

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Flag Day celebrated at new courthouse flagpole

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

On Friday, June 14, Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw convened a small gathering of veterans, elected officials, law enforcement and patriotic community members to observe Flag Day at the new flagpole in the courtyard of the renovated Towns County Courthouse.

Flag Day commemorates the official adoption of the United States Flag by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777, meaning Old Glory turned 247 this year.

"The symbol of the flag represents our country," Bradshaw said in welcome. "I have the utmost respect for that flag, as it represents freedom. That's what the United States is all

about, and we thank God for that."

Mel Halfon with Veterans of Foreign Wars Garrett-Owenby Post 7807 read from prepared remarks to showcase the feelings of local veteran service organizations on Flag Day.

"We have the honor today of presenting the flag of the United States of America to Towns County," Halfon said. "It's a great pleasure for us as veterans to be able to present to you the symbol of our great republic."

"We ask only that you always respect our flag and, if necessary, defend this great and beautiful flag, even at the risk of giving your own life if necessary for our nation."

VFW Post Member Dar-

ryl Boltz then raised the flag, after which veterans saluted and others placed hands over hearts to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Macedonia Baptist Senior Pastor Wade Lott led the prayer for the event, starting off with thanks to God for providing the opportunity to gather and seeking the Lord's blessing over the newly renovated courthouse.

"God, on this Flag Day, as we raise this flag, we remember those that have given their lives so that we might have the freedom to gather around this flag, to be able to gather in public assembly without concern," Lott said. "So, Father, we thank you for those who were willing to stand in the gap."

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Local Veteran Darryl Boltz raised Old Glory during the Flag Day observance called by Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw June 14. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Mason Deal to wrestle for Brewton-Parker College

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Since he was 13 years old, Towns County High School wrestler Mason Deal has had an eye on Mount Vernon's Brewton-Parker College, and last week, that dream became reality.

Despite not qualifying for the school initially, Deal went the extra mile to earn a shot through Brewton-Parker's Second-Chance Admissions program.

"At first, my GPA wasn't high enough, and I ended up getting it high enough to go there, well above the (minimum requirement)," Deal said. "And once my final transcript came through, they ended up accepting me."

Deal's journey to Brewton-Parker has been five years in the making, dating back to middle school when the southeast Georgia school first piqued his interest.

"I've always wanted to go to college and wrestle, and Brewton-Parker is a place that's always been a top priority for me."

See Mason Deal, Page 2



Towns County High Class of 2024 graduate Mason Deal will be wrestling for the Brewton-Parker College Barons this fall. Photo/Submitted

Family Fun Day supports local first responders

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Sheriff's Office and the Towns County Fire Department squared off in a competitive kickball contest on Saturday, June 15, at the Third Annual Family Fun Day fundraiser for local first responders, hosted by the nonprofit Summer Heat of Towns County.

It was a heated competition. According to Jeff Pierot, Vice President of Summer Heat of Towns County and the self-appointed Commissioner of Kickball under Yugoslavian rules, the Hose Riders filed a formal protest with the umpire, Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

"Even though they had lost demonstrably, 16-5, the Hose Riders claimed there were not enough people playing on our team who were related to law enforcement either by job, blood, marriage, court order or imprisonment, so they filed a complaint," Pierot said.

Between the formal protest "and a substantial bribe, they were awarded the trophy



A local youngster takes aim as Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw's fate hangs in the balance at the dunk tank during Family Fun Day June 15. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

instead of TCSO, and that's my official statement," said Pierot, having some fun at the expense of the Fire Department that day. Asked about the kickball controversy, Firefighter

See Family Fun Day, Page 12

TCSO Auxiliary Academy celebrates 13 graduates

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Sheriff's Office graduated 13 community members from its Auxiliary Academy in a June 11 ceremony at McConnell Baptist Church.

Chief Deputy Gene Moss officiated the ceremony, which McConnell Lead Pastor Steven Taylor opened to thank participants for their service and pray for the continued safety of everyone in the Sheriff's Office.

Graduating that Tuesday were Thomas Bowman, Danny Cornett, Jane Cornett, Leslie Howard, George Krivas, Joe Liguori, Suzan Liguori, Johnny Morris, J.J. North, Ferne O'Quinn, Carol Rosenqvist, Thomas Walker and Barry Webb.

"I am very proud of this program and what we do," Moss said of the educational outreach initiative. "We give our citizens an overall snapshot of the agency."

"They have complete access to what we do and how we do it - complete transparency because we have nothing to hide. When you have something to hide, it's time to go. And these people serve and ask for nothing in return."

Sheriff Ken Henderson has graduated many residents

since he began offering the program in 2021, his first year leading the Sheriff's Office.

Over the course of the 10-week academy, participants learn about patrol, the courtroom, the jail, fingerprinting, DNA, investigations and more, and following each segment of training, participants are given the opportunity to evaluate the program.

Most graduates elect to join the Auxiliary wing of the Sheriff's Office as volunteers to assist deputies in local events like Family Fun Day and concerts, at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, parades, and virtually any event that could benefit from an extra set of eyes and ears.

"In my 45 years of law enforcement experience, this is the best I've seen," Moss said. "This young office continues to grow and mature and has the best support staff. Everything they do is to support the uniform patrol, the backbone of the department."

"This is a great program," Maj. Eric Wood concurred. "Citizens see what we do and have a chance to see that we're not bad all the time. The program promotes a sense of community and neighborhood."

Graduate Barry Webb enlisted in the program to



The Towns County Sheriff's Office enjoyed graduating another class from the Sheriff's Office Auxiliary Academy Program on June 11. Photo by Shelly Knight

learn more about the operations of the Sheriff's Office.

"I am a staunch supporter of law enforcement," Webb said. "My father was a prosecutor in Atlanta. I wanted to identify possible areas for volunteer work or even possible employment."

Second-time graduate Jane Cornett said the program "was so good the first time" that she decided to enroll again and bring her husband

with her.

"I've learned many new things, and I loved the questions everyone asked," Cornett said.

Tom Bowman also wanted to learn more about operations and have a way to be more active in the community. He has already joined the Sheriff's Auxiliary and is looking forward to working at Anderson Music Hall during concerts.

TCSO Administrative Supervisor Vicki Ellis said she loves that the academy gives her the chance to showcase for the public just what a family the Sheriff's Office is.

"I've been around a long time, and this is the best crew ever," Ellis said. "We all work together. If someone is sick, someone from the jail fills in. If they need us, we go right over. This is more of a family than an office."

"I've been a mother, a marriage counselor, a grandmother, and just about anything someone needs me to be. I have even had a deputy stay in my basement while he was between homes. We take care of each other."

The Sheriff's Office offers the academy twice a year, and anyone 21 or older is welcome to attend. For more information, visit <https://www.townscountysheriff.org/tcsa>.

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Blue Ridge 1,686.63
Chatuge 1,925.55
Nottely 1,776.76

Civic Association Meeting June 25 See Page 2

Made in Georgia Festival June 29-30 See Page 5



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Mason Deal...from Page 1

ty," he said. "They are a Christian school located in Georgia, about four hours away, so I thought it was a perfect fit."

Deal, who will major in physical therapy, considered other out-of-state schools, but once he realized he had a shot at Brewton-Parker, it became his No. 1 goal.

"I reached out to (Brewton-Parker) during my senior year (at TCHS) and visited them," said Deal, who graduated high school in May. "It's a very beautiful school, and I just felt at home there."

"Their coaching staff has really helped me a lot. I owe them a huge thank you for helping me get into the college. I really appreciate everything they did for me."

"I want to thank God, of course, for giving me the power to get through this and put me where I am today. And my fiancée has always been there for me; she's been to every tournament and has always helped me push through it."

"I thank my grandmother and my dad for helping me

get through everything that I've been through and helping me through all the adversity and challenges."

"And I have to thank my (TCHS) coaches; I appreciate them more than you could ever imagine. They've trained me hard, and I wouldn't be where I am today without them."

Reflecting on his years at Towns County High, Deal said he'll forever cherish the time he spent with his teammates and the grueling practices.

"I'll always remember the friends I made along the way," he said. "During the practices, I tried to remind them to stay focused on God, master the boring stuff and keep repeating those reps."

Brewton-Parker College is a private Baptist college in Mount Vernon. Founded in 1904, Brewton-Parker is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Food Pantry Food Distribution

The Food Pantry hours are Monday - Thursday 9 AM- 12 PM with the exception of distribution day. The Distribution is every other Wednesday 11 AM - 2 PM.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Richard Thomas at towns.pantry@ndocsbg.org or (706) 896-4783. T(June19,A1)JH

Standard Telephone Reunion

Standard Telephone Reunion, Saturday, August 17, 2024. Habersham EMC 6135 GA 115, Clarkesville, 11 AM. \$12 per person, pay to STC Reunion, c/o Kathy Rarey, 81 Taylor's Trace, Hayesville, NC 28904 or Venmo @Janna-Manning-2 before July 27. Questions call Janna 706-768-9514. NT(June19,M1)JH

Citizens for a Better America

Are you happy about the way things are going in Cherokee County, NC, the U.S. and the world? Let's work together to create change, peacefully & patriotically!

We have an information packed meeting and guest speaker in store for you at the Citizens for a Better America monthly meeting, Thursday, June 20 at Legends Steakhouse in the private meeting room, 42 Tennessee Street, downtown Murphy, NC. Meeting starts promptly at 6:00-7:30.

This meeting is free & open to the public. For more information: Website: <http://www.CitizensForABetterAmerica.com>; Email: Contact@CitizensForABetterAmerica.com; Call: (828) 494-7403. NT(June19,Z3)CA

Children's Summer Art Classes at Artworks Artisan Center

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild is excited to announce the 2024 children's summer art program! Classes will start the week of July 8 and run for 3 weeks. The cost per child, per class is \$12 and includes all supplies. Classes will be held at ArtWorks Artisan Center, 243 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee, GA. The children's summer arts program is part of our community outreach program.

Class Schedule: July 9 - 10:30 AM to Noon - Butterfly Mobile - ages 6+. July 9 - 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Watercolor (1 of 2 sessions) - ages 6+. July 11 - 10:30 AM to Noon - Pop-up Cards (2 of 2 sessions) - ages 6+. July 11- 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Bug Magnets -ages 6+. July 16 - 10:30 AM to Noon - Wind-chimes - ages 8+. July 16 - 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Rainbow Sun-catcher -ages 8+. July 18 - 10:30 AM to Noon - Marble Mania Painting - ages 6+. July 18 - 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Bubble Painting - ages 8+. July 23 - 10:30 AM to Noon - Painted Slate Rocks- ages 6+. July 23 - 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Painted Flower on Canvas - ages 8+. July 25 - 10:30 AM to Noon - String Art - ages 8+. July 25 - 1 PM to 2:30 PM - Plastic Canvas Picture - ages 8+.

To register your child or grandchild, please visit our website www.mountainarts-crafts.org. A link for the schedule and registration paperwork are on the main page. You can drop off the registration form at the store. Payment is required at the time of registration.

Please call for ArtWorks Artisan Center at 706-896-0932 for more information. Classes are small and fill quickly.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild/Artworks Artisan Gallery is a 501 (c)3 non-profit charitable organization. NT(June19,A2)JH

Arrest and Fire Reports

Local law enforcement provides the following information for publication. Names are spelled as they were when received from the law enforcement agencies. It is important to remember that the following individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until such time as they are found guilty by a court or enter a guilty plea. Addresses of persons under arrest are no longer available from Sheriff's Office.



ARREST REPORT

Towns County Jail
Sheriff Ken Henderson

- 06/11/24 Mark Raymond Coffelt, age 46, Young Harris, GA Possession and use of drug related objects, theft by taking-felony, probation violation (when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge, willful obstruction of law enforcement officers-misdemeanor
- 06/16/24 Daniel Ward Harris, age 63, Hiawassee, GA Pending
- 06/13/24 Tricia Leigh Ingalsbe, age 55, Young Harris, GA Possession and use of drug related objects, possession of methamphetamine
- 06/13/24 Daniel Lee Dyer, age 38, Hiawassee, GA Simple assault
- 06/15/24 Jose Guadalupe Nava Sainz, age 33, Hayesville, NC Driving without a valid license (misdemeanor)
- 06/11/24 Morris Claude Sutton, age 62, Hiawassee, GA Pedestrian under the influence



Towns County Civic Association Joins Movers and Shakers, June 21

The Towns County Civic Association joins the Mountain Movers And Shakers this Friday, June 21 at 8 AM.

John Clemens, Current President, and Michael Courey, Past President, come

to us to explain their purpose and dispel the adverse myths about the association.

Get to the excellent Sundance Grill early this Friday to hear more about the Association, and how they help instill transparency to our county government, local utilities and other entities that affect the daily lives of Towns County Citizens. T(June19,F3)JH

Civic Association Membership Meeting observes 20 years, June 25

The Towns County Civic Association will be celebrating their 20th Anniversary on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 and is inviting our members and the general public. The meeting will be held at the T. C. Civic Center, 67 Lakeview Circle, Hiawassee from 6 PM -8 PM.

The evening will begin with a potluck dinner with meat and drinks provided by TCCA Board members, and side dishes and desserts brought by others attending. We will also have a large celebration cake.

Our invited speakers are the two candidates running for GA House Dist. 8: Incumbent R. Stan Gunter and Charlotte Sleczkowski (D). They will have 5 minutes to speak. Towns County Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw; DDA Denise

McKay; YH Main St. Program, Rosemary Royston; and Hiawassee City Mayor Pro Tem Jay Chastain, Jr. fill out the rest of the program.

The Towns County Civic Association, Inc. is a non-partisan/non-political association supporting the community since 2004. Our mission is to address issues and citizen concerns which affect the management, planning and development of the County. Our two cities, Hiawassee and Young Harris, and the County area are growing and our residents need to be involved in this growth.

Mark your calendar for this important meeting on the evening of the 25th of June at the Civic Center in Hiawassee, and celebrate our 20th Anniversary with us. T(June19,A2)JH

Apply Now to Add Veterans' Names to Monument

Criteria: 1-Exclusively dedicated to friends and families of Honorably Discharged Towns County Veterans who have passed away after January 1, 2012. 2-Towns County Veteran must have served in: A-US Army;B-US Navy;C-US Marine Corps;D-US Air Force; E-US Coast Guard; USSF. 3-The sponsor, IE, family member or appropriate sponsor must appear in person before our committee and present proof of Honorable Discharge and/or DD-214. In the case of Veterans who served prior to issuance of DD-214 certificate, please bring the appropriate form. 4-Proof of Towns County residency at time of passing (tax records, notarized records,driving license,etc.). 5-Death certificate, reflecting residency in Towns County at time of passing.

Please take note: A-If your loved one's name is already inscribed upon any of the Memorial walls in our small but beautiful Memorial Park, said Veteran's name will not be re-inscribed. B-Each year we create a waiting list for those who may not qualify under item #1 above. Thus far this has not been an issue. C-Inscription will be the Veteran's name and military branch, only. D- Veteran must have no record of criminal activity.

Our First of four meetings with family members in 2024 will be at the former Civic Center, 67 Lake view Circle, adjacent to polling HQ, and Courthouse. We will meet with sponsors, family members Thursday, June 13, 2024 10AM-2PM. Three alternate meetings are planned for July 11; August 8; and lastly September 12, same time frame. Thanks and God Bless America and those who have served this great nation.

Thanks and God Bless America and those who have served this great nation.



TOWNS COUNTY LIBRARIES HIWASSEE AND YOUNG HARRIS BRANCHES

SUMMER 2024 EVENTS

- Bill Packard Magician Wednesday, June 5 at 11 AM Towns County Recreation Center 150 Foster Park Rd, Young Harris
- Smithgall Woods: Snakes Alive Thursday, June 27 at 11 AM Mountain Regional Library
- Water Day Wednesday, June 12 at 11 AM Mayor's Park, Hiawassee
- Beatin' Path Rhythm Monday, July 8 at 11 AM Towns County Civic Center 67 Lakeview Circle, Hiawassee
- ZooPro Adventures Wednesday, June 19 at 11 AM Mayor's Park, Young Harris
- Smithgall Woods: Birds of Prey Thursday, July 11 at 11 AM Mayor's Park, Young Harris

Find us at...
mountainlibrary.com/events

@mountainregional
@TownsCountyLibraries

13th Annual Blairsville Pro Rodeo this weekend



Get ready, get set, the Blairsville Pro Rodeo is here. Mountain Valley Motors, our main sponsor, and numerous other sponsors will bring the International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) and National Cowboy Association (NCA) sanctioned Pro Rodeo to Blairsville.

Again, during this year's event you will be able to enter a drawing for the horseshoe toss for a chance to win a brand-new Jeep Renegade. If you get a ringer, you win! The Union County Saddle Club and Circle N Rodeo Production will present this 13th annual event. It will be held this Friday and Saturday, June 21st and 22nd under the beautiful, covered Union County arena. Gates will open each night at 6 p.m. and the action will start at 8 p.m.

The opening ceremony will be dedicated to the Military, Law Enforcement, and First Responders. There will be plenty of action going on to include Bareback Bronc Riding, Saddleback Bronc Riding, Steer Wrestling, Team Roping, Tie-Down Roping, Ladies Break-away Roping, Cowgirl Barrel Racing, and of course, everyone's favorite, Bull Riding. Top quality livestock provided by Hedrick Rodeo Company will be there to ensure some thrills and spills!

There will also be plenty of things to do for our little Cowboys and Cowgirls like the calf scramble, bounce houses, mechanical bull, and pony rides. We will also have plenty of great food along with homemade ice cream and freeze-dried fruit and other items.

Please help spread the word and come out and enjoy two great nights of Professional Rodeo excitement. Everyone will have a great seat on the stadium style bleachers but arrive early.

Advance tickets are on sale now until Friday at 5 p.m. You can save money by purchasing advanced tickets online or at our advanced ticket locations. Advanced ticket prices are \$17 for adults, \$7 for children 6-12, and children under 5 are Free. Gate



Bull Riding



Cowgirl Barrel Racing

Photos by Alysia Hargus Photography

prices are Adults - \$20, Children 6-12 - \$10 and children under 5 enter free. You can get complete information and purchase your tickets online at www.BlairsvilleProRodeo.com. Advanced ticket sales locations are Mountain Valley Motors in Blue Ridge, United Community Bank main branch in Blairsville, American Cowboy Store in Blairsville, General Supply in Blairsville, and Nelson Tractor Company in Blairsville.

A big thank you to the Blairsville Union County

Chamber of Commerce for all your assistance.

Come out and enjoy two great nights of excitement. The arena and show grounds are located on the corner of Hwy. 515 and 325 in Blairsville.

For complete information and photos of last year's rodeo action, visit the official website at www.BlairsvilleProRodeo.com or on Facebook. See ya'll there!



Towns County Lions Host Summer Heat Leaders



The Towns County Lions were fortunate to receive a well-timed visit at their most recent meeting June 11 from local Summer Heat project reps, Wayne Fiorito and Jeff Pierot, just before the Second Annual Family Fun Day at Foster Park, Saturday, June 15.

Summer Heat of Towns County's mission is to provide financial assistance and support to sick or injured First Responders in Towns County based on their individual emergency health needs.

Our First Responders are law enforcement personnel, firefighters, emergency medical services technicians, and 911 dispatchers who serve as our first line of defense that keeps us safe as they stay ready and vigilant 24/7 in case of emergencies.

Summer Heat of Towns County was established in 2023 by several concerned



Jeff Pierot and Wayne Fiorito of Towns County Summer Heat

local citizens as a 501-C-3 not-for-profit charitable organization. It is all-volunteer and receives no taxpayer funds, only voluntary contributions and donations. For more information on how you can become more involved, please check the website, summerheatoftownscounty.org and the Facebook page, Summer Heat of Towns County. The email address is summerheatoftownscounty@yahoo.com.

All readers are invited to the Made in Georgia Festival at Foster Park, June 29 and 30 where the fabulous, famous and fantastic Gutenstein Lions Funnel Cake Trailer will be once again be open for business.

Don't forget the annual Fireworks Festivities at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds July 4, 3-11 PM as we celebrate our national birthday! See you there!

Flag Day...from Page 1



2024 Flag Day attendees were Wade Lott, Tim Bresnahan, Mel Halfon, David Rogers, Scott Drummond, Michael Anderson, Cecil Dye, Darryl Boltz, Cliff Bradshaw, Gene Moss, Eric Barrett, Eric Wood, William "Scotty" Scott, Jeremy Parker and Marty Roberts (not pictured).
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

"Father, I pray your blessings upon those who lead us here in this community, and Father, I pray your blessings upon our leaders in our nation, and guide our state leaders as well. And God, I just pray that you would use them to be your hands and feet as they serve others here.

"Father, I pray your blessings on this county, and I ask God that you would just pour out your blessings on Towns County. God, thank you for all that are represented here today. May you use each of us to conduct your business and to reach others with the good news of Jesus Christ."

In closing, Bradshaw expressed gratitude to everyone

for coming to the brief commemoration while explaining more about why the occasion was important to him, citing also "the people that have laid down their lives for this flag."

"There's so many sacrifices by parents and family that's been made sending their children that - the flag is everything to me," Bradshaw said. "If I had my way about it, the flag would be never touched as far as any anger, spit upon or torn or stomped on. That's absolutely wrong.

"We need to stand for something; if not, what do we stand for? So, we do thank God for this country, for our flag. We have problems in the country - there will always

be problems. But you know what? God is in control, and we still have the best country in the world."

In addition to Commissioner Bradshaw, VFW Member Halfon, VFW Member Boltz and Pastor Lott, attending were American Legion Post 23 Member Scott Drummond, American Legion Member Tim Bresnahan, Probate Judge David Rogers, Clerk of Court Cecil Dye, Tax Commissioner Michael Anderson, Clerk of Court-Elect Eric Barrett, Sheriff's Chief Deputy Gene Moss, Sheriff's Maj. Eric Wood, Police Chief Jeremy Parker, EMA/911 Director Marty Roberts and Movers & Shakers Leader William "Scotty" Scott.

Family Fun Day...from Page 1

Dominic Barbanera said, "We did win kickball. The Sheriff's Office only showed up with four people. We gave them the other six. We gave them a whole bunch of young guns. We went out and had fun."

The kickball contest was one of several events that included special appearances of Santa Claus and Elvis, along with food and craft vendors and a silent auction.

Summer Heat of Towns County is a 501(c)(3) and is the brainchild of Wayne Fiorito. The nonprofit organization is designed as a "safety net to help our first responders."

"If they get hurt, injured, sick on or off the job, we help them pay their bills," Fiorito said. "That's what we do. But we cannot do it without community help. This is one of our biggest functions of the year. We have some very generous sponsors, and as you can see, we have community support."

Led by faith and a purpose to serve, Summer Heat

had its origins when Fiorito heard Sheriff Ken Henderson address some of the needs of his office at a function in October of 2021. Henderson spoke of the need for computers in patrol cars.

Fiorito hosted a spaghetti dinner at the Christ the King Church of Hiawassee and raised about \$4,000. Next, he and his compatriots hosted a music festival and raised about \$15,000.

"Now the Sheriff's Office has computers in their cars," Fiorito said. "Without us and the donation of one of the committee members who had a heart for the drone, we probably wouldn't have that."

"It's heartwarming to see what the community and God can do. It just shows you when God wants something to be done, it happens. I always say be a first responder to a first responder. Because I don't care if what time, day or night, you call them, they're coming."

"I think at some point

in time, every one of us is going to need one of the entities, and they are there for us. So, I think in return we should be there for them."

Sheriff's Auxiliary volunteer Brenda Micali agreed that Summer Heat was "a great cause to support - it's so good for the community." And even Santa Claus, aka Timothy Garrett, lent his support to the cause.

"I use Santa to share the Gospel and the real reason for Christmas, and I love it," Garrett said. "This is my 31st season, but this is my first summertime Santa. I already told Wayne I'll be back next year in Bermuda shorts, a pretty shirt and sandals."

Young Harris College Police Chief Robbie Rich, a drone-flying expert, found the day to be a success despite a lower than hoped-for attendance.

"It's going good," Rich said. "I think it could go better. I wish we had a better crowd. The heat today is a challenge, and there are other events going on, but I think it's been a success today, overall."

Rich made a presen-



Towns County Firefighters took home the big trophy for the 2024 Family Fun Day "Guns vs Hoses" Kickball Tournament Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

tation about the amazing features of drones in public safety. He is an FAA-licensed pilot who deploys the drone for search and rescue, surveillance, wildfires, fire hot spots, crime scene photography, accident reconstruction photography and all things public safety.

Other first responders shared their thoughts on the

event also, such as Firefighter Barbanera, who said that Summer Heat is "very important to us."

"They help first responders who have a tragedy in their life happen where they are down and out having financial difficulties," Barbanera said. "This is the fundraiser that helps them get by for a month or two, and we give so

much gratitude to them.

"They put on such a great event, and I'm really, really happy to be here. Our community shows us a lot of support and gratitude. I'm working with a great team."

For more information about Summer Heat of Towns County and upcoming events, visit <https://www.summerheatoftownscounty.org>.

Hiawassee PD, TCSO search for suspects in vehicle theft

News Special

On the morning of Sunday, June 16, an officer with the Hiawassee Police Department was on patrol doing property and business checks when the officer noticed two vehicles traveling east inside city limits.

The vehicles were traveling in close proximity to one another and immediately caught the attention of the officer, who turned around to check the vehicles' unusual behavior and noticed the two vehicles split and go separate ways.

The rear vehicle drove into the parking lot of McDonald's, and the vehicle in front drove from the central turn lane, across the eastbound lane, and behind a closed business.

The officer followed the vehicle behind the closed business and found the vehicle unoccupied and the ignition punched. The driver was later observed on property surveillance video fleeing the vehicle, which was determined to belong to an individual out in the county.

The owner was notified, and it was at that time he discovered his vehicle was missing.

The Hiawassee officer notified the on-duty Towns County Sheriff's deputies, and both the Hiawassee Police Officer and Towns County Depu-



ties have been working diligently to determine the facts of this incident and to locate the person responsible.

"We believe that the other vehicle was possibly involved, and we are working closely with the deputies, sharing information, to hopefully identify these individuals," Hiawassee Police Chief Jeremy Parker said. "We will provide more information as it becomes available."

"The attention of the officer and the diligence of him in his duties to protect the citizens and businesses of Hiawassee led to the discovery of a stolen vehicle before the owner knew it was missing."

"We will continue to be proactive in our efforts to keep the community safe and investigate any unusual behavior."

The theft remained under investigation at press time.

Hiawassee man arrested in child sexual assault case

News Special

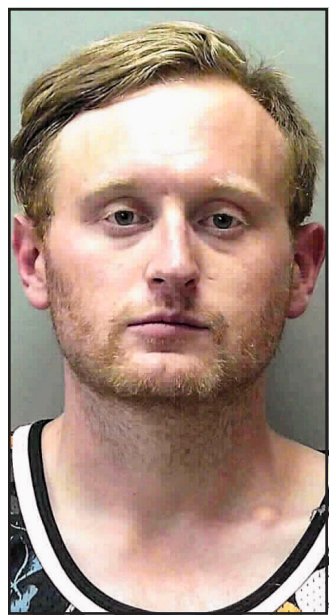
On June 3, the Towns County Sheriff's Office was contacted by the Cleveland Police Department in reference to a child sexual assault here in Towns County.

The Sheriff's Office opened an investigation into allegations of sexual abuse, revealing that Tanner Trimble Boyd, 31, of Hiawassee, was involved in the sexual assault of a young child.

Boyd has been charged with two counts of felony rape, felony aggravated sodomy, felony child molestation, felony cruelty to children and furnishing obscene materials to minors.

He is being held without bond in the Towns County Detention Center and has charges pending in White County.

Sheriff Ken Henderson commends the investigation into very sensitive criminal



Tanner Trimble Boyd activity. The investigation continues.

Individuals are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Misy Muntain Quilters Guild June 25th Meeting

The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild will celebrate the beginning of summer with a luncheon on Tuesday, June 25. Sign-in begins at 12:00 p.m., with the general meeting starting at 12:30. The luncheon will include a remembrance of recently passed friends and loved ones, as well as a celebration of the Guild's 40th Anniversary. Bring a dish and a smile to share, and spend some time socializing with others interested in quilting. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall of First United Methodist Church, 938 GA-515, Blairsville, GA.

MMQG has more than 160 members, hailing primarily from Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida. Our mission is to educate, share, promote and keep alive the craft and traditions of quilting. The guild makes quilts for various charitable groups, including quilts of valor, nursing homes, shelters and children's services. If you are interested in quilts or want to learn more about quilting, come see us! For more information, visit <https://www.mistymountainquiltguild.org> or email mmqginfo@gmail.com.