

Burglary...from Page 1

A more complete search yielded bolt cutters, a flashlight and rolls of copper wire, which allegedly had been removed from the walls of the building. After further interview, April Michelle Matheson, 38, of Young Harris, and Brandon Cory Silvers, 26, also of Young Harris, were taken into custody and subsequently charged with Criminal Trespass, Burglary, Theft by Taking, and Criminal Damage to Property. At press time, Silvers remains in custody with a probation hold, and Matheson bonded out on Thursday, Jan. 2.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton praised the quick action of the deputies and the willingness of the citizen to report suspicious activity. He also wishes to remind the public "that this incident is an excellent example of citizens and law enforcement working together." If you see possible suspicious activity, Sheriff Clinton urges you to call (706) 896-4444, or go to the website at www.townssheriff.com and go to the "Contact Us" page. You may also call 911 to relay information concerning a crime or other emergency.

Budget...from Page 1

allotted for elections in Towns County in 2014. According to Commissioner Kendall, the increase for elections is due to the fact that "the election board is responsible for four major elections this year" and every election is costly. Not to mention, an additional increase for the cost of county utilities. This is due to the rising cost of electrical utilities since the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC has raised their rates again. Although, the county budget seems to be increasing, one thing that will not increase is the taxes for homeowners; those will remain the same as they were last year, Commissioner Kendall said. Not to mention that part

of the revenues for 2014 include grants from federal and state agencies. A Local Maintenance Improvement State Grant for Roads of \$202,402 is budgeted along with, a \$5,000 Emergency Management Agency (EMA) grant, and a Forest Service—Secure Rural Schools Grant for \$25,848. Grants such as these provide for the betterment of community services and industries. After all is said and done, the 2014 is \$300,000 more than the previous years' budget. At the conclusion of the meeting and without any objections from those in attendance, Commissioner Kendall passed the 2014 Budget for Towns County.



Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers had a fun-filled December, although we miss our fellow jeeper friends who are enjoying the winter weather in warmer climates.

We gather at least once a week for dinners at local restaurants, and we generally go on several monthly forest trail rides. This past month we never went off-road.

On Dec. 7, we had eight Jeeps in the Blairsville Christmas Parade. The Jeeps were individually decorated, and were very festive. Some sported antlers and Rudolph red noses and others were decorated with decals, lights and tinsel. We enjoyed throwing candy to the eager children.

Although our name is Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers, which recognizes our entire beautiful area, most of us live in or around Blairsville. We were a little disappointed when the name of our group was listed as Young Harris Jeepers in the newspaper article about the Christmas Parade, but we don't fret over minor things like that.

On Dec. 17, we ventured out on an afternoon and evening ride to Dahlonega, where we spent all afternoon shopping and sight-seeing. Several jeepers toured the museum and were pleasantly surprised at the quality of the display and associated film depicting the story of the first American gold rush.

We had planned to have dinner at the Smith House, but, since it was closed, we had delicious pizza at a restaurant right

on the square. Later we rode around the area and viewed the beautiful lights and then set out for home. Of course, we took the long way back, up and over the mountains to Suches and Skenah Gap.

The moon was at its fullest, and it beautifully illuminated our way on the steep winding roads. When we reached a mountain peak, we found a vista point turn-out, so we filed in and parked. Were we ever surprised and thrilled to discover that we had a wonderful view of the lights of Dahlonega from that vantage point! We decided right there and then to schedule monthly full moon rides.

Another highlight of December was getting to help a less fortunate area family. We obtained their wish lists, pooled our money and bought Christmas gifts, toys and clothing, for the family. Although we didn't meet them, how rewarding it was to know we helped put smiles on the little faces of the children!

Our first Full Moon Ride is planned for Tuesday, Jan. 14, immediately following our regular monthly meeting. We eat dinner together at 5 and have a short meeting at 6 p.m.

If you have a Jeep and are interested in our group come and meet us. Our meetings are always held the second Tuesday of each month at Steve's Steakhouse Restaurant, where we enjoy delicious food and excellent service.

Our website, www.blueridgemountainjeepers.com, shows our upcoming events and you can look at pictures of recent rides. For more details, please attend one of our meetings or call (706) 835-2390 and someone will answer your questions.

District Attorney to speak at Grassroots Meeting

Union County School District 3 residents are invited to a meeting of grassroots conservatives on Saturday, January 11 at 10 AM at the newly restored Choestoe Schoolhouse located at 1034 Collins Road. The schoolhouse is 7 miles south from the Blairsville Square on Hwy 129, left on Hwy 180 and left on Collins Road.

District Attorney Jeff Langley will be the featured speaker at this event designed to engage conservative voters throughout Union County. DA Langley is a 1983 UGA graduate and received his Juris Doctorate from the UGA School of Law in 1986. He served 12 years as ADA, Special Drug Prosecutor and Chief ADA in the Enotah District Attorney's Office before his election to District Attorney in 2010. Jeff and his family are active members of the Fellowship of the Hills Church and the Union County Community. The District Attorney will be providing an update



District Attorney Jeff Langley on his first three years in office, a look into the future and answering questions from the audience as time permits. This event is sponsored by the Union County Republicans and you are encouraged to invite your conservative relatives, friends and neighbors to this community event. For more information contact District Three Chairperson, Patrick Malone at 706-835-1308 or ptm4936@gmail.com. NJan8.22/CA

Weather...from Page 1

body is cooled at a faster rate causing the body's skin temperature to drop. This combination of high winds and cold temps creating such extreme cooling can actually freeze a person's flesh.

According to the weather service, frostbite is body tissue that has frozen and usually starts with the tips of your fingers and toes, the nose and the ear lobes. Whereas, hypothermia happens when the body's temperature drops too low, and in these extreme wind chills, both of these can happen without warning if precautions are not taken.

The wind chill warning from the National Weather Service estimates the wind chill readings across the area to be 15 to 20 degrees below zero, with some of the higher elevations approaching 30 degrees below zero.

The best advice is stay indoors and out of the frigid temperatures.

The weather service suggests staying dry—wet



Higher elevations are proving to be the coldest spots in the state. Photo/Lowell Nicholson clothing results in faster heat loss from your body; stay covered—wear mittens or gloves and a hat; at least half of your body heat is lost if your head is not covered; dress in layers—trapped air between loose fitting clothing helps to insulate; check on loved ones—especially those who are home bound, elderly, and/or disabled; bring pets in doors; stay indoors as much as possible; stay informed. Listen to NOAA Radio or local TV newscasts for additional weather details.

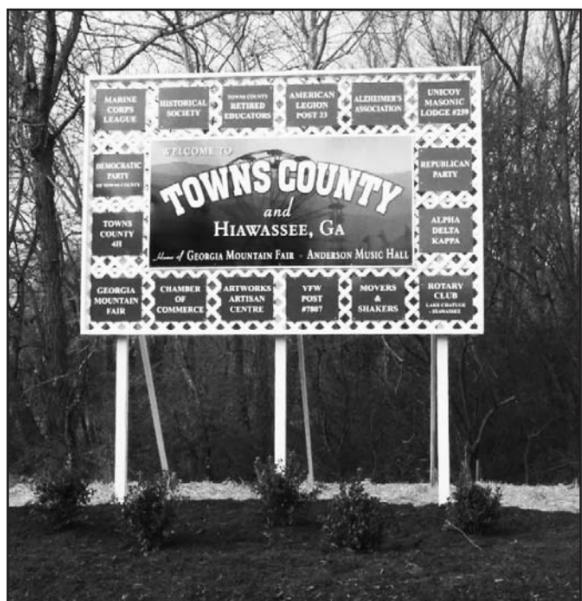
Sign...from Page 1

pletely destroyed in a single car accident. Samuel Bell of Habersham County was traveling southbound on Highway 75 South, and failed to stop at the stop sign at the intersection of Highway 76 East.

According to accident reports, Bell attempted to make the left hand turn, but was unable to control his Ford F150, the truck rolled landing on and destroying the sign which had been erected less than a year before.

The sign reconstruction was started immediately and as the Mountain Movers and Shakers did last December, they, along with sponsors and volunteers, began repairing the Welcome sign.

The Mountain Movers and Shakers, a nonpartisan conservative group, were once again assisted in the sign rebuilding by sponsors, whose plaques upon the sign have also been restored. However, Sam Fullerton, cofounder of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, stated that "this time, the sign has been reinforced" to hopefully prevent any future destruction of the sign.



A source of county pride is back. Photo/Azure Welch

In addition, to the newly designed, painted and constructed sign, landscaping has also been added around the base of the sign. The landscaping includes bushes planted at the base of the sign, and two trees, one on each side of the

sign to add to the appearance of the new sign. The sign is done in the Towns County colors of blue and white, and has 16 plaques honoring the original sponsors surrounding the larger sign in the middle which

reads: *Welcome to Towns County and Hiawassee, GA, Home of the Georgia Mountain Fair & Anderson Music Hall.* The white lettering is on a background, which displays a picture of the Ferris Wheel in front of a mountainous backdrop. Similarly, the sponsor plaques are a deep blue with white lettering.

The 16 plaques surrounding the outer edges of the sign are in honor of those who helped to sponsor the rebuilding of the sign.

The sponsors include: the Marine Corps League, the Historical Society, Towns Retired Educators, American Legion Post 23, Alzheimer's Association, Unicoy Masonic Lodge No. 259, Democratic Party of Towns, the Republican Party of Towns, Towns County 4-H, Alpha Delta Kappa, Georgia Mountain Fair, Towns Chamber of Commerce, Artworks Artisan Centre, VFW Post No. 7807, Movers & Shakers, and the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge, Hiawassee.

Thank you to all of those who helped to bring the Welcome sign back.

Cold weather safety tips save lives

By Azure Welch
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

With frigid temperatures expected to hit the North Georgia Mountains region on Tuesday morning, and the possibility of continued harsh weather, here are a few tips on how to deal with single-digit or colder temperatures.

You must take precautions to prevent frostbite. At wind chills of 15 to 30 below, exposed skin can get frostbitten in 15 minutes and hypothermia can quickly set in.

Also Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd warns that cold temperatures sometimes result in dangerous fires as a result of carelessness with home

heating devices.

If you use space heaters or wood stoves in cold weather, remember to keep them away from combustibles like curtains and bedding.

If you use a kerosene heater, make sure it has an automatic switch that shuts it off if it tips over.

Don't burn trash or cardboard in a fireplace. Make sure the damper in your chimney is open before starting a fire.

Have your home heating unit checked annually to be sure it is working efficiently and safely. Make sure all fuel-burning appliances and fireplaces are properly vented.

If you suspect a gas leak in your home, leave immediately

and call the gas company from elsewhere.

Remember to install an adequate number of smoke alarms. Most fatal fires start between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., while the family is asleep. The advance warning of a smoke alarm may mean the difference between life and death.

Nine out of 10 fire victims are already dead before the fire department is even called, mainly from smoke and toxic gases.

Be smart with supplemental heating devices: Those whose heating systems are inadequate, or who can't afford to pay utility bills, sometimes make dangerous decisions on how to stay warm, turning to space heaters,

stoves, ovens, candles and even kerosene or propane heaters meant for the outdoors.

More than 50,000 residential fires annually are caused by heating, resulting in about 150 deaths. January is the peak month for such problems. Improper use of heating devices is also a common cause of carbon monoxide poisoning and deaths.

With temperatures in the single digits, don't forget to protect against frozen pipes.

Expanding water in pipes can cause them to break. Pipes that are most likely to freeze are those exposed to severe cold, such as swimming pool lines and water sprinkler lines that are in basements, crawl spaces, garages or attics.

Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council – One year later

About this time last year, when I was Chestatee/Chattahoochee's New Kid on the Block, I wrote an article describing the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council, what it had done since its beginning in 1962; what our plans were for the future of Chest/Chatt, and described our mission statement which is: "To assist local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens."

During 2013 we worked every day to live up to our mission and we slowly began to push this once highly regarded, no longer federally funded, program back on the road to recovery by offering our citizens several highly successful programs that actually were useful and contributed to improving their way of life. During our rebuilding in 2013, we started to look under new rocks for projects rather than the same old mossy places where plentiful federal dollars used to be found. We knew that we had to think outside of the old box in order to survive and offer services that would help our communities in Northeast Georgia.

Here are a few of the successful projects and programs that Chest/Chatt provided in 2013:



Executive Director of RC&D
Frank Riley

ties – Towns County had a very successful Firewise Communities program and we decided to try to improve on it and work on wildfire safety education projects since Firewise fits in our mission of helping people improve their standard of living by helping them protect their property and homes. Since the Firewise program was started in Towns County, wildfire calls have dropped 75 percent which has saved the county, community, and citizens many dollars by reducing wildfire risks that reduce costs for firefighting and property losses. We increased the number of Firewise Communities in Towns County from three to 12 in 2013, and since the total number of Firewise Communities in Georgia is 44 our 12 made us stand out.

2. Fire Adapted Communities – The notoriety that we gained with the successful Firewise program caught national attention and Chest/Chatt was invited to develop one of eight national Fire Adapted Communities pilot projects in Towns

County. Fire Adapted Communities is a National, comprehensive wildfire preparedness program designed to prepare the entire county to survive a wildfire event. Fire Adapted includes Firewise plus many other wildfire prevention and safety components including Ready, Set, Go an evacuation plan for our citizens. Funding for the Fire Adapted program has been extended thru the end of 2015, and when the concept is fully developed in Towns in mid-2014, Chest/Chatt will spread the program across North Georgia and eventually the Southeast.

3. Wildfire, Safe, Sound and Code Smart workshop – Chest/Chatt hosted a two-day workshop sponsored by FEMA, Homeland Security, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National RC&D Council to present the new Wildland, Urban Interface, building code that the State Fire Marshall has endorsed for Georgia.

4. Forest Action Plan Workshop – Chest/Chatt hosted a one day workshop sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service at the Dillard House to give our citizens the opportunity to learn about the plans developed by the Georgia Forestry Commission for management of Georgia's publically owned forests and to learn about opportunities available to private forest land owners.

5. Mud Creek EPD 319h

grant – Chest/Chatt is administering an EPD grant in Habersham County that funds projects to improve water quality in the Mud Creek and Little Mud Creek watersheds.

6. Coldwater Creek EPD 319h grant - Chest/Chatt is administering an EPD grant in Hart and Elbert counties that funds projects to improve water quality in the Coldwater Creek watershed.

7. Town/Tesatee Creek EPD 319h grant - Water quality improvement project in White County upcoming in 2014.

8. Lady Bug Farms field day - Chest/Chatt, along with the NRCS, hosted a field day at Lady Bug Farms in Rabun County to showcase organic alternative farming methods.

9. NRCS Outreach program – Chest/Chatt hosted a one day workshop at Jaemor Farms for County Extension agents to learn about available NRCS programs.

Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council will continue to work for you, the citizens of Northeast Georgia, in 2014.

Frank Riley is the Executive Director of the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council and may be contacted at frank.cccrd@gmail.com or for more information on the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council visit our website www.chestchatt-rcd.org.