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Matheson pleads not guilty in shooting of estranged wife

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Jason Matheson has pleaded not guilty in the Jan. 26 shooting of his estranged wife Crystal Matheson at her place of work.

An attorney with the Enotah Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office entered the plea in front of Superior Court Chief Judge Raymond George at the Towns County Courthouse on April 22.

Matheson was scheduled to appear in court as part of an official arraignment proceeding, however, he decided to waive

arraignment so did not appear, acknowledging through his attorney that he was aware of the charges against him and would be entering a plea of not guilty.

A Towns County Grand Jury indicted Matheson in March on three charges in connection with the shooting that could result in a prison sentence of up to 40 years: criminal attempt to commit murder, aggravated stalking and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Now that Matheson has been arraigned, the court will set a trial date for his case. In the meantime, he remains in custody without bond at

Towns County Jail. He has been charged until and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

His charges stem from a Jan. 26 incident in which he allegedly entered his wife's place of work at Chatuge Regional Hospital Rehabilitation & Wellness Center and fired upon her with a 9 mm handgun, striking her eight times.

At the time, Crystal Matheson, the shooting victim in the case, had a protective order in place against her husband, who was arrested in July 2020 for assaulting her by strangulation in Clay

County. He was arrested again in October last year for violating that same order.

Miraculously, Crystal survived being shot eight times and is well on her way to recovery. The surrounding community has been incredibly supportive of Crystal, helping her to raise funds to offset medical expenses and pay bills while she has been out of work recovering.

A GoFundMe account set up by one of Crystal's friends is still active at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/recovery-for-crystal-matheson>.



Jason Matheson

CDC, FDA recommend J&J vaccinations to resume

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

After a 10-day pause for safety review, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced April 23 they had determined the use of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine should resume.

Following this decision, the Georgia Department of Public Health announced Friday it would be resuming J&J vaccinations in the state after initially pausing on April 13.

"The pause was recommended after reports of six cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals

following administration of the (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine," the CDC said.

Continuing, "During the pause, medical and scientific teams at the FDA and CDC examined available data to assess the risk of thrombosis (i.e., clotting in the brain, abdomen, legs and other places), along with thrombocytopenia, or low blood platelet counts."

The FDA and CDC have reached out to providers to inform them of the potential for such adverse events and to make sure they can properly manage and recognize these events "due to the unique treatment required for these blood clots and low platelets."

Together, the federal agencies have determined that:



Dr. Janet Woodcock
Acting FDA Commissioner

J&J vaccine use should be resumed; its potential benefits

See Vaccinations, Page 8A

Bradshaw speaks on detainees, offers plethora of updates

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed guests to his regular meeting in the Towns County Courthouse April 20, where he touched on quite a few updates for those gathered that evening.

In one of the bigger pieces of news, Bradshaw said the detainee crew from the Towns County Jail would now be working five days a week, rain or shine. Previously, the crew only worked as weather permitted.

The local inmate detail began operating mid-March picking up litter on roadways and maintaining county properties as weather permitted, which has come in especially handy recently given

the yearlong absence of state detainee crews from Colwell Probation Detention Center.

Fortunately, it looks like Colwell will be able to commit a couple of crews back to the county starting in July, and to augment these crews, Bradshaw has decided to make the Sheriff's Inmate Work Program officially permanent by hiring a full-time detainee crew supervisor.

The local crew consists of minor offenders who volunteer to man the detail five days a week, with a focus on grounds maintenance of county properties, like cutting and weed eating, and on bad weather days cleaning the interiors of county facilities.

Bradshaw said he has contracted with a small company to do groundskeeping



Cliff Bradshaw
Sole Commissioner

at the courthouse only, though the detainee crew will commit

See Bradshaw, Page 8A

BOE talks REACH Georgia, holds budget public hearing

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Come May, Towns County Schools will very likely be joining nearly every other school system in the state in offering eligible eighth-graders the opportunity to earn a REACH Georgia Scholarship.

Towns County School Board members discussed the scholarship program in their

April 12 regular meeting, and Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said after the meeting that program approval is expected to occur in May.

REACH stands for Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen and is a \$10,000 need-based youth development and scholarship program "with specific financial, academic and behavior eligibility

requirements," per the Georgia Student Finance Authority.

Scholarship funding comes predominately from the REACH Georgia Foundation in conjunction with a one-time \$1,000 match per student from the local system, raised at the local level. And the \$10,000 award may even be doubled or tripled depending on the college being attended.

See Board of Ed., Page 8A

Mile Long Yard Sale a success; GMF readies for Car Show



The Mile Long Yard Sale at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds welcomed hundreds and hundreds of guests to the largest yard sale in the area on Friday and Saturday.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With spring in the air and summer on the horizon, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is in constant preparation for a full calendar of events to get the community back outside and

bring people into the county.

As part of this full slate of activities in full swing, Friday, April 23, and Saturday, April 24, the Mile Long Yard Sale returned, bringing with it thousands of people curious to see what local vendors had to offer.

Linda Tafton of Fanning County has enjoyed the event since it started, loving the varieties of goods people bring to the sale.

"We have been up to this event before, and it is great," Tafton said. "I really

See Yard Sale, Page 3A



TCES Principal Shannon Moss, TCMSD Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs, and TCHS Principal Darren Roy Perren received Certificates of Accreditation for their respective schools in the April 12 School Board meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Towns County Sheriff's Office completes image change

News Special
Towns County Herald

As promised, Sheriff Ken Henderson has taken the Towns County Sheriff's Office to another level of professionalism by making a uniform change to Blauer Uniforms.

According to Sheriff Henderson, Blauer achieves the highest quality and performance through continuous innovation in materials, design, and engineering, and has worked closely with those who use their products in the field.

Some of the benefits in changing to Blauer uniforms include professional appearance, functionality, comfort, lightweight material

See TCSO Uniforms, Page 8A



Towns County Sheriff's Deputies are now wearing these sharp-looking and versatile uniforms by Blauer, so keep an eye out for the all-new look by the Sheriff's Office. Photo/Facebook

Heaton requests second delay in reporting to federal prison

By Linda Erbele
Towns County Herald

Under order to begin a six-year stint in federal prison as early as May 1, former Blairsville family physician James Heaton has filed a motion to delay the start of his sentence by two months.

Heaton was originally set to report to prison Jan. 2, though last December, he was granted a delay of four months to give him time to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In a motion filed with the U.S. Court Northern District on April 22, he asked for another delay of two more months, reporting that the vaccine was in short supply in Union County.

When reached for comment April 23 regarding a reported vaccine shortage in District 2 health departments, either in Union County or

elsewhere, Georgia Department of Public Health Spokesperson Dave Palmer painted a different picture.

"We have plenty of vaccine at our health department," Palmer said. "We have plenty of vaccine in all of our counties."

According to the latest DPH figures, 15,100 doses of Moderna, 8,190 doses of Pfizer and 400 doses of Johnson & Johnson have been allocated to the various health providers in Union County, including pharmacies at Walmart, Walgreens, Ingles and Brasstown Drug & Gun.

As of April 25, some 13,700 doses had been administered to Union County residents, making up more than half of that allocation. The report added that 6,625 Union County residents, or 28% of the population, had been fully



James Heaton

vaccinated as of Sunday.

In his motion, Heaton asked that either his report date be delayed or that he be allowed to begin his sentence in home confinement until he can get vaccinated.

The request is similar in See Heaton, Page 8A

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Chatuge 1,923.28
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