County's 21st Firewise Community.

Also in the meeting, Mayor Gibby surprised longtime City Clerk Shirley Jarrard with a certificate honoring her for 25 years of service at Young Harris City Hall.

The exact date of Jarrard's 25th anniversary was Dec. 17, 2016, and after 25 years, she still loves what she does.

"It's been a great job," said Jarrard. "I've seen three mayors, they've all been good mayors. Andrea is a workaholic - she's really out there for the city and works really hard."

Residents will be interested to know that the second reading of the height variance for the proposed student housing complex across the street from the college was tabled once more, this time to dig into the overlay district remapping option.

The variance has been on the table for several months, and has met challenges from recently retired Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, who refused to grant an exemption for the height variance due to the precedent that would set for others looking to build tall buildings in Towns, among other reasons.



Frank Riley visited Young Harris City Hall last week during the regular meeting to ask the city to become Firewise.



Marsha Elliott, along with Ann Atchison and Michael Courey of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition, spoke to the council about making Young Harris a Firewise City. Councilwoman Angi Smith is also a member of the coalition.



Mayor Gibby and Councilman Matt Miller

Also in the meeting, Councilman Matt Miller was voted once again to serve as mayor pro tempore, and the council decided which committees they would all take part in for the 2017 year.

The following council members have taken on the following committee assignments in the new year: Angi Smith, Dr. John Kelley and Stuart Miller on Water/Sewer Committee; all council members on the Administrative Committee; Samuel Leslie, Matt Miller and

Jared Champion on Street/Tree Committee; Leslie as Planning Committee Representative; Jared Champion as Library Board Representative; and City Clerk Jarrard once more assumed the role of Elections Superintendent.

Qualifying fees for the upcoming 2017 municipal election were also set in that first meeting of the year, and it will cost \$72 to qualify as a city councilperson and \$252 to qualify for the mayor candidacy.