

Dr. Berrong...from Page 1A

that Dr. Berrong will assume full responsibility as Superintendent within two months," according to the board's press release. "In the coming weeks, the Board plans to work closely with Dr. Berrong and Dr. Richard Behrens, who serves as Interim Superintendent, to accomplish a variety of transi-

tion tasks."
Towns County's Board of Education thanked the employees of the school system, county residents and also "expressed gratitude to Dr. Richard Behrens for his service as Interim Superintendent during this transition period."

BOE...from Page 1A

"So, I have to have 80 different meetings just this semester - we'll have to redo that whole process again next semester. Pretty much, that's what we're doing all the time."

And High School Principal Jonathan Gibson spoke on TKES.

"We're in the middle of TKES, and you've got to stay on it or get left behind, so that does take most of our time," said Principal Gibson. "But I enjoy it, I enjoy being in the classroom and seeing the kids and the teachers, and you see good things daily. And I leave the rooms most of the times with smiles on my face, so

that's good."
Principal Gibson congratulated the Towns County Cross Country teams for their performances at the State Meet, at which the girls placed first and the boys placed second, with Hannah Whitehead winning the State Champion individual title.
"All those kids are just great kids, great students, and so we're proud of them," said Principal Gibson.

The last regular board of education meeting of 2014 will be held Dec. 8 at 7 p.m. in the Towns County Schools Auditorium.

Barnhart...from Page 1A

every positive about everything that's going on with our program," said Coach Barnhart. "We would love to stay here a long time."

Coach Blair Harrison upset more than a few people when he completed one season of football at Towns County High School and left. It was at that point that Coach Barnhart, newly hired for the assistant job, was offered the head coaching position on an interim basis.

"I was surprised it happened as fast as it did," said Coach Barnhart. "I had a feeling that maybe in the future that I may have an opportunity to become the head coach here, but I was really surprised it happened as soon as it did."
In describing that par-

ticular time, when he was first asked to become head coach until the wrap of the 2014 season, Coach Barnhart calls it a "whirlwind."

"I'm just thankful to Mr. Gibson for giving me this opportunity, and like I said, we just want to continue to build this program to get it to be one of the best programs in the state of Georgia," said Coach Barnhart.

In parting from the 2014 season, Coach Barnhart offers a simple message.

"I just want people to know that we're committed to this football program, we're committed to this school and we want to be here for a long time," said Coach Barnhart. "I appreciate everyone being welcoming to me and my family."

Thanksgiving...from Page 1A

Thanksgiving meal.
Rita Patrick handed out her homemade apple butter to all who attended.

"I did it when I lived in West Virginia," said Patrick. "We went out in the backyard Halloween night when the kids were trick-or-treating, and put a big pot out there, threw apples in, put sugar in there, put cinnamon and cloves, and we stirred for eight hours with a wooden spoon."

Now, Patrick has developed a recipe that cooks in a crockpot, which makes it a lot easier to create the quantities she needs in the right amount of time in order to give it away.

And the luncheon serves a dual purpose: to serve and let others be served.

"Four years ago, we decided we just wanted to give them a special day where we just serve them," said Varao. "We decided we're not doing a buffet line - we have a sit-down table with white table cloths, we decorate the room, and we just try to make them feel special. We make deserts and have some singing. Our pastor gives a little sermonette, and we go through town, hit different businesses, and ask them to give us door prizes, and just do stuff to make it really special."

The House of Manna is but one of North Mt. Zion's many ministries, and the food, acquired through the Feeding America program at an extreme discount, is paid for entirely by donations from church members.

"We get out 2,000 to 3,000 pounds of food every week, and we don't always have good choices of food, but

we get whatever we can," said Varao. "This particular week it will be a lot of liquid drinks, because that's what we could get. A lot of fresh vegetables, just whatever we can get from Feeding America."

Church members Joe Varao, who is Sally's husband, and Bobby Dills drive to Athens every week to pick up food for the House of Manna and its clients.

Ryan Wilson, son of North Mt. Zion Church of God Pastor Raburne Wilson, entertained lunch-goers with gospel music, playing guitar and singing silky notes of God's love.

The church has expanded considerably since its inception, and now includes a youth center behind the main church. "I've pastored here for 20 years," said Pastor Wilson. "We had a little one-room church when we first came here, a 20 by 40 church. The church was established on March 26, 1919. In the last 20 years, we've added a lot."

Pastor Wilson, along with all the cooks and volunteers from his church for the day's event, enjoys the time spent with people who may not typically get the same Thanksgiving meal that many do.

"We just invite them here for a dinner and minister to them, do some singing and love on them a little bit," said Pastor Wilson.

Each family present at the luncheon was given his or her choice of either a frozen ham or frozen turkey, and all who came that Thursday left with smiles on faces and full, happy stomachs.

City Council...from Page 1A

Georgia Mountain Laurel Magazine, Blue Ridge Country Magazine, Discover Georgia Outdoors and Southern Lifestyles.

Hiawassee is also advertised in the 2015 Fishing Regulations Guide, which is a publication that outlines the rules for fishing in the state of Georgia.

"We'll have an ad in here for 2015, which means it will be the whole 12 months," said Lee. "And the ad's cute - it says 'Quit wishing and go fishing,' and it has City of Hiawassee and the lake and the properties downtown."

Each magazine caters to a different market, with some overlap, but generally a good spread of information about Hiawassee.

"They feature a different aspect of visiting Hiawassee, whether it's fall festivals or come in the wintertime, or whatever the date of the release was," said Lee.

Lee also spoke on an upcoming event featuring high-wire acrobat Nik Wallenda.

"The official announce-

Veterans...from Page 1A

resented by his wife, Randi Carlisle; John H. Hitchcock, USA, represented by his wife, Brenda Hitchcock; Arthur F. Kiser Jr., U.S. Air Force, represented by his wife, Ernestine P. Kiser.; Leonard F. McConnell Jr., USN, represented by his wife, Ruth McConnell; Paul E. Parton, USA, represented by his daughter, Monita Parton Rodgers; Jimmie A. Taylor, USMC, represented by his wife, Oleta Taylor; and Walter L. West Jr., USN, represented by his wife, Jacqueline West.

Derrick Nolen, Towns County High School's new band director, led the band in playing the national anthem, and Mel Halfon, post commander for Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807, started the ceremony.

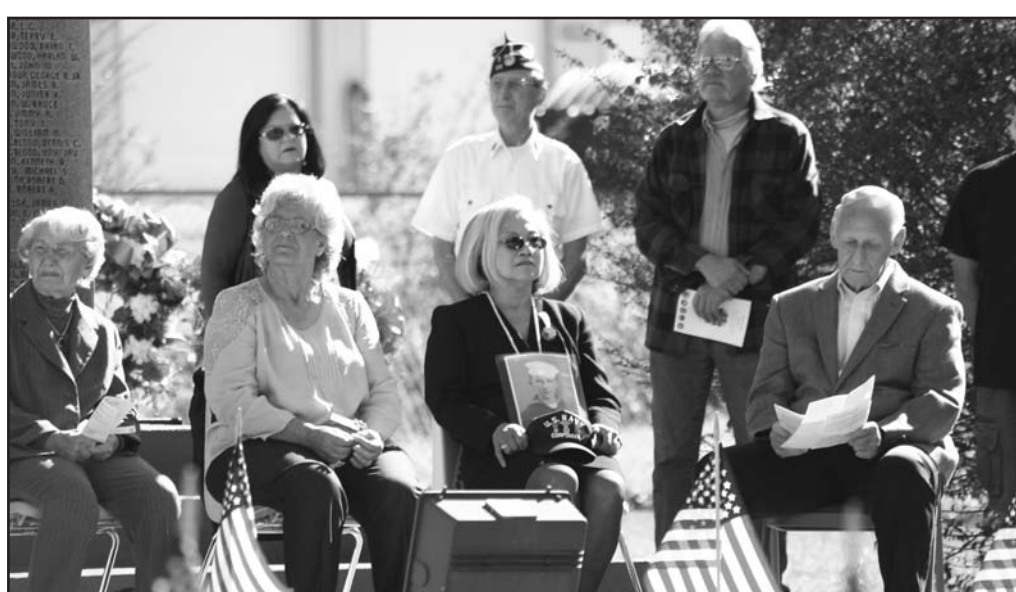
"I'm kind of excited that one day out of the year they recognize our veterans, and it's today, Veterans Day," said Halfon. "And we want to thank all of you for your service, for honoring our country and for our freedom. We appreciate all of you coming today."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall spoke on the origins of the park, recognizing members of the audience who had been instrumental in making the Veterans Park a reality 30 years ago.

David Sellers of Towns County Fire and Rescue sculpted an eagle for the central monument 30 years ago, which stands to this day as a symbol for those being honored.

"The eagle represents the strength and courage with which these soldiers fought," said Commissioner Kendall. "The eagle has an olive branch in its mouth, and this olive branch represents the peace which they fought for. And there's a flame at the bottom - the flame represents our liberty and freedom for which they gave their lives to protect."

The new monument wall was made possible by a special monument committee formed of ten veterans from the five branches of service. They started planning the wall last year, and asked the community to provide documentation for



friends and loved ones who served honorably in one of the five branches of service to be included on the wall.

Bud Johnson, retired USN and WW II veteran, served as chairman of the committee, and he approached Commissioner Kendall concerning an important oversight. Prior to the monument committee's involvement beginning last year, the criteria for being named on the monument required that a veteran be born in Towns County.

Johnson and Commissioner Kendall agreed that a new set of criteria was called for, and the monument committee met regularly to establish those criteria.

The Veterans Memorial Park Monument Committee consists of: Chairman C.E. "Bud" Johnson; Co-Chairman Billie Krueger, retired USN; Mel Halfon, retired USA; Jim Hoyt, retired USAF and commander of the American Legion Post 23; Wayne Roshaven, retired USMC and commandant of the Marine Corps League, Unicoi Detachment; Richard Holbratan, retired USN Seabee; Scott Drummond, U.S. Coast Guard; Vince Miller, retired USMC; and Commissioner Kendall, honorary committee life member.

The new criteria requires: a DD214 or Honorable Discharge certificate or separa-

tion record; death certificate; proof of residence (tax records, family records, notarized records, etc.); and \$60 to cover the cost of engraving.

Each year, eligible veterans will be added to the wall in a dedication ceremony on Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

Committee Chairman Johnson would like to thank Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton for coordinating traffic, Fire Chief Mitch Floyd for providing a fire truck to raise the flag, and other civic members present, including Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, Hiawassee Chief of Police Jimmy Wright and Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby.

Shop With A Cop just around the corner

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's beginning to look a little like Christmas in Towns County, as the air has grown colder and residents have already experienced their first snow of the season - and along with Santa, Hiawassee's Shop With A Cop program is on its way.

Shop With A Cop is a program designed to give middle school children in Towns County the best Christmas possible, and to serve as community outreach from the police department.

"We try to build relationships with these kids, have a good time with them," said Hiawassee Chief of Police Jimmy Wright, who helped start the program years ago. "From the first Shop With A Cop, I still have kids I talk to who are adults now."

Children who are selected to Shop With A Cop are treated to an excursion to Blairsville's Walmart on the last day of school, which is a half day that kicks off Christmas vacation. Each kid gets \$200 to spend on anything he or she wants.

Walmart serves as a place where kids can get the most bang for their Christmas bucks.

"Walmart has got everything," said Chief Wright. "Whether it be from clothes to food to electronics - I've seen kids buy food."

And the fun continues when the shopping is done, as children are taken to eat at a restaurant in Towns County.

Each year, donations come from individuals, businesses and organizations



Chief Jimmy Wright

throughout the community, some of them anonymous.

"We've got one donor who has made a big donation every year, but they don't want to be named at all," said Chief Wright. "They don't want any kind of credit, but if it weren't for them it would be really tough on us. We wouldn't be able to take as many kids as we do."

The police department takes donations all year for the event, and people can give money or gift cards to be used expressly at Walmart.

"Our community has just been generous with this Shop With A Cop," said Chief Wright. "I've been just amazed with how well it has gone. I didn't know if we'd make it past the first year, and it's just every year it seems to grow."

Children and the volunteers who make Shop With A Cop possible all benefit from the experience.

"Our kids are so appreciative - we've got some great kids here," said Chief Wright. "It's probably one of the best things I've had a part in while

being a law enforcement officer, and this is my 24th year. It's a blessing for us, too. I've seen officers, when maybe the \$200 wouldn't cover it, that they would pull money out of their own pocket and finish paying."

This year, 45 middle school children will be able to Shop With A Cop, and that effort, which has grown over the years, is thanks in large part to the relationships Chief Wright has built in the community.

"Every year, it's kind of just really been overwhelming, the response," said Towns County Family Connection Director Amy Rosser. "And we decided that, several years ago, we'd just really work to make sure that we're all working in coordination with each other. And so because there were several things already in place with the elementary age, we decided to focus Shop With A Cop solely with middle school students."

Each year, Rosser works with a committee of middle school teachers and administration to select the children who get to go shopping. In order to maximize the benefit of the program, a child typically only gets to shop once during their time in middle school.

"We really work to have the kids have a wonderful day, and so they're paired up with different police, the sheriff's department," said Rosser. "There's some members of DNR that come to volunteer, lawyers' offices. We just have kind of a wide range of volunteers that come for that day to make sure that the kids have that one-on-one."

Family Connection helps to coordinate many avenues of giving to children of all ages, and Shop With A Cop is just one way the organization is involved with the county's youth. Rosser urges those who would donate to contact her.

"I can work with the people who are donating to give them the best experience according to what they are looking for," said Rosser, who can be reached at (706) 896-4131, extension 1233, and by e-mail at argibby@townscountyschools.org.

"Our message in Family Connection is that we want to serve the whole family, and we want to serve the needs of the whole family," said Rosser. "We want kids to have toys and have the things they enjoy, but we also want them to have clothing, we want them to have a warm home. We want there to be food on their table. So, we want Christmas to be about serving the whole needs of the family."

Giving, it would seem, is the gift that keeps on giving, and donations can help that sentiment take root in young people.

"It's rewarding to know that the kids that are chosen, we always see kids that are grateful, appreciative," said Rosser. "And we hope that it gives them an experience that we planted a seed of not only thanksgiving and having a grateful heart, but that one day when they're older and can pay it forward, that they see what it's like to give to somebody. And we think that that's what community and giving and being part of a community is all about."

TCSO needs your help

On Sunday, Nov. 9, at 3:30 p.m. a call was received by Towns County 911 that a rock had fallen from Bell Mountain and struck a subject in the head.

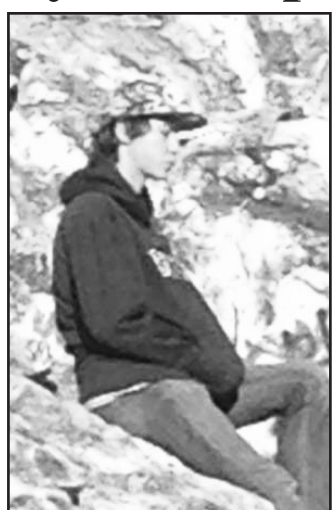
Towns County Fire and Rescue and EMS units were dispatched to the scene.

The victim, Austin James Corneck, age 17 of Clarksville, was airlifted from the scene with serious injuries.

The victim has at this point been released from the hospital.

Towns County Sheriff's Office investigators following up on the incident are asking for the public's assistance.

Anyone who has information surrounding the reported incident are asked to contact the Towns County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff's investigators



advise the picture of the subject is a person of interest.

Anyone who has information as to the identity of this person is asked to call the Towns County Criminal Investigations Division at (706) 896-4444.