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Oakes recognized for commitment as student-athlete

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald

Towns County High School Junior Kyle Oakes received groundbreaking honors recently for his success and hard work both on and off the field, becoming one of 25 Georgia High School Association student-athletes selected to the ScoutSMART All-Academic Team.

Presented by Georgia High School Football Daily, the All-Academic Team honor is a showcasing of the Indian's commitment to all aspects of his education and his personal character.

"His unselfishness is by far what makes him so special,"

Head Coach Jason Roquemore said. "It's never about him, it's really grown and matured over the last two years."

For a terrific example of Oakes' character, all one need do is examine the last two seasons. For 2019-20, Oakes never hesitated in leading his teammates as starting quarterback. It was a young team, however, and Roquemore said they really didn't have a lot to put in place around him.

When the Indians added some new players ahead of the 2020-21 season, Coach Roquemore said they received the opportunity to adjust, which included taking Oakes off the coveted quarterback

assignment.

Senior Mason Thomas had come in as a transfer student, and Roquemore said they tried some things during the preseason workouts last summer. As it turned out, moving Oakes to running back and putting Thomas in at quarterback seemed to be the right fit.

"(Oakes) was the heart and soul of our team two years ago," Roquemore said. "And this year, we had some pieces to go around, and as coaches, we are always looking to find the best combination to get you the best opportunity to be successful."

Moving from quarterback to running back was tough

at first, because signal caller was the position Oakes had played throughout his entire career. But it became easier to accept after seeing success offensively, thanks in large part to Oakes' prowess in his new position.

As an athlete this season, which ended in November, Oakes rushed for over 1,100 yards and had 14 touchdowns. As a student, Oakes achieved a 3.9 grade point average, showing he can shine both on and off the field.

With such outstanding grades and athletic performance, Oakes will likely have his pick between football and academic scholarships when he graduates
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Towns County Indian Kyles Oakes is an All Star on and off the football field, having been one of the few in the state selected for the ScoutSMART All-Academic Team. Pictured here with proud coach Jason Roquemore. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Indian fishermen win big at Lake Eufaula tourney



Towns County Indian Anglers River Huffman and Miles Donaldson, both 12, finished First Place at Lake Eufaula recently to qualify for the State Tourney in the Chatuge Anglers, Junior Division. Photo/Submitted

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

EUFULA, Ala. — Towns County seventh-grader Miles Donaldson and River Huffman took home First Place earlier this month at the Georgia Bass Nation High School Fishing tournament at Lake Eufaula.

Competing in the Junior (middle school) division of the Jan. 16 tournament, Donaldson and Huffman, aka Chatuge Anglers, set out from Lakepoint Resort State Park on the Alabama-Georgia border.

And at the end of the day, their four-fish haul netted a tournament-best 13.44 pounds that included the competition's largest single fish at 5.17 pounds.

At weigh-in, Donaldson and Huffman's 13.44-pound catch was nearly two pounds heavier than the Second-Place

finishers from Temple Middle School (11.76). Additionally, the Chatuge Anglers' biggest fish was more than 1.6 pounds larger than second place (3.54).

The First-Place finish comes on the heels of a fourth-place performance in the previous tournament at Lake Chatuge in November, where they also pulled in the event's largest fish at 3.81 pounds.

Their win has qualified the fishing team for the State Tournament, to take place in June back at Eufaula, and their goal now is to fish their way to nationals.

Progress for the rest of the season can be followed on the Georgia BASS Nation High School Fishing Facebook page.

Other local fishermen competing on Lake Eufaula were Union County High School's Will Holloway and

Coby Thompson, as well as Towns County High School's Jay and Mitchell Grimsley.

The Union County duo placed eighth in the high school division, reeling in four fish for a total of 10.74 pounds - less than a half-pound back of North Paulding's seventh-place duo.

Holloway and Thompson now sit third in the overall points standings at 569, seven points back of second-place North Hall and eight behind the top spot that is occupied by Lee County.

Meanwhile, Jay and Mitchell Grimsley placed 33rd at Lake Eufaula with a total weight of 3.04 pounds.

The TCHS duo is now 18th in points with 514 but are within three points of 15th and seven points of 12th.

The next Georgia Bass Nation event is Feb. 6 at Lake Seminole in Donaldsonville.

General public grateful for mass vaccination clinic

Local organizers administer 1,000+ shots

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE — The Jan. 22 mass vaccination clinic at the Union County Sports Center was a resounding success, so much so that organizers can't wait to host additional clinics in hopes of maximizing the life-saving potential of creating COVID-19 immunity in the community.

Sponsored by the Union County Government, Union County Emergency Management Agency, and the health departments of Union and Towns counties, the clinic featured 1,050 COVID-19 vaccinations administered over 12 hours, or roughly 15 shot appointments every 10 minutes.

"This is amazing," Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said of the endeavor. "Our No. 1 goal in Union County is to get as many people vaccinated as



Beverly Turner of Hiawassee, right, attended the COVID vaccine clinic in Union County Friday. Turner said she felt relieved knowing she's on her way to being fully vaccinated. Pictured here with Firefighter/Advanced EMT Matt Tinchner. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

quick as we can for those that want it. That's our goal, and that's what this is all about."

The socially distanced, masked undertaking was

a week in the making and required close coordination between all stakeholders to get the job done.

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Bradshaw cancels meeting for COVID; shares good budget news

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Due to the uptick in COVID prevalence regionally, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw canceled the Jan. 19 county meeting.

However, he did have good news for residents recently, announcing with the adoption of the 2021 Tentative Budget that the county had come in greatly under budget last year.

Hearing no negative feedback on the FY21 budget, Bradshaw accepted it in a meeting on Dec. 30, in which he also amended the 2020 Final Budget.

"And this is where I'm very excited," Bradshaw said. "It looks like we're going to be a little more than \$300,000 under budget (for 2020), so we're very happy about that."

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Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signed the contract Dec. 30 to hire Haynes, James and Associates for civil engineering work on the courthouse renovation and addition project. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Towns County man arrested for sexually exploiting children online

News Special
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS — Towns County resident Jamie Burnette, 49, has been charged with two counts of Sexual Exploitation of Children for possessing child sexual abuse material, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

The GBI Child Exploitation and Computer Crimes Unit brought the charges on Jan. 14, having allegedly found Burnette to be in violation of O.C.G.A. 16-12-100(b)(8) regarding Georgia's child pornography laws.

Multiple reports were received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children pertaining

to the same online user who was uploading digital sexual exploitation material to the internet.

The GBI CEACC Unit initiated an investigation into this online user, which led to the identification of Burnette.

A search warrant was executed by the GBI and the Towns County Sheriff's Office, leading to evidence related to the crime of sexual exploitation of children, and later the arrest of Burnette, who was transported to the Towns County Jail upon his arrest.

Burnette has been charged only and is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

This investigation is part of the ongoing effort by the



Jamie Paul Burnette
Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force housed within the GBI's Child Exploitation and Computer Crimes Unit, to

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Residents encouraged to drive safely as bridgework continues

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris residents and travelers of SR 66 couldn't help but notice last week that traffic had shifted onto the new bridge over Brasstown Creek on Jan. 19.

Built in 1940, the old bridge was declared by the Georgia Department of Transportation to be "structurally obsolete and functionally deficient" as far back as 2001, and active work on the project has been ongoing for the last couple of years or so.

"We actually started construction on Jan. 1 of 2020, but the project let day was

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The new SR 66 bridge over Brasstown Creek is now in service. Just watch out for that bump. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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SPORTS BASKETBALL

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Senior Center "Memory Heart" Fundraiser

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Cast Off Pet Rescue Safe Pet Project Jan. 30

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