

Towns County Herald

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Sheriff Henderson aims high with goals for department



Towns County Probate Judge David Rogers swore in Ken Henderson as the new sheriff of Towns County on Wednesday, Dec. 30, in the Towns County Courthouse. Photo/Submitted

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

There's a new sheriff in Towns, and soon, there will be a new look for the entire department, with redesigned patrol cars and uniforms set to take to the streets in coming weeks.

Sheriff Ken Henderson swore into his post as local Top Cop alongside other elected officials on Dec. 30, 2020, inside the courthouse. There, he promised to modernize the Sheriff's Office and do everything within his power to protect the residents, businesses and visitors of the county.

"I'm going to be out here

helping in any way that I can," Henderson said during his first week in office. "We're going to do what we told people we're going to do, and that's the job. We're not going to lose sight of the fact that the citizens of this county pay us; we're expected to do a job, and we're going

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Two perish in fire on Leisure Meadow Lane



The deadly fire at Leisure Meadow Lane in Hiawassee destroyed the home and killed two people. Photo/Submitted

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Two people died in a structure fire on Leisure Meadow Lane in the early morning hours of Friday, Jan. 8, and the cause of the

fire remains under investigation. A third person was taken to Chatuge Regional Hospital for medical observation and released later that day.

Authorities believe the victims lost to the fire were

Sylvia Yianaridis and James Henry Dietrich of the Leisure Woods subdivision, though a final determination of identity is being conducted by the Medical Examiner's Office of the Georgia

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Mayor Gibby named GMRC 'Elected Official of the Year'

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby has been named the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission 2020 Elected Official of the Year.

GMRC Executive Director Heather Feldman awarded Gibby the honor during the city meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 5, complimenting her service to the city and commission.

"The Georgia Mountains represents 13 counties in the Georgia Mountain Area and 38 municipalities," Feldman said. "Out of all those peers, my senior management team has selected Mayor Andrea Gibby to be the 2020 recipient of the Elected Official of the Year Award."

"I can't say enough great things about her. She is always there in support of our Regional Commission. We took over Workforce Development and operations in 2011, and she stepped up and said she would serve as a chairman and served for eight years while serving as mayor, having a full-time job and volunteering."

Gibby was humbled



Mayor Andrea Gibby received the Elected Official of the Year Award from GMRC Executive Director Heather Feldman on Jan. 5 at Young Harris City Hall. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

to have received the award, expressing her thanks for the help of the community and council in getting Young Harris where it is today.

"It is an incredible honor," Gibby said. "I was shocked when they told me that I had been selected. I come at this because I work with a really great council and a really good community, and it makes my job easier."

"This is for all of us, because all we do is for our city and this Enchanted Valley."

The mayor has served the city for more than a decade, in which time she has diligently worked to set the foundations for developing Young Harris at a steady pace.

"I am really proud that we have taken the slow but steady approach to planning in this valley," Gibby said. "Some people don't understand that, and we haven't gotten criticized, necessarily."

"But there have been a lot of questions about what

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Former Hiawassee man charged following DC riot

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A former Hiawassee resident was one of 13 individuals charged last week in federal court "related to crimes committed at the U.S. Capitol," the Department of Justice said in a Jan. 8 news release.

Thousands of people attended a rally in the nation's capital Jan. 6 in support of President Donald Trump, resulting in protesting that turned violent during a raid of the U.S. Capitol Building as Congress worked to certify the presidential election for Joe Biden.

Among the Trump supporters in D.C. last week was Cleveland Grover Meredith Jr., charged Jan. 7 with "making interstate threats to Speaker Nancy Pelosi." Meredith arrived after the rally, though he'd meant to be there, court documents show.

A former Atlanta resident, Meredith moved to Hiawassee in recent years, North Carolina, sometime in the last year, Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith said.

Smith learned about Meredith from his parents, who contacted the chief when Meredith first moved to town because they were concerned about their son's behavior and wanted to inform local law enforcement of his presence.

Meredith made local headlines last June when he attended the Black Lives Matter rally in Hiawassee to stage a counterprotest of sorts, bringing with him his IWI Tavor X95 rifle, the American variant of a weapon used by many in the Israeli Defense Forces.

Pulling into the rally on the Hiawassee Town Square, Meredith had brandished the weapon inside his vehicle in an apparent attempt to intimidate the BLM protesters, upsetting several in the process. Meredith was legally allowed to carry his rifle that day.

At the time, he told the Towns County Herald he'd brought the weapon "just to let those that are protesting (know)

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Cleveland Grover Meredith Jr. put Hiawassee BLM protesters on edge when he showed up with his rifle to hold a counterprotest of sorts on June 5, 2020. He was arrested Jan. 7, 2021, after communicating threats against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in Washington, D.C. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Public Health commences COVID-19 vaccine signups

Northeast Georgia Health also offering vaccination

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

District 2 Public Health has rolled out a COVID-19 vaccine registration link on its website, allowing eligible people to book an appointment for vaccination by their local Health Department.

The sign-up form can be accessed by visiting www.phdistrict2.org. However, due to demand, all appointment timeslots are currently full through February. In addition to the website, a call center number for potential signups will be made available this week.

Eventually there will be enough vaccine to cover everyone, but so far, demand for the two-dose vaccine has greatly outstripped supply, and residents are being asked to check back in with the website regularly.

"There is enormous demand for the vaccine and the available appointments did fill up quickly," Public Information Officer Dave Palmer with District 2 Public Health said. "We have been trying to hire additional staff as funding allows."

"As we add new staff and get them trained, we will make more appointments available. I would suggest that residents check the site a few times a day to see if appointments have



Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson led by example in getting his COVID-19 vaccine with other law enforcement officers during Synergy Health's clinic at Towns EMA last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

been added."

Beginning Jan. 11, those eligible to receive the vaccine are health care workers, long-term care staff and residents, police officers, firefighters, first responders, and people aged 65 and up. A wider range of individuals will become vaccine eligible as more supply comes online.

"Vaccines are for residents who live or work in the counties that comprise District 2, (including Towns County)," Public Health said of its vaccine doses Jan. 6. "Vaccines will be given by

appointment ONLY. Walk-ins will not be accepted."

Continuing, "If you have insurance, please bring your card. Insurance will help pay to offset the cost for administering the vaccine. There will be no cost to anyone to get vaccinated."

Additionally, Northeast Georgia residents aged 65 and older can try scheduling an appointment to receive a COVID vaccine at one of several events hosted by Northeast Georgia Health System.

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