

## Drill...from Page 1A



Photo by Mark Novak

### School officials and sheriff's deputies walking the halls during the lockdown drill.

With the touch of a button on a cellphone or computer, teachers can send out an emergency alert to inform other teachers and first responders of a present danger in the schools.

"One of the teachers sent a message," said Sheriff Clinton. "The alert system worked really well."

"We realize that a situation like this is not the same level of chaos, which is why we're going to be doing

the additional level of training we do as a law enforcement agency, we try to simulate that level of stress."

The deputies, teachers and students all participate in the drills to educate themselves on what needs to be done in the event a shooter enters one of the schools.

"If a bad guy comes busting through that door, they're not going to just sit there and let them hurt them, they intend to counter as much

as possible," said Sheriff Clinton. "We're buying time and preserving lives."

As School Resource Officer Donnie Jarrard and other deputies walked up and down the hallways during the drill, they encountered locked doors, dark classrooms and complete silence from those barricaded within.

"I think it went exceptionally smooth," said Sheriff Clinton.

## Whitt...from Page 1A

have never taught the STAR Student, and I have never been the STAR Teacher, and I am humbled."

Whitt then switched gears that Friday to talk about Senior Capstones at Towns County High School.

The Senior Capstone Project in Towns County has been in place for three years and aligns with the Georgia Business Ethics Student Training program, which aims to provide students with skills needed to be successful in the workforce.

Whitt worked on developing a change in the portfolio that would better help students focus on their specific skills.

"Our hope is that students will find new relevance with

work that they are doing for their GeorgiaBEST portfolios, because they will be able to see how it aligns with their career interests in their particular pathway."

The schools hope to add value to what the students are doing, and the teachers that are mentors for the individual career pathways offered at TCHS have given great support in their ability to create opportunities for students to become more involved.

This type of program helps students find and utilize their skills to build onto their current future interests.

Whitt told the story of a student who created a table for a project as an example to help explain how students could

take their ideas and develop them into a project that could fulfill the requirements of the GeorgiaBEST program.

"To have a child who sits in my English class and does a great job but it's not his thing, to give him an opportunity to show what he can do, there's nowhere else but the Capstone where he can show this broadly," said Whitt. "It validates the talents in our kids, and that's what will launch them into their careers, and what they seek in post-secondary training internships and creating a life with it."

Whitt concluded with a thank you to the community for helping the students thrive and showing the support they need to become successful.

## TCHS students place in statewide HOSA competition



Towns County High School HOSA students who placed at the annual state leadership conference earlier this month.

### By News Office Towns County Herald

Towns County High School's local Health Occupations Students of America chapter attended the annual State Leadership Conference in Atlanta, March 7 through March 10.

More than 4,400 students and advisors across the state of Georgia attended the HealthCare Leadership Conference located at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis.

Students enjoyed educational symposiums,

conference exhibitors and workshops.

Thirty-seven members from the high school competed in various healthcare events against other future healthcare professionals, and 31 of the competitors placed in the Top 15 in the state.

Of those 31 competitors, five placed in the Top 5.

Kyra Tallent and Melissa Caldwell placed in the Top 25 in Healthcare Issues; Sara Perry placed Third in Clinical Specialty; Carly Dills placed Fourth in Clinical Specialty; and Sara

Beth Hobbs placed Fourth in Researched Persuasive Writing and Speaking.

These HOSA members get to advance on to compete at the International Leadership Conference in Dallas, Texas, from June 26 through June 30.

In addition to the top placers, Towns County's own Chase Reece was elected Georgia HOSA State Officer in the position of Reporter.

This is the first time ever that Towns County High School HOSA has had a member elected to Executive State Council.

He will advance on to the International Leadership Conference in Dallas to be an ambassador for Georgia HOSA.

"Competing at the state level has increased the students' knowledge and boosted their confidence in healthcare skills," said Sarah Vardo, Health Occupations teacher and HOSA sponsor. "I am extremely proud of this group of students."

## BRMEMC...from Page 1A

Vegas for 88 days."

Also in the meeting, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms brought everyone up to speed on the state of broadband legislation in the Georgia General Assembly.

The two bills currently being reviewed in committee conference are House Bill 887 and Senate Bill 232, both of which aim to "facilitate and incentivize adequate and expanded broadband and other communications services throughout the state," per HB 887.

Nelms said he was hopeful that the increased legislative attention being paid to broadband expansion will help rural communities like those in North Georgia to gain better access to more reliable internet services.

Furthermore, Nelms

said that he had been tapped by Georgia EMC to join a group focused on providing guidance and feedback on EMC needs in the broadband realm, alongside CEOs of Greystone Power, Flint Energies and Mitchell EMC.

More details on an upcoming TVA rate change emerged in the March 13 board meeting, as Nelms informed the board that the TVA plans to submit the rate change proposal to its board in May.

After that, BRMEMC will have until July 1 to figure out how to implement the rate change for customers.

The board was excited to discuss in the meeting a new product the EMC will be offering for members called GenerLink.

GenerLink is "a new

meter collar device that makes connecting a portable generator safe and easy," according to promotional materials, and it "detects when a generator is operating and automatically disconnects from the utility grid, eliminating dangerous feedback."

For more information, call the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC or visit GenerLink.com

Young Harris resident and EMC member Chuck Lucas attended the March 13 board meeting, and he asked the board who would be covering the cost of implementing the Hiawassee Franchise Fee Ordinance.

In his manager's report, Nelms said that he had reached out to Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales about covering the cost of any software development fees associated with collection of the fee.

## Hiawassee...from Page 1A

26 work session to learn more about ServLine, as it will be a good occasion for residents to ask questions.

"Work sessions are very interactive, and we want input from our citizens," said Ordiales. "That's their opportunity to talk to us about whatever it is that we're talking about that day."

"And if they have any items that they want to discuss,

the work session is the place to do it. Once we get to the city council meeting, it's a much more formal meeting, and it's all about approving motions that were discussed at the work session."

ServLine is not a warranty program, according to the National Rural Water Association, and is backed by Hanover Insurance Company.

"The difference is

warranty programs only provide water line and sewer line repair products and no leak adjustments," per NRW.org

City hall saved approximately 50 million gallons of water in 2017 over 2016 thanks to extensive waterline repairs ordered by Ordiales during her stretch as mayor pro tem last year.

That's 50 million gallons of water treated by the city, which cost about \$400,000 to produce only to be lost to the ground.

Added Dr. Berrong: "We are looking into grant opportunities to where possibly we can get some of this paid for."

The state requires that two public budget hearings be held before a budget can be passed.

The first hearing will be held April 9 and the second hearing will be May 7, with both meetings taking place at 6:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Office, 67 Lakeview Circle, Suite C in Hiawassee.

"If anyone wants to come and discuss the budget, they are welcome to," said Dr. Berrong. "My door is always open."

## Budget...from Page 1A

"This is completely out of our control—we have to pay it," said Dr. Berrong. "This increased our budget \$285,000 this year."

Flooding on the sports fields is a recent major concern for the school district. Left field on the baseball field, as well as the football field and an area by the stadium bleachers, all have begun to suffer from the unexpected appearance of groundwater.

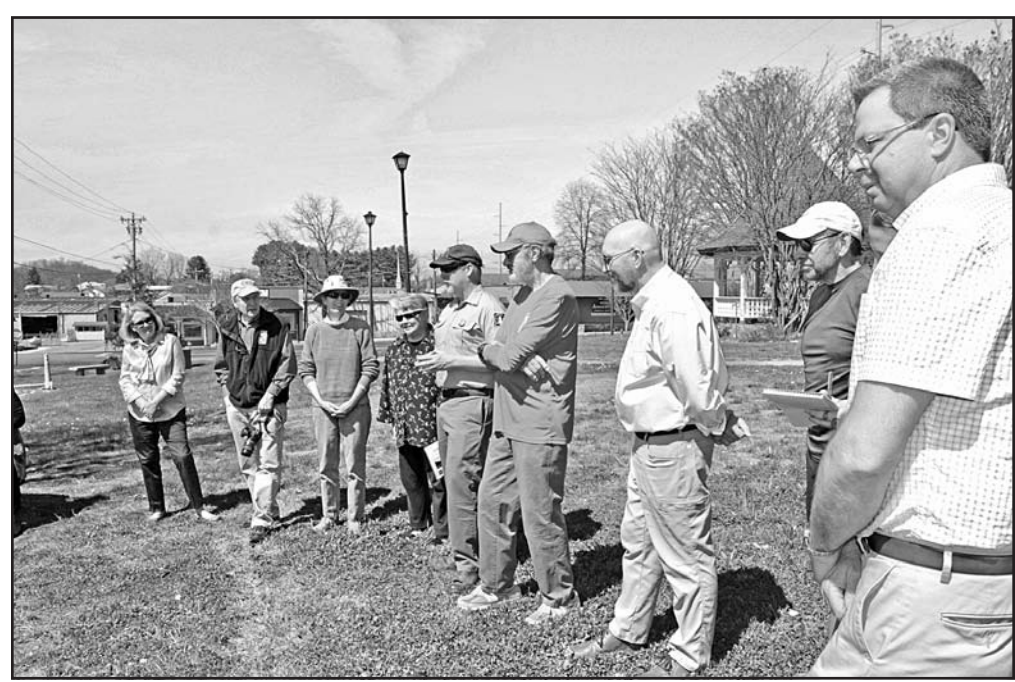
"We have not budgeted anything for the baseball field," said Dr. Berrong. "We're still waiting to see what the best course of action is for the field

... We don't want to spend a lot of money if we don't have to."

There is a possibility that the baseball field may get an artificial turf surface to correct the flooding issues.

"I'm still waiting, they are getting me a price to put drains on the field compared to what it would cost to put artificial turf on the field," said Dr. Berrong. "The artificial turf option is the most expensive option, but with that option you have no more drainage issues, you have no field maintenance, everything is taken care of for the next 10 years."

## Kiosk...from Page 1A



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and others join Hiawassee City Hall for the big unveiling of the new sign.

they sent us \$1,200. Then in the general confusion and malaise that transpired that year, it was forgotten about."

With the help of the community and local businesses, the project has finally been completed.

"We got this done," said Mitchell.

Many hikers use the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail that stretches from Springer Mountain, Georgia, to Mount Katahdin, Maine.

"The purpose of this is for the people who visit our town," said Mitchell. "We get lots of hikers through here every year."

"We want them to know how close they are to this national treasure that we call the Appalachian Trail, and how many people walk on it and how important it is to our community, and how grateful we feel to be a part of it."

Mayor Ordiales could be seen out overseeing the project during the construction of the kiosk several weeks ago.

"We are extremely proud to be an Appalachian Trail Community," said Ordiales. "We welcome the hikers here and let them leave here knowing that we like them here, we want them here, and we want them to come back and buy a house here and retire here."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw came out to welcome the hikers that visited the newest addition to the square that day.

"We have such a beautiful area to live, and I want to share it," said Bradshaw. "I'm so excited to be able to work with Liz and the City of Hiawassee



Mayor Ordiales with Dave Seddon a couple weeks back, during the construction of the sign.

as the county commissioner because we're doing so many positive things, and this is one of them."

Ranger Steverson Moffat from the U.S. Forest Service said he has been very honored to be involved with the Appalachian Trail.

"We're here to express our support and our appreciation for all the hard work that trail volunteers do to keep things looking nice," said Moffat. "It's a tremendous national resource, it's right in their backyard, and we encourage folks to get out and

explore a little bit."

Georgia Appalachian Trail Club member Jerry Carnes was on hand to promote the Appalachian Trail and support the hiking community.

"Hikers know this is a hiker friendly town," said Carnes. "We are lucky that we have 35 miles of the trail in Towns County, and it's all on U.S. Forest Service land."

"We try to promote the Appalachian Trail in every way we can. Adding this kiosk was a great way to celebrate and let folks know that it's all here."

## ACI employees reunion meeting

To all former ACI employees: we are trying to put together a reunion. Anyone interested in coming to the next planning meeting for the ACI Reunion meeting April 14, 2018, 1 PM at Brothers in Young Harris, GA.

Please let one of us know by April 11, 2017.

Please call Dayton Moss at 828-389-8956, Sue Davenport at 828-389-3559, Thelma Mull at 828-389-6086 or Herman Swanson at 706-897-1427. NT(Mar21,18)SH