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Chris Clinton celebrates 10 years leading sheriff's office

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

It's been 10 years since Chris Clinton became Towns County's top cop, and in that time, he has rebuilt the sheriff's office from the ground up.

After winning his first election and being sworn in to office on Dec. 14, 2007, Sheriff Clinton capitalized on his mandate to begin the long journey of transforming the Towns County Sheriff's Office into a modern, professional law enforcement agency.

Over the last decade, Clinton has carried out sweeping changes and policy reforms at the sheriff's office, with goals of improving the quality of local law enforcement, maintaining agency-wide accountability, and reinforcing positive interactions with the community.

"I truly believe the office of sheriff is where the rubber meets the road with government, and it belongs to the people, and I want the people involved," said Sheriff Clinton.

Fortunately for the county, the sheriff has surrounded himself with highly competent employees who help him to realize his vision of bringing community and law enforcement closer together.

To further his goals, Sheriff Clinton has implemented a structured chain of command for deputies and jailers, and he and his staff have established rigorous internal assessment procedures for each department, including the jail, to make certain the sheriff's office regularly meets and/or exceeds state standards.

Prospective deputies and employees face stringent hiring practices under Sheriff Clinton's leadership, and undergo constant evaluation and training once employed to ensure that the community is served by only the best and most qualified law enforcement officers.

Increased patrols of neighborhoods and businesses have resulted in a 65-percent reduction in burglaries in recent years, and the culmination of



Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton in his office inside the Towns County Courthouse.

Sheriff Clinton's hard work has led to a 30-percent drop in overall crime since he first took office in 2007.

In short, the community has never been safer, thanks to the vigilant efforts of Sheriff Clinton and his state-accredited

sheriff's office in guarding the lives and properties of Towns County residents.

And he has accomplished all of this while being a good steward of taxpayer dollars, coming in under budget year after year, despite leading his department through the period of the Great Recession.

These are just a few of the many reasons that Clinton has enjoyed such strong community support as sheriff. Having won four elections now with clear mandates, Sheriff Clinton has been able to connect with the community in ways outside of his strict legal duties.

For example, Sheriff Clinton not only watches over the county's children, but also raises money for them with his annual Empty Stocking Fund for Christmas.

He also interacts with members of the community on a personal level via the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy, which has graduated nine classes and counting since 2014.

Clinton's insistence

on meaningful community connections stems from the fact that Towns County is his home, and even before his election to the office of sheriff, he always desired to make the county a better place to live for his family and fellow residents.

Just ask his old boss, Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson, who remembers Clinton, formerly a Gilmer County detective, talking about how he wanted to make a difference back home.

"He's doing the things that he said he would like to see happen in Towns County long before he ran for sheriff," said Sheriff Nicholson. "That's the neat thing about it. I like seeing that. I've got a great deal of respect for him."

And once voters put their trust in him, Clinton worked no time putting in the work to make his county better — he hit the ground running and never looked back.

Sheriff Clinton has also embraced opportunities to

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Mayor Ordiales, Chief Smith give Hiawassee City update

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales shared the most recent ins and outs of the city with the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Jan. 26, at Sundance Grill.

Ordiales was sworn in as mayor of Hiawassee in the first mayor of Hiawassee in 2018.

"We haven't changed a lot of things, but we have changed some things around as far as structure at city hall," said Ordiales. "I felt that if we could be more efficient and manage our money better, then we should do it."

"We eliminated one position and made some changes. Cenlya Galloway is no longer the city clerk. She is now the court clerk. This means that she will take



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales

anything and everything that the police chief needs, and all of the court business.

"Bonnie Kendrick is now the city clerk and the office manager. This is working out really, really well. I think some change is good to make things

flow easier and smoother, and we're saving money."

As far as city maintenance goes, Ordiales has continued to address the issue of fire hydrants throughout the city.

Last year, the city

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Board of Health talks flu, literacy in quarterly meeting

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Health held its quarterly board meeting to discuss yearly goals and statewide programs on Thursday, Jan. 25.

Before delving into an upcoming literacy campaign to be implemented statewide, District 2 Public Health Director Dr. Pamela Logan addressed the flu outbreak that has taken hold not only in Georgia, but nationwide.

According to Dr. Logan, the CDC has recorded 414 flu-related hospitalizations throughout the state, with 12 of those hospitalizations resulting in 12 flu-related deaths.



Photo/Lily Avery

District 2 Public Health Director Pamela Logan and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

Dr. Logan attributed the large outbreak in part to the H3N2 strain of the virus, which

has become more prevalent this year.

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American Legion and Cochran Funeral Homes team up for veterans

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

Because it represents a living country, the U.S. flag is considered a living thing under federal law.

Due to this singular distinction, replica flag pins are directed to be worn on the left lapel, near the heart of the American wearing one.

When the heart of an American veteran has marched its final beat in the cadence of life, he or she may be presented with a burial flag, provided at no cost by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, that will accompany the veteran to his or her final resting place.

For a veteran who is buried, the burial flag drapes his or her casket during a

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Photo/Shawn Jarrard

L-R: Max Cochran and Brandon Burkhead of Cochran Funeral Homes, with American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 Cmdr. Mike Ayers, Past Cmdr. Don Sullivan, Jr. Vice Cmdr. Dan Navin and Adj. Jack Waters.

Motel shooting leaves one injured and one in custody

News Special
Towns County Herald

Just before midnight on Friday, Jan. 26, the Hiawassee Police Department responded to a call from the Hiawassee Budget Inn on South Main Street in reference to a subject attempting to force entry into a room.

Upon arrival, officers discovered that a shooter had been shot. The shooter had fled the scene on foot.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office and Hiawassee Police Department canvased the area attempting to locate the shooter.

The 40-year-old Lee Conard of Young Harris, was transported by air ambulance to Northeast Georgia Medical Center with a bullet wound to the arm.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation was called to investigate the shooting.

As the shooting was ending, 18-year-old Christopher Cody Wiggins, the assailant, returned to the scene and surrendered to the officers still present.

Wiggins then lead officers approximately three-quarters of a mile to where he had dropped the gun used in the incident.

Wiggins is currently being held at the Towns County Detention Center and has been charged with two counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Investigators learned that Conard sustained the gunshot wound while hiding in the bathroom with 18-year-old Abigail Petoskey of Young



Christopher Wiggins

Harris.

Wiggins shot through the bathroom door multiple times, striking Conard in the arm.

Petoskey was not injured.

It's not too late for your flu shot

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

Everyone has heard by now that the influenza virus is widespread and particularly nasty this flu season, but just how bad is it?

"The Centers for Disease Control has said that this is a severe flu season in both the spread of the influenza virus and the severity of the illness," according to Dave Palmer, public information officer and risk communicator for District 2 Public Health. "For the first time in over a decade, all 49 mainland states experienced widespread activity of influenza at the same time."

Continued Palmer: "Influenza activity in Georgia



has been widespread and the severity has been rated high by the Georgia Department of Public Health. What we are seeing in our area is the same across the state of Georgia."

Flu seasons typically run between October and

May every year, with peaks usually occurring in January and February, though the virus can strike at any time during the year, according to Palmer.

And the flu is no

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January Term 2018 Towns County Grand Jury Indictments

By News Special
Towns County Herald

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2018 of the Towns County Grand Jury.

Joshua Leon Brinson, possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance; possession of cocaine; possession of a firearm by convicted felon; possession of a firearm during commission of a felony; carrying a weapon without a license.

Samantha Jolee Dye, possession of a controlled substance.

Shannon Nicole Silvey, AKA Shawn Ashley Silvia, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; possession of a controlled substance; possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance with intent to distribute; possession

of a Schedule IV controlled substance; possession of a firearm by convicted felon; possession of a firearm during commission of a felony; possession of marijuana less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects; two counts drugs not in original container; defective windshield; tag light violation.

Edward Allen Nicholson, AKA Ed Nicholson, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects; driving without a license; tag light violation; two counts possession of a firearm during commission of a felony.

Carlos Thomas Morrow, battery, Family Violence (felony); battery, Family Violence (misdemeanor); cruelty to children in the third degree.

Robert Hoyt King, unlawful acts of violence in a penal institution; battery.

Justin Jared Gordon, false

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