

# Towns County Herald

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## Forest Service gives fire update in county meeting

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall invited the U.S. Forest Service to give updates on wildfires in the surrounding areas in concerned residents during the county's monthly meeting at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center on Thursday, Nov. 17.

Before the forest service spoke to the crowd, Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland shared the county's efforts to contain and prevent the fires, thanking the community for being supportive throughout this state of crisis.

"The outpouring from the public has been unbelievable," said Chief Copeland. "Since the North

Carolina fires and all the smoke, there's fires all around here, people began bringing things to Station 1.

"I've never seen anything like it. It's been a true blessing. It's very humbling."

Chief Copeland urged everyone to remember that the county is still under a strict burn ban, prohibiting all outdoor open flames of any kind. If an open flame is spotted, Chief Copeland said to report it immediately to decrease the chance of it becoming another wildfire issue. Anyone in violation will be ticketed and fined for the nonobservance of the ban.

According to Betty Jewett, Forest Supervisor with the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Service, there have been 500 fires in the

North Georgia mountain area this year. This is more than triple of what this region sees in a typical year, even more of a reason to adhere to the strict regulations of the burn ban.

"We also went under a state of emergency yesterday (Nov. 16)," said Chief Copeland. "This brings outside resources to us to help. These folks with the U.S. Forest Service, they're doing an excellent job, and you're starting to see results just by looking outside at these mountains."

In addition to the teams from the Pacific Northwest with the forest service, the area has received aid from the City of Smyrna, Walton County, Forsyth County, Athens-Clarke County, Habersham County and the City of Covington.

See Fire, Page 6A



U.S. Forest Service officials shared specifics on the Rock Mountain Fire with county residents on Thursday, Nov. 17

## 'Turkey Trot' showcases community support for UCSO deputy Mitchell Henderson



Medal winners from the 5K race

By Todd Forrest  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – The sheriff at Saturday's Mitchell Henderson prayer walk and run read "#239 Strong," in honor of Henderson's Union County Sheriff's Office Badge Number 239 and the incredible strength he continues to exhibit during his recovery from an automobile accident on Sept. 19, exactly two months prior to the day of the race.

Proceeds from the #239 Turkey Trot 5K went to the Mitchell Henderson Benefit Account. The event featured 25 sponsors and 145 participants in the 5K and the Prayer Walk.

According to Bridget Henderson-Phillips,

See Turkey Trot, Page 6A

## Two die in two-car crash on GA Highway 515



By Charles Duncan and Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Brittish Shenis Hunter, 23, of Hiwassee, died at the scene of a two-car crash on GA 515 on Thursday, Nov. 17, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

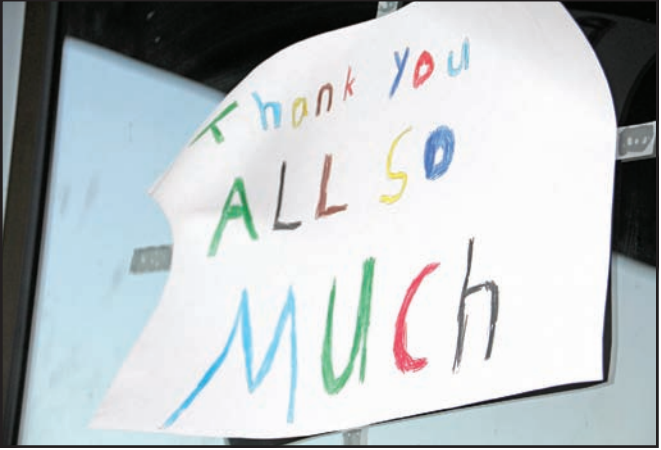
An elderly couple, Ronald and Joanne Guggisberg,

both 73, of Warne, North Carolina, was also involved in the accident, according to authorities.

Joanne Guggisberg was airlifted from the scene, authorities said, and she died the next day on Nov. 18 in Northeast Georgia Medical Center as a result of injuries sustained in the accident, according to the Ivie Funeral

See Crash, Page 6A

## Firefighters from home and afar appreciate local gratitude



A child's note taped to the entrance of the temporary lodgings for firefighters at Mount Pleasant Church of God. Firefighters here recently were just as appreciative of community support as the community was of them.

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

All it takes is a little kindness – a wave or a nod, perhaps even a thank you, to make someone feel appreciated.

Of course, Towns County residents have been doing more than that for the many firefighters who have been fighting the fire on Rock Mountain that has threatened the Tate City and Upper Hightower areas for more than a week.

The Rock Mountain Fire continues to burn, and had consumed close to 12,000 acres at press time Monday, but thanks to these men and women who came from all over the state and the country, as well as Towns County's own hometown heroes, the fire was no longer a threat to Tate City and Upper Hightower as of Saturday afternoon.

Assisting Towns County in its hours of need were eight fire departments from

Georgia, activated under the Georgia Mutual Aid Group: City of Smyrna, Walton County, Forsyth County, Hall County, Gilmer County, Athens-Clarke County, Habersham County and the City of Covington; as well as the U.S. Forest Service and hotshot teams from around the country.

"It was a great opportunity to work with different departments and the U.S. Forest Service," said Harold Copeland, who was extremely grateful for the assistance.

In response to this willingness of total strangers to fight fires on their home turf, Towns Countians reached out to give more than a wave or a nod. The residents here embraced these heroes who have been risking their lives at all hours of the day and night, feeding them, housing them, and generally asking what was in need.

"For three weeks now, See Gratitude, Page 8A

## 4-H travels to Union County for district competition

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Representatives of the Towns County 4-H program made their way to neighboring Union County to participate in the annual Northeast District Project Achievement competition on Saturday, Nov. 19, hosted at the Union County Middle School.

District Project Achievement, commonly known in the 4-H world as DPA, is a subsector of the 4-H project achievement program, one of the four core programs of the Georgia 4-H association.

According to the Georgia 4-H website, project achievement is a way for the 4-H program to help implement Georgia Performance Standards

See 4-H, Page 8A



4-H parents turned out in force to help their children represent Towns County at the districtwide speaking contest on Saturday, Nov. 19.

## Fire safety a big concern at monthly Board of Education meeting

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

With the many wildfires plaguing the mountain region, the Towns County Board of Education addressed concerns about the fires during the monthly meeting at the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium on Monday, Nov. 14.

Over the past month, many in the community have been concerned with the safety of students due to wildfires spreading to Towns County and poor air quality in the region.

However, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong wishes to assure the community that

the students are safe at the schools, and that the faculty and staff is doing everything they can to provide a healthy environment for them.

"The fire issue, I know a lot of people are concerned about it," said Dr. Berrong. "We've had a couple of phone calls asking if we're going to cancel school or not have school."

"Some of the surrounding counties have called and asked if we're considering it as well. When this all first started last week, I thought about it, but the more I thought about it I couldn't think of a single good reason to cancel

See BOE, Page 8A



Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong with Board Member Donna Hedden at the November regular meeting of the Towns County Board of Education.

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