

VFW Thrift Store decked with Christmas cheer

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The holidays are here, and it's never too early to start putting up Christmas decorations.

Just ask Julie Andrew, volunteer at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Thrift Store in Hiawassee.

Step into the store and

you will be greeted with two big Christmas trees decked top to bottom in an array of Christmas ornaments. Explore further and you will come across wreaths, holly and other Christmas-themed odds and ends.

Since the entire VFW Thrift Store is run by volunteers, sometimes they don't have the time or manpower to decorate as extravagantly as they have

this year. "We try, depending on volunteers, because sometimes we don't have a lot. But this year's the best year," said Andrew.

Andrew, Cindy Coker and Luann Mowrey are all volunteers who worked to decorate the VFW.

The giving spirit of Christmas stays year-round in the VFW Thrift Store. That's

because every cent that the store makes goes back into the community in some form.

"All the money we make goes right back into the community, and this time of year we just put out all our Christmas," said store manager Fred Walker, a retired Army Veteran.

Although the decorations help beautify the store, they might not last, because even the decorated Christmas trees

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Hiawassee asking state for money for Mayor's Park

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During a special called meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 17, the Hiawassee City Council made another stride toward the construction of a new Mayor's Park, as well as taking steps to ensure the quality of its public safety.

The meeting was called for two reasons, the first being to purchase or lease a new pursuit vehicle for the Hiawassee Police Department.

The second was to authorize the submission of a pre-application to the Department of Natural Resources for a State Grant for the Hiawassee Mayor's Park.

The new police vehicle came up first in the meeting.

"We have a police car that is dead. It died, so we have no choice but to lease another car or to use one similar, so we do need a motion to authorize us to purchase or lease one," said Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis.

The vehicle breakdown will leave Hiawassee with only

three pursuit vehicles for the police department.

"The problem with pursuit vehicles, whenever they're out of commission, it's a problem. The last time we ordered a vehicle, it took us three to four months. So rather than waiting on this, we want it voted on quickly because it pretty much is a have-to. So the council went ahead and authorized it so we can start to go ahead and start looking and searching. It may take us a month, it may take us three months," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil.

In addition to the pursuit vehicles, the Police Department also has a multipurpose truck. However, it does not qualify as a pursuit vehicle.

"We also have a pickup, a multi-use vehicle, but it was basically a drug forfeiture. But it helps out well for certain events to have a pickup. Somebody was using it, and we apprehended them using it, a case was made and the District Attorney did a forfeiture, and then we were given the truck back. The only issues is that

it can only be used related to drugs and drug enforcement," said Stancil.

The council carried a motion to authorize the purchase or lease of a new pursuit vehicle.

Afterward, the city passed a motion to submit a pre-application to the Department of Natural Resources for a grant to help build Mayor's Park.

"The deadline for the parks grant is Nov. 30, and it had to be approved so we could go ahead and send it in. It's a pre-application to the State Parks, under the Department of Natural Resources, requesting assistance in developing our park. So if we miss the deadline, we get nothing. We still may get nothing, but we don't know if we don't ask," said Stancil.

"I'm optimistic. It's a very political process, and we'll go to our local delegation and make some more inquiries, but if you don't ask, you'll never receive. So I'm cautiously optimistic."

Tickets...from Page 1

The special sale will only be available on Black Friday, Nov. 27, and tickets are \$38 for premium seats and \$28 for regular seating.

"Joe and I have been buddies for 25 years now," said Chesnutt. "He came out just about the same time I did, just maybe a month or two later, and we've been really good friends ever since. We've toured together off and on all these years, and it's always fun to get together and work with him."

"We have a hoot on stage. When we do these acoustic shows like this together, it's me and him and a couple of other guys backing us up, and we're all sitting there on stools playing acoustic guitars. We've all been knowing each other forever, and it's getting together with old friends that you haven't seen in a while."

The two Country Music icons are famous for their onstage rapport, which speaks to the level of friendship that they have achieved over the years.

"We always have a great time, we just hang out and we talk, and if we don't watch it, we'll end up talking more than we do singing," said Chesnutt. "It's like our audience is sitting on the bus with us, and we'll tell stories about the songs. He'll request a song of mine and I'll request some of his stuff, and sometimes we'll sing each other's songs."

Chesnutt broke out onto the Country Music scene some

25 years ago with his hit single and record by the same name, "Too Cold at Home," which launched him onto the national charts.

Since then, he's charted 30 singles, had eight No. 1 hits, put out 11 studio albums and is working on his second Greatest Hits compilation as well as a brand new studio album with all new recorded material.

And from the time he could pick up an instrument as a young boy, Chesnutt knew he wanted to be in the music business.

"I kind of planned on it that way," said Chesnutt. "I could see myself being a Country star or Rock 'n' Roll star. I loved all types of music. I grew up listening to Country Music - Hank Williams Sr., George and Merle. My momma was always playing the Rock 'n' Roll records, she loved Elvis Presley and Fats Domino, and all these guys like that. She loved Jerry Lee Lewis."

"And my brother, who's five years older than me, he was bringing home records by Aerosmith and ZZ Top, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and I was soaking all this up. All this music was going on at the same time at my house, plus, my daddy was a singer and a songwriter, played guitar, and my brother played Rock 'n' Roll electric guitar. When I was just a little bitty kid I started playing drums. I'm not saying we were like the Carter Family or anything like that, but we all loved music, and I was like a sponge, I soaked all

of those different styles up."

Chesnutt is excited to have been in the studio of late, putting the finishing touches on his new album that will be coming out next year.

"We're going to have a brand new CD with all freshly, new written Honky-Tonk Country songs," said Chesnutt. "Nothing rare, not the formula that you're hearing on the radio right now, but the type of music I've always done."

That new album doesn't have a name yet, but that's just part of the process for Chesnutt.

"After the last song is finished, and we're sitting back listening to all the playbacks, to a rough mix of the whole CD - then we'll sit there and we'll start thinking about what we should call that album," said Chesnutt. "Everybody has their input, the management, the engineer, everybody that's been involved in putting this thing together."

Chesnutt still lives in his home state of Texas, where he is raising two of his boys while his eldest son completes secondary training in California as a recently graduated member of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Joe Diffie is known for his many hits, including "Third Rock from the Sun," "Pickup Man," "Girl Ridin' Shotgun," "Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die)" and many more.

The concert will begin at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 28, in Anderson Music Hall at the Fairgrounds.

Seabees...from Page 1

from their fellow Seabee brothers.

"Mike (Ruback) was instrumental in starting (Island X-3) back in April after we talked about it back in January when we were hoping that we could get five people to start the Island," Island X-3 member Ed Crenshaw said. "Now we hope that we can (honor someone) every year and recognize them for doing a great job for the Island."

Later, Commander Hoiibraten, a Seabee for 17 years, was recognized for his hard work in getting Island X-3 off and running. He was presented with a plaque with the names of all of the Island's Plank Members (original members).

"I didn't know but I suspected something because my brother (Bart) is always up to something," Hoiibraten said. "When he asked me for a list of names, I hesitated because I'm very cautious about giving out people's names and information."

A Plank Owner or Plank Member is an individual who was a member of the crew of a United States Navy ship or United States Coast Guard cutter when that ship was placed in commission. Now the term is used for charter members of an Island.

Formed in 1942, the Seabees have a history of building bases, bulldozing and paving thousands of miles of roadway and airstrips, and accomplishing a myriad other construction projects in a wide variety of military theaters dating back to the second world war. The name "Seabee" comes from the initials "C.B." which stand for "Construction Battalion."

For security purposes, during World War II the Seabees were not allowed to disclose their location, so when corresponding they would list their location as Island X. When the Seabee Veterans of America (SVA) was established, it was

decided to call the chapters "Islands".

Island X-1 is the Atlanta chapter, Island X-2 is located in Macon, and Island X-3 is in Blairsville.

For any Seabees that seek further information regarding Island X-3, Commander Hoiibraten offered an open invitation.

"For any Navy Seabee, retired or otherwise that's interested in joining Island X-3 in Blairsville, we meet on the second Friday of each month at the Major Davenport's Veterans Center in Blairsville at 1300 hours (1 p.m.)," Hoiibraten added.



Rabies...from Page 1

Berrong of the Environmental Health Division of the Towns County Health Department, those numbers are rare.

"This year there have been three, and prior - I have been here 16 years and never had one until this year," said Berrong, who noted an uptick in rabies cases in counties south of Towns, like Hall and Forsyth counties. "I don't know if that's a trend where that started moving north or what, but it's kind of strange that we've had three in the last six months."

It's just a fact that wild animals that have never been exposed to vaccinations will be susceptible to rabies, according

to Berrong.

And the raccoon that was killed near Scataway Road and tested back in September is unlikely to be connected to this particular cat infection, said Berrong, given that the incidents occurred between four and five miles apart from each other.

At the end of the day, both Dr. Vardeman and Berrong asks that everyone with a pet dog or cat get their animals vaccinated against rabies.

"I just urge everyone - this would not have happened if they would have had that cat vaccinated," said Berrong. "Pets and domestic animals go

out, and people here live in the woods and that type thing - the odds of them getting in a fight with a rabid raccoon is not high, but it's possible. And if your animal's not vaccinated, they're going to get rabies, and we end up with this situation."

Every year in May, the Hiawassee Animal Hospital and others host rabies clinics designed to get every pet in the county vaccinated at a deeply discounted rate.

But if your pet still hasn't received its shot this year, now's the time to do it, said Dr. Vardeman.

Iwo Jima...from Page 1

Airport in particular as we passed through on the way to Vietnam. However, that's not how people are here. We never have to fear being assaulted here because of our military service," the speech read.

Gibson went on to declare how impressed he was with Towns County's patriotism.

"Since returning, I have been constantly amazed at how people here acknowledge and appreciate their veterans. Bulletin boards in public places display our pictures. Dedicated, patriotic women make quilts and present them to us in moving ceremonies. Some businessmen allow us discounts on their merchandise and some restaurants feed us a free meal on Veterans Day. Church congregations are grateful. Cashiers and other ordinary citizens thank us for

our service. So it's wonderful to be home and it's wonderful to feel appreciated," the speech read.

"Today that appreciation is set in stone for all time by Commissioner Bill Kendall, the employees and people of Towns County, as we dedicate a replica of the famous Marine Corps memorial of Iwo Jima especially to the brave men of World War II who made victory there possible, but also to all veterans of all services past, present and future," he finished.

The county also presented the proposed 2016 tentative budget.

"The last county meeting, we set the tax millage, and at that time we informed you we would be presenting a tentative budget tonight. We'll be adopting the budget in

the December meeting," said Commissioner Kendall.

Commissioner Kendall said that the 2016 budget has a few changes but is otherwise similar to the 2015 budget.

"There's been some adjustments in utilities and things. It has a property tax decrease of \$69,389. This is the sixth year in a row we've been able to reduce property taxes to county taxpayers. The budget also has a 1.32 percent reduction overall from the 2015 budget. The 2015 budget was \$9,579,733. The budget we're proposing tonight is \$9,455,101," said Commissioner Kendall.

"Overall, we're pleased with this budget. We think it's good for the taxpayers, the employees and everyone," he said.

Hiawassee...from Page 1

but for the future of our future residents," he added.

The people's ratings have yet to be tabulated, but Stancil hoped to have them counted by the end of the month.

The city council previously committed \$125,000 in SPLOST funds toward the project. In addition, TVA has committed \$15,000 towards the project as a reimbursement.

"Based on these estimated

initial costs, we're now \$34,000 short on the budget, which means we'll have to spend money we have in hand, and then over the years we will have to add to it from a budgetary standpoint. Or if we receive grants, then we will basically take that grant money," said Stancil.

He also mentioned that, previously that afternoon,

the city council approved submitting a pre-application to the Department of Natural Resources asking for \$100,000.

"It will move ahead at its own pace. You can't force the state government to do anything other than on their timeframe. We're just appreciative that they're willing to do this for us," said Stancil.

Young Harris...from Page 1

She then went on to detail reasons for her concern. While looking over schedules for the water and sewer fund, she said, she found numbers that seemed to suggest to her that the water and sewer rates had been artificially inflated.

"For example, in the water fund, there's an \$18,000 clerk salary charge to the water fund, \$38,000 of other salaries plus benefits charged to the water fund, \$2,700 of telephone expenses, \$3,600 of dues, fees and subscriptions, over \$4,000 of computer expenses, over \$500 of printing and binding, over \$2,000 of postage to the water fund," she said.

She said that it appeared as though many city expenses were being run through the water and sewer system instead of regular city operating accounts.

Voting to approve

the motion to adopt the Amendment to the City of Young Harris Water and Sewer Rate Ordinance were councilmembers Terry Ingram, Sam Leslie and John Kelley, while recently appointed Angi Smith, who works as vice president for student development at the college, voted no.

After the vote, Mayor Gibby replied to President Cox's statements.

"We actually reallocated, because it was appropriate to put things in the sewer fund, because that's where it truly belonged. It didn't belong in the general fund where it was three years ago. We allocated things and we actually looked at things appropriately for the last two years. So in the future when we have committee meetings, it would be so helpful

if one of your staff, or you, would come to the meetings, because they hashed this out in detail," she said.

"This is not something that is inflated. It is not. And we have all kinds of documentation that we've had and we've given out for the last two years about the loans that we have," she added.

Mayor Gibby explained that the motion to pass the amendment would stay on the agenda until the council voted definitively yes or no with the required four votes.

"It's also connected to our budget. So if it fails completely, our budget's going to be out of balance. So in the state of Georgia, statutorily, you're not allowed to have a budget that's out of balance. So we'll have to see what happens," she said.

Mistletoe...from Page 1

the Celebrate Autumn show in September and the Mountain Fling in June.

The show featured handmade items ranging from pottery, paintings, woodworking, fiber arts, fabric art, jewelry, wreaths, soaps, sauces and rubs, skin care, floral, yard art, furniture and holiday gifts, decorations and much more.

This year's show also included Woody Gap Schools' steel drum band that only added to the weekend's festivities, according to the Arts and Crafts Guild's Wendy Holden.

"The turnout has been fantastic and all of the vendors are happy," she said. "The steel drum band from Woody Gap was great. The kids were great, the director was great and they were embraced by everyone that was here and it was wonderful. Everything has just been perfect."

While the current construction at North Georgia Tech limited the amount of space available, the turnout

among vendors was similar to last year's, and with no complaints. The majority of the vendors reside in the Tri-State area with a handful from South Georgia and Florida.

"The feedback is, 'what is here is great,'" Holden said. "The customers are happy with the quality, the variety and the prices. I think we hit a homerun."

The show, which is in its 16th year, was originally held in Hiawassee, but as the show began to grow, it was moved to North Georgia Tech to allow an increase in the Guild's income.

Once again, the Mistletoe Market was a huge success for Hiawassee's ArtWorks Artisan Centre's Artwork Store along with its Children's Arts and Crafts Summer Program. The program, which begins when school lets out for the summer, allows every participating child the opportunity to create and be exposed to different types of art. The guild also offers

classes for adults year-round.

The Guild supports and promotes its working artist and crafter members from the North Georgia and North Carolina mountain area. The 60-plus members work in many different media and over 40 of the members are also a part of ArtWorks Artisan Centre.

ArtWorks is a retail store selling the work of Guild members, and also houses the classrooms where guild members teach, sharing their expertise with students on a regular basis.

The store is located at 232-B Chatuge Way in the Hiawassee Business Center, just east of downtown Hiawassee. On Hwy 76/75, turn at the waterfall sign beside the Dairy Queen. They are located in the second building on the left.

All the artists represented in the store are members of the Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild.

For more details, contact the store at (706) 896-0932.