

King Cove...from Page 1A

20 minutes to some round-trip emergency response times in that area, especially on Gumlog close to SR 66.

Of course, Towns County 911, Fire, the Sheriff's Office and EMS are ready to handle whatever comes their way.

"We've got a plan," said Towns County 911 Director Marty Roberts. "And though things could always change, we're prepared for those changes. We've looked at every aspect of anything that can happen here."

Roberts is optimistic that Towns County will be able to set up a special emergency landing zone for a medical helicopter in the area of the detour, to aid in the delivery of swift medical service during construction.

Furthermore, Roberts said emergency responders could potentially drive up to the barricade and transfer patients there if the need arises.

"We're going to do



Photo by Shawn Jarrard
Bridge replacement construction has already begun, and the new bridge will be higher and to the west of its former location.

whatever we have to do to get a patient where they need to be," said Roberts. "We just ask that people be patient. We're going to do everything we can to get to them as quickly and

safely as possible."

Close to 400 households will be affected by the detours on King Cove and Gumlog roads.

Ordiales...from Page 1A

These numbers are based off supply and consumption records, as well as other usage amounts.

In previous years, the city's water audit has been moderate, with scores averaging close to that of other municipalities across the state.

This year, however, the city's water audit score shot up over 10 points.

"Last year when we did our water audit, our water score was 52. This year it's 64," said Ordiales. "Now, that's out of 100, and so it may look like it's not that good – the normal score for water treatment plant across the state is in the low 50s."

So, why did the city's score jump the way it did?

According to Ordiales, over the last year, the city has been working hard to identify and repair all water leaks within the city limits.

These efforts decreased the amount of water waste throughout the city, which, in turn, led to a more efficient water system.

"So, these are the findings," said Mayor Ordiales. "We saved 50 million gallons of water last year because we fixed all of our leaks – 50 million gallons of water. We're pretty happy with that, but now, of course, we have to hit a score of 70 next year."

Also during the meeting, Mayor Ordiales announced that the City of Hiwassee, along with the City of Young Harris, would be joining the Towns County CodeRED Emergency Alert System in the near future.

"CodeRED is an initiative that the county has," said Mayor Ordiales. "That's where you get a blast that tells you if schools are closing or if there's a problem on a certain street, things like that."

"We're going to join efforts with them – (Towns County Sole Commissioner) Cliff Bradshaw, (Young Harris Mayor) Andrea Gibby and myself – to see what we can do to get as much content on there as possible."

"The reason we want to use their system is, for example, if there's a water leak, I can put out an area that our waterlines touch and send a blast out to those people letting them know what's going on."

CodeRED contacts registered subscribers by sending notifications and messages to landlines, mobile devices, email addresses and



Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales

Photo by Lily Avery



Photo by Lily Avery
Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith showing off one of the heavy-duty laptops his department acquired recently on the cheap.

even social media platforms.

To learn more about how to subscribe, visit www.townscountyga.org/emergency-alert-system.html.

In other city news, Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith shared with the council new gear that the Hiwassee Police Department recently purchased that will add to the proficiency of the department as a whole once in use – new laptops.

"We were able to get new items this month, the laptops that we keep in our cars," said Chief Smith. "The police like to have acronyms for everything, so we call these MDTs or Mobile Data Terminals. These are waterproof."

"They're long overdue. The laptops we had were office-type laptops that were refurbished when we got them. We're hoping that these last us, and they should take the use that comes in a car much better."

These new MDTs will prove to be invaluable for the police department, since most of the paperwork that coincides

with on-duty patrolling needs to be done from the officer's vehicle rather than waiting for the officer to be in the police station.

"We write all of the citations and reports on our laptops in the car," said Chief Smith. "Instead of the officer leaving the field and going upstairs to write a report, they can sit on the side of the road and still get it done and still be available for calls and such."

"This is something that we'd budgeted for, and I'm glad that we were able to get them."

The laptops are typically \$3,400 each, but Chief Smith found a deal and got all four of the MDTs for only \$2,800, saving the city more than \$11,000 on the purchase.

The result of the Tuesday, March 6, Hiwassee City Council vote on the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Franchise Fee Ordinance was not available at press time, though the ordinance was expected to receive full council support.

Homestead...from Page 1A

in Towns County qualifies for an exemption if they meet the requirements, which are available at the local Tax Assessor's Office.

Some of these requirements include having proper identification, a home on the property, permanent residency status, and residents can't be claiming a homestead exemption anywhere else in the country.

The \$10,000 exemption

is good for every permanent resident homeowner in Towns County who qualifies, though state and local governments offer additional exemptions for certain homeowners, including for those over 62 years of age, over 65, and for veterans.

Navigating the tax laws can be difficult. For assistance and the documents required to receive the maximum deduction, stop into the Tax Assessor's Office at 48 River

Street, Suite G, in Hiwassee.

"We just need folks to come on in that do not understand our taxes and homestead," said Towns County Deputy Chief Appraiser Michael West.

Homeowners who have applied for the homestead exemption in the past need not apply again, as the exemption is good year over year once acquired.

Art contest to benefit Hamilton Gardens

Hamilton Gardens invites you to submit your two dimensional art in their "As Our Gardens Grow" art contest. This contest will benefit Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. and is the forerunner to A Blooming Affair at Hamilton Gardens. On April 14 and for several weekends following, there will be plant sales and various activities to celebrate the beauty of the Gardens and share with the community what is happening as our gardens grow.

Artists are encouraged to

include one or several botanical elements in a creative yet realistic piece. The image size must be no smaller than 11" x 14" in oil, acrylic, watercolor, mixed media or drawing. Cash prizes will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winners with amounts to be announced later. The deadline to enter your art will be April 20th.

Our friends at ArtWorks in Hiwassee will be displaying all of the entries beginning April 23rd. ArtWorks Gallery is owned and operated by the Mountain Regional Arts and

Crafts Guild, Inc. a 501c-3 organization, where members may sell their work and share their expertise with students on a regular basis by teaching classes. Artists participating in Hamilton Gardens' Art Contest, with the exception of the winner, may have their art entries available for sale while the exhibition is open at ArtWorks. A complete set of rules and guidelines and an entry form are available at hamiltongardens.org. You may also call (706)970-0011 for more information.

Speech...from Page 1A

student brought something unique and interesting to the competition.

"We don't have an agenda for what these students need to speak about," said Smith to the crowd. "We just told them that, 'You're starting off – now, this may be your first speech contest, maybe your first speech ever. Speak about something you want to speak about.'"

"As you can see, we've had topics from all over the world pretty much. One thing that I always say to kids is, you cannot be passionate about public speaking until you speak confidently in something you're passionate about."

The \$500 Grand Prize and title of 2018 Speech Contest Winner went to Towns County home school student and junior Larson Church, who wowed the judges with her take on the power of gratitude.

"Thank you, thank you, and thank you for being here," said Church to those assembled. "Being grateful has the power to transform your life, to impact every part of your day, from when your feet hit the floor in the morning, to when you close your eyes to sleep at night."

Church's brother and sister also competed in the competition, and she shared how all three of them traveled to Nicaragua in December as part of a language and cultural exchange program.

The trip opened Church's eyes to how grateful she could be, even in the absence of all the modern conveniences to which she'd grown accustomed.

"It starts with the small things," said Church. "Not taking the small things for granted and being grateful for them will act as a domino effect into your lives, affecting other things, making it easier to be grateful for more things in your life as a whole."



Photo by Shawn Jarrard
Sam Fullerton, center, receiving a plaque of appreciation presented by his friends Bill "Scotty" Scott and Col. Gene Moss, in recognition of his generous work with students over the years.

Church's brother Syler, 13, finished Second Place behind his sister, and he spoke on the ultimately rewarding experience of making a habit of stepping outside one's comfort zone, something each contestant certainly did that night.

Towns County Middle School eighth-grader Bazya Smith placed third with her light-hearted speech about appreciating one's siblings, and high school freshman Vanessa Floyd finished fourth after expounding on the merits of physical therapy.

Elijah Moody of Eastgate Life Academy placed first in the sixth-grade division, and he urged people not to fear the unknown, but to instead embrace the inevitable advancements of the future.

Student speakers that evening were Bentley Floyd, Hannah Minchew, Bellarose Childs, Elijah Moody, Bazya Smith, Syler Church, Vanessa Floyd, Peyton Barrett, Liam King, Haley Zuber, Samantha Church, Larson Church, Taylor Cornett and Reace Hampton.

Senior Brooke Barrett of Towns County High took part in the speech development

and training but was unable to make the competition due to a prior engagement.

TCHS freshman Summer Rahn inspired the audience at the beginning of the competition with her rousing renditions of the national anthem and "God Bless America."

Judges that evening were Carol Jackson of North Georgia Technical College, Josh Davis of Union County Schools, Joe Buckner of North Carolina American Legion, and Crystal Clinton, wife of Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton.

The Movers and Shakers Development Team consisted of Col. Gene Moss, Dr. Amber Barrett, Ash Todd, Brandy Creel, Sam Fullerton, Dr. Aubry Samford, Andrew Smith, Lawanda Lynn, Bill "Scotty" Scott, Sue Scott and Kendall Floyd.

Kendall Floyd, who won the contest in 2017, delivered the invocation that evening, and Montana Stickeler and Amy Barrett served as the official greeters for the event, which took place inside the new Towns County Senior Center.



Photo by Shawn Jarrard
The full cast and crew of the 2018 Top of Georgia Student Speech Contest, featuring student contestants and speech development coaches.

VSOs...from Page 1A



Photo by Lily Avery
Vanessa Floyd, center, being rewarded for her stellar Third Place finish at the District Level Voice of Democracy audio essay contest

jumped at the chance to support the kids.

"We went to each one of the veterans organizations and decided that we needed to step up and offer some help," said Todd. "So, we gathered checks from each organization. They vary in amounts but together they total \$1,000. We hope that you enjoy your trip."

Coach Floyd and several players accepted the donation on behalf of the team that Tuesday, and each was grateful for the act of generosity and kindness.

In addition to expressing gratitude for the donation, Coach Floyd said that the veterans of Towns County could always be counted on for a helping hand, no matter the circumstances, and that he will forever be appreciative of their steadfast support of the local youth.

"We have had a lot of help from our community many times," said Coach Floyd. "I know that our veterans and women's auxiliary have always stepped up to the plate."

"From scholarships, I can't even begin to count how many years this has gone on.

What you veterans have done for our students and helping out with our players and so forth to go on this Savannah trip, I cannot thank you enough.

"This money will help feed these guys and help with providing rooms. And this trip is going to be a good bonding experience for our team and for our players."

"These guys get to go down there, and we remove them from their element here at school. It is a time where the team can really learn how to depend on one another."

Also on Tuesday, TCHS freshman Vanessa Floyd received a certificate in recognition of her winning submission into the Voice of Democracy Patriotic Audio Essay Competition.

Floyd came in First Place for the local leg of the competition in December, and she went on to compete in a much larger pool of entrants to win Third Place at the District Level.

The Voice of Democracy competition is a contest sponsored annually by the

Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Founded in 1947, the competition serves as the organization's primary scholarship program, awarding more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives to students every year.

"We're very proud of your accomplishments and look forward to seeing what the future holds for you," Todd said to Floyd during her recognition.

TCHS Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs expressed her utmost gratitude for the veterans that day, for their contributions, and continued interests in the students of Towns County.

"I want to thank you for everything that you do for our students and for what you've done for our country," said Dr. Hobbs.

Veterans organizations within Towns County include the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #7807 and Auxiliary, American Legion Post # 23 and Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion and American Legion Riders.