

Suspects arrested for furnishing alcohol to minors at party

News Special
Towns County Herald

Two employees of the Clay County School District in North Carolina have been arrested for providing alcohol to minor students, according to authorities.

Rex Allen Cothren, 57, and Mary Veronica Cothren, 42, both of Young Harris, each received charges of maintaining a disorderly house and furnishing alcohol to persons underage, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

The minors were all students of the Clay County School District in North Carolina, according to authorities.

Towns County Sheriff's deputies responded to a residence off Julie Hollow Road in Young Harris shortly after midnight on Friday, Oct. 27, after receiving information as to a party involving underage drinking, according to the sheriff's office.

Upon arrival, deputies



Rex Cothren

located a large number of minors who had been consuming alcoholic beverages, according to the sheriff's office.

Authorities also said that several of the minors received



Mary Cothren

medical attention related to the consumption of alcohol.

The investigation is ongoing and additional charges are likely, according to the sheriff's office.

Voting...from Page 1A

will need to inquire at the Towns County Board of Elections Office.

Only eligible Hiwassee voters will be voting in this election, and the board office invites people to call ahead to check if they are a registered Hiwassee voter.

There are five candidates

running for office in the Nov. 7 Hiwassee General Election, though Amy Barrett is running unopposed: Liz Ordiales and Barry Dearing for mayor; Barrett for Post 1; Incumbent Jay Chastain Jr. and Patsy Owens for Post 2.

For the Nov. 7 Hiwassee Special Election, which is

running concurrently with the General Election, Ann Wedgwood and Nancy Noblet are each vying for the Post 5 Hiwassee City Council seat.

The Post 5 seat is part of a special election because whoever is elected, instead of the usual four-year elected term, the winner will fill the remaining two years of the term of former Hiwassee City Councilmember Ordiales.

Wreaths...from Page 1A

the actual number of wreaths to be placed by volunteers that day in Canton will be greater than 11,000.

"On National Wreaths Across America Day each December, volunteers place wreaths on individual veterans' graves in over 1,200 locations throughout the U.S., with ceremonies at sea, and at each of the national cemeteries on foreign soil," according to Knights literature.

Continues the literature: "The Knights of Columbus are dedicated to ensuring that every headstone at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton is adorned with a live holiday wreath this year. The Knights of Columbus have successfully sponsored this drive locally for several years."

Bill Lyon and Dan Poirier, both of Assembly 2563, have been working closely to make sure that this year's wreath fund drive is a success.

"We're just doing our small part to make sure these veterans aren't forgotten," said

Lyon.

Along with its association with St. Francis of Assisi in Blairsville, Assembly 2563 is also affiliated with St. Anthony Catholic Church of Blue Ridge.

The Knights ask that anyone wanting to donate to cover the cost of one or more of the 400 wreaths for this year's Wreaths Across America Day mail the following information to P.O. Box 1448, Blue Ridge, GA 30513: name, address, phone number and email address.

Donation checks should be filled out to Knights of Columbus Assembly 2563 and mailed to the same Blue Ridge P.O. Box with the information requested.

The sponsorship of one wreath costs \$15, a family sponsorship of \$60 covers four wreaths, a small business sponsorship costs \$150 and covers 10 wreaths, while a corporate sponsorship will allow for the purchase of 100 wreaths for \$1,500.

"Individual wreaths are

\$15, but for each two wreaths purchased, the Knights will receive a third wreath without charge," according to the Knights.

For people wanting to pay by credit card, they can go to www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org and select donate, then "Sponsor a wreath with a local fundraising group."

The webpage will redirect to the donation website, at which point donors should put in the Knights' group ID, which is GA0153, and follow the instructions from there.

Questions about the Wreaths Across America campaign can be directed to (770) 377-2377 or miaga30512@gmail.com.

"Anyone wishing to help with laying wreaths is recommended to be at the Georgia National Cemetery early, as parking is at a premium," according to the Knights. "Wreath laying will start at 11 a.m. ... (on) Saturday, Dec. 16."

As of press time Monday, only 15 of 400 wreaths had been sponsored through the official Wreaths Across America donation website.

Simulation...from Page 1A

employees, specifically public safety personnel, may experience on a regular basis.

"We want to keep our officers and public safety workers safe as much as we want to keep our citizens safe," said Mike Earl, the primary LGRMS Instructor. "All it takes is one wrong move, one wrong decision. When you're a public safety official and you're driving, you have to remember that the laws of the road still apply to you."

And that is what this training is all about – decision based driving. During the driving simulator, drivers are placed in real-life situations, in a life-like vehicle module, where the trainee will experience both everyday driving and emergency response situations but without the liabilities that come with being out on the road in a public safety vehicle.

While partaking in the training, drivers are put through a series of driving scenarios, chosen from more than 80 possible circumstances. If the driver makes an incorrect decision, such as running a traffic light or stop sign without making certain the intersection is clear to cross, the instructor has the ability to back up the program and replay the situation, showing the driver where the error occurred and what driving techniques would be more appropriate in that circumstance.

And, unlike real life



Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton in the sim. Photo/Lily Avery

situations, the scenario can be repeated until the proper technique is learned. That is where the true value of the program lies. It allows public safety officials to practice, make mistakes and learn, without harming themselves or those around them, making this training technique a priceless experience.

According to EMA Director Rickey Mathis and Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, this is a training program that they both hope to see all of their employees to take advantage of and learn from.

"Obviously, this helps public safety officials with decision making options to

avoid collisions to not only keep themselves safer, but keep the community safer as well," said Sheriff Clinton. "The goal is to avoid being in an accident."

"There is only one thing that I would disagree with the instructor, for me personally, he said that the worst thing that could happen is that I get killed in a car wreck. Well, to me, the worst thing that could happen is that I hurt somebody else. And I think most of our public safety officials would tell you the same thing."

"I think that any time we can bring more training to officers to help them serve the community better, it's a good thing. I fully support this."

Shop with a Hero...from Page 1A

community donations to take kids Christmas shopping, and though organizers with Shop with a Hero were able to take more than 20 kids last year, the number of children served is always subject to the amount of donations that come in.

So far, the 2017 Shop with a Hero event has yet to receive any donations, though the program is just now gearing up and looking to count on some good community support leading up to the big shopping day.

Students will make their way from Towns County Schools on Tuesday, Dec. 19 – an early release day ahead of the Christmas vacation – and they will shop for presents at the Walmart in Blairsville.

The students will be joined by volunteer chaperones from all areas of Towns County public safety, including firefighters, EMS workers and paramedics, police officers and sheriff's deputies, and other first responders.

After leaving Walmart with all their presents – and many will likely purchase gifts for their own family members – students will be treated to a lunch in Hiwassee.

"Money that is designated for Shop with a Hero goes solely for Shop with a Hero," said Rosser. "It goes solely to support the kids shopping for Christmas."

Added Rosser: "Jimmy was the sole reason this started. He was the person that wanted to make sure all the kids had a Christmas."

People interested in donating to Shop with a Hero, or who are wanting to pass along a referral for a child they may know, can contact Rosser at argibby@townscountyschools.org, by calling (706) 896-4131,



Former Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright started Shop with a Cop nearly a decade ago with Rosser. He loved making Christmas a special time for the children of Hiwassee and Towns County. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

or by mailing donations or inquiries to 1400 US Hwy 76 E, Hiwassee, GA 30546.

Donations can also be dropped off at the front desk of Towns County High School.

"Just however is easiest for them," said Rosser of the preferred donation method. "Those public safety agencies that are in the field, we all want this to continue as a community, and this is to make sure that happens."

"The only way to continue it is through donations, and we want to make sure that people understand that it all goes back to the kids for Christmas."

Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith knows well the Shop with a Cop experience, as he's been a part of it every year since Chief Wright hired him in 2010.

"It was obvious that he enjoyed it more than the children," said Smith of his former boss and mentor. "I have had a great time every

year, and it's even better as Shop with a Hero.

"One of the benefits of involving members of the other public safety organizations is that it increases the number of adults to accompany the children that we take shopping."

"Having a one-on-one experience with a 'hero' means so much to a child, and it allows us to show them how much we care about them as individuals."

"It's awesome to see the transformation of the children from the start of the trip to the end. When we ride the school bus with them to Walmart, the children often keep to themselves and are quiet."

"But by the end of the trip, they are sitting with their new friends and are sharing stories and asking questions of the adults. Shop with a Hero makes a very real positive impact on these children, and we're delighted to help keep the program going."

Copeland...from Page 1A

checked and maintained on a yearly basis.

Another major cause of structure fires is chimney and woodstove fires.

"Any time your chimney pipes or flashing gets into your attic against your rafters, that can cause homes to burn down," said Chief Copeland. "So, maintaining your chimneys and keeping your chimneys clean, and getting into your attic and looking at the condition of your ductwork and stovepipes is critical."

Continued the chief: "In the event of a chimney fire, calling 911 is a must, and before we get there, shut your dampers and cut all the air off to the stove or fireplace."

Chief Copeland also says that candles and space heaters can be dangerous if positioned too close to combustible materials in homes, such as drapes and curtains or bedding materials, and that these heating and lighting sources should be used away from anything that might catch fire.

Of course, the most immediate deterrent in the event of a fire is to have a couple of fire extinguishers in the home, which the chief says should be kept in easily accessible places near the

kitchen, and possibly near the laundry area.

Affordable fire extinguishers are available at any major retail outlet, such as Walmart and Home Depot.

As far as electrical fires, people should pay attention when lights regularly flicker in a socket, or when an outlet only works some of the time, as there could be electricity actively arcing behind the wall, said the chief.

"Another big cause of fires is careless smoking, as well," said Chief Copeland, which can occur outside the home from the embers of a cigarette flicked outdoors, as well as in bedding should residents fall asleep smoking.

And as Chief Copeland has always said, smoke alarms save lives and property, so people should have them installed in all sleeping areas and check them regularly to see that they are operational.

The Towns County Fire Department has a free smoke alarm installation program in partnership with SERVPRO and the American Red Cross, and for more information on how to take advantage of that, call Fire Station No. 1 at (706) 896-2090.

People also have to be

careful with fire outside their homes, and Chief Copeland advises that everyone looking to burn brush piles acquire a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission at (877) OK2-BURN, or (877) 652-2876.

Some things are outside of a homeowners control, like lightning strikes, though residents should stay alert during storms in case lightning travels into their home through outdoor propane lines.

People can make their homes safer against wildfires and fires from outside the home by checking out www.Firewise.org to learn more about creating a defensible space around personal property.

Towns County currently has 21 Firewise Communities, and along with being the No. 1 Firewise county in the state, Towns County Firewise is a nationally recognized program under the leadership of Frank Riley.

"Since we have implemented the Firewise Program, the number of fires in Towns County have been significantly lower than other surrounding counties that do not have a Firewise Program," according to information made available by Towns County Fire & Rescue.

HRWC...from Page 1A

Moore. "Three of the watershed's Top 10 cleanest streams are in Towns: Hightower Creek, Bearmeat Creek and Corn Creek."

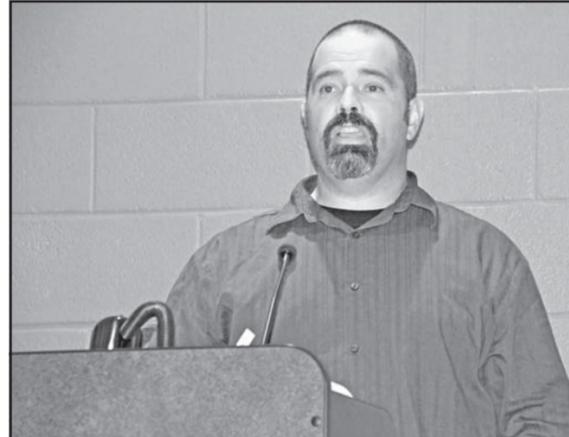
"An exception is Bell Creek. Average E. coli concentrations at our Upper Bell site are the second highest of the 42 monitored waters. No one should be swimming, and children shouldn't even be wading or playing in Bell Creek."

"HRWC will be contacting the state to request sampling and possible listing on the list of impaired waters. If they come up, we'll hopefully have them sample Bearmeat and Fodder Creek for removal from that same list, as our data indicate these waters meet the recreation standard."

Moore also said that the Hiwassee River above Lake Chatuge has occasional spikes of elevated E. coli pathogen, but that, generally, the river appears to be meeting state standards for water-based recreation in all monitored counties.

Also in the Oct. 24 meeting, the City of Hiwassee received praise for its nutrient-reduction efforts at the city wastewater treatment plant, which cleans sewage water before putting it back into Lake Chatuge.

"The HRWC is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining good water quality in rivers, lakes and streams that flow into the Hiwassee River," according to the coalition, which is funded from a variety of sources, including membership dues, fundraising events, business sponsorships, private donor contributions, local government support and grants.



HRWC Restoration Coordinator Tony Ward in the annual address. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

All told, the coalition has four main program areas: monitoring, restoration, education and community connection.

In the past year, the coalition has made great strides in all four program areas, and in the annual meeting, Moore and fellow HRWC staff Tony Ward and Raleigh Keagan highlighted the achievements in the various areas.

The coalition trained 13 new water quality monitors over the last year, reached out to a greater number of students and volunteers, and conducted or aided in a number of cleanup projects, including the upcoming Nov. 4 Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup, and much more.

At the end of the meeting, Moore asked those in attendance to rank the HRWC program areas by what each attendee thought should be the highest priority for the coalition.

The highest priority of

the most people present was the monitoring aspect of the coalition's duties, with an emphasis on expanding and sampling more streams and sites.

Other ranked priorities from the meeting included a focus on the organization's efforts toward becoming more financially sustainable, and youth education also scored high on the list of people's priorities.

The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition will be taking these priority recommendations into account as they move forward into 2018.

This year's annual meeting occurred in Murphy, North Carolina, though each year, the location of the meeting rotates between the member counties of the coalition: Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina, and Union and Towns counties in Georgia.