

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 92 Number 43

Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Luckenbach crowned Miss Georgia Mountain Fair

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Corrina Luckenbach of Towns County was crowned Miss Georgia Mountain Fair over 11 challengers during the 2021 pageant at the Anderson Music Hall on Monday, Aug. 16.

Luckenbach edged First Runner-Up Emily Byers, who is currently a senior at Union County High School. The title of Second Runner-Up went to Brittany Hemphill, also of Blairsville.

As the pageant drew to a close and the contestants patiently waited on stage for the announcement of the judges' final tally, the 12 young ladies appeared to play it cool. But on the inside, they were all a bundle of nerves.

Especially Luckenbach, who wasn't afraid to admit it.

"Please don't laugh, but if I'm being honest with you, for some reason, I thought the first runner-up was the winner, and I started walking off the stage," Luckenbach said just moments removed from her coronation.

"I didn't realize it until I saw I bring another shot out, but I immediately thought, it's not going to be for me," she added. "Then it was for me, and I was totally shocked. I don't mind public speaking and being on stage, but the worst part for me was definitely the waiting."

The first runner-up received \$300, roses and a trophy, while the second runner-up was given \$200, roses and a trophy.

Luckenbach collected a \$2,000 top prize, a watch, roses, a trophy and a crown. She also earned the privilege to represent the Georgia Mountain Fair over the next 12 months and will attend next year's competition to crown the 2022 winner.

"My mom has volunteered at the Fair for probably 10 years now; I grew up around the Fair and could probably walk through it with a blindfold on," Luckenbach said when asked what serving as the Fair's ambassador meant to her.

"I know a lot of the vendors that come back each year, and I'm just excited and proud to represent them and everyone

involved with this fair," she continued. "I hope they will be proud of me as well. But to most of them, I'll always be that little blonde girl running around the Fair."

Emceed by Israel Rogers and Ann Moody, a dozen young ladies from across the tri-state area took the stage last week, vying for the crown in front of three judges at the annual Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant.

The competition marked the pageant's return following its 2020 cancellation due to COVID-19. The 2019 winner, Hiawassee's Carly Woodard, was on hand to crown the winner following her extended two-year reign.

Hopefully, Luckenbach won't experience a similar 24-month wait and be able to enjoy a stress-free return next summer, in what would be a stark contrast from the week leading up to last Monday's pageant.

"Much of the week (before) I was busy doing a covered wagon for the Georgia Mountain Fair," Luckenbach said. "I actually had to help paint it and

sew it by hand, so most of my week was spent preparing for (the covered wagon instead of the pageant)."

Added Luckenbach, "I have to thank my mom (Catherine). She taught me to never be afraid of competition or be afraid to speak in front of people. She's one of the best public speakers that I've seen. She taught me how to be calm and confident, and I think that really helped me in the pageant."

Contestants were scored in each of the event's three categories: sportswear, evening wear and the question-and-answer segment.

The pageant also featured a talent contest and Miss Congeniality winner. Both competitions were judged separately from the Miss Georgia Mountain Fair competition and had no bearing on the night's main event.

Towns County's Summer Rahn took home \$75 as the winner of the talent contest with her acoustic guitar-backed rendition of Dolly Parton's hit "Jolene."

See Miss GMF, Page 6A



Corrina Luckenbach was thrilled to receive the crown as Miss Georgia Mountain Fair 2021, with coronation by 2019 winner Carly Woodard on Aug. 16. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Coronavirus surge continues across state and nation

TCES re-opens after staff outbreak

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor



The latest COVID-19 surge, with 98 confirmed cases reported in Towns County between Aug. 1 and Aug. 20 compared with just 33 cases for the entire month of July, per the Georgia Department of Public Health.

As of Friday, the state was reporting one Towns County

resident dead with COVID-19 in August, though that number is likely to increase in the coming days given the current level of local hospitalizations.

Union General Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Julia Barnett said at the end of last week that the region may have reached a peak in hospitalizations for COVID records earlier in the month, though it was still too soon to know for sure.

"We continue to see a high number of COVID patients presenting to our clinics and the ER," Barnett said. "Our admissions have slowed slightly, so we are hopeful that we have at

least 35, down from a high of 42 at Union General. Chatuge currently has six COVID inpatients."

Barnett noted that "the vast majority of severely ill patients requiring hospitalization are not vaccinated," with an average range of 5%-10% for breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people.

Especially if the most vulnerable continue to seek vaccination and people take staying home when sick, Barnett believes things could once again begin trending in the region's favor, and she encourages

See COVID Surge, Page 6A

Gibby, Van Horn qualify for mayor of Young Harris

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Four Young Harris residents qualified for elective office last week during the three-day qualifying period for the Nov. 2 General Municipal Election: two for the office of mayor and two for City Council.

Incumbent Councilmen Dr. John Kelley and Donald Keys qualified unopposed and are therefore set to be sworn into new terms in January 2022.

For the office of mayor, however, Incumbent Andrea Gibby qualified with opposition from the current Young Harris College President Dr. Drew Van Horn, meaning the two will be going head-to-head in November.

It remains to be seen what, if any, conflicts of interest may arise should the college president be elected city mayor, as he oversees the largest land-owning and employing entity in Young Harris, as well as the biggest customer of the city's water and sewer infrastructure.

Responding to potential concerns that his candidacy might be viewed as an attempt to



Andrea Gibby
Young Harris Mayor



Dr. Drew Van Horn
YHC President

benefit the college by controlling the inner workings of the city, Van Horn pointed to the structure of local government and the "clear delineation between the roles of the mayor and members of the City Council."

For reference, the City of Young Harris features a weak mayor/strong council dynamic, with the mayor effectively serving at the pleasure of the council.

"The ultimate 'control' of the municipality rests with the citizens who vote and attend council meetings," Van Horn said. "I am confident that no citizen of Young Harris would have

an issue with a candidate wanting to have a voice at the table regarding the municipality's direction."

And there is plenty of precedent for Young Harris College employees occupying elected positions, including five faculty members having served on the City Council since 2014.

Concerning what he would like to accomplish as mayor, Van Horn said his focus would be on improving services for residents and fostering conditions favorable to bringing more affordable housing to Young Harris.

See Qualifying Over, Page 6A

Hiawassee candidates qualify unopposed; liquor vote Nov. 2



Liz Ordiales
Hiawassee Mayor



Patsy Owens
Hiawassee Councilwoman



Amy Barrett
Hiawassee Councilwoman

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

For the incumbents running for re-election in the City of Hiawassee Municipal Elec-

tions, it'll be four more years. Mayor Liz Ordiales and Councilwomen Amy Barrett and Patsy Owens all three qualified unopposed during the five-day qualifying period last

week, so each is set to be sworn into second terms in January 2022.

There will still be a local municipal election in November.

See Unopposed, Page 3A

US Rep. Andrew Clyde addresses quad-county meetup

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. Andrew Clyde, the Republican freshman from Georgia's Ninth Congressional District, discussed current events before a group of about 60 people at the Towns County Civic Center on Wednesday, Aug. 18.

The event was sponsored by the GOP organizations of Towns, Union, Fannin and Rabun counties, the four northernmost counties in the Ninth District.

Starting things off, Towns GOP Chair Betsy Young lamented the Aug. 15 fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban and the thousands



During remarks at the quad-county GOP meeting last week, U.S. Congressman Andrew Clyde thanked his wife Jennifer for being his constant companion. Photo by Mark Smith

TCSO breaks up organized 'theft ring' with arrests

News Special
Towns County Herald

Resulting from a 10-day investigation, the Towns County Sheriff's Office has recovered approximately \$5,000 worth of chainsaws and powered lawn equipment that will be returned to their rightful owners.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated this is a great job by Investigators and Uniform Patrol and that this is a continuing and active investigation into other thefts in the area.

Based on the amount of drugs confiscated during these arrests, it is evident that these thefts are drug related, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Three people have been arrested in connection with the investigation on the following charges:

Larry Scott Johnson, 51, of Hiawassee, two counts theft by receiving stolen property.

Brandon Todd Odell, 32, of Hiawassee, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug-related objects, and two counts theft by receiving stolen property.

Jeremiah Allen Giddens, 35, of Blairsville, three counts theft by receiving stolen property.

See Theft Ring, Page 6A



Sheriff Ken Henderson posing with chainsaws and lawn-care equipment recovered after his office busted an "organized theft ring" on Aug. 13. Photo/Facebook

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Nottely	1,772.47

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8/27 @ Armuchee
7:30 PM

SOFTBALL
8/28 vs. Lake Oconee
Academy (DH) Noon & 2 PM

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US Rep. Clyde...from Page 1A

of Americans now trapped in-country. It is a travesty, she said, after all the men and women of the United States Armed Forces gave to liberate that country.

Introducing Clyde was Ninth District GOP Chair Rebecca Yardley, who offered a brief biography of the congressman.

Clyde graduated cum laude from Bethel University in 1989 and received his MBA from the University of Georgia in 1999. He started a business in his garage in 1991 that has grown into the successful Clyde Armory, with two locations in Georgia today.

The congressman served 28 years in the U.S. Navy, in Iraq and Kuwait, and retired with the rank of Commander.

In 2013, he was hit with a civil asset forfeiture from the federal government of \$940,000 but fought it and, ultimately, won the asset forfeiture back.

As a result of that experience, the congressman co-authored the Clyde-Hirsch-Sowers RESPECT Act to protect small business owners from having that same experience.

The acronym RESPECT stands for "Restraining Excessive Seizure of Property through the Exploitation of Civil Asset Forfeiture Tools."

In 2019, President Trump signed into law the Taxpayer First Act, which incorporated the Clyde-Hirsch-Sowers RESPECT Act, a triumph for the congressman and American small businesses.

With that intro, Congress-

man Clyde then took the floor, first recognizing his wife, Jennifer, for her support in everything he does before moving on to discuss his first months in office.

"What I've seen these last eight months can best be described in Washington as a nation in crisis," Clyde said. "We have a national security crisis. We have a border crisis.

"We have an economic crisis, an energy crisis, a crime crisis, and a crisis of the unborn, with the federal government now wanting to use our tax dollars to fund abortion outright, and that is simply unacceptable.

"These last three days have truly highlighted our national security crisis. On Sunday, Kabul, Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban without so much as a fight. It took only 10 days for the Taliban to take over once they saw us leaving like a dog with its tail between its legs.

"In less than a month it will be the 20th anniversary of 9/11, and because of President Biden's incompetence and lack of leadership, the Taliban today actually control more of Afghanistan than they did before Sept. 11, 2001.

"This is the most staggering failure of leadership and the worst betrayal of our service members' sacrifices in a generation," Clyde continued, adding that he fears this may end up being Biden's Tehran if the Taliban detains Americans and holds them hostage.

Clyde also focused his message on the situation at the

southern border, saying it was "the worst I've ever seen, and the administration refuses to even call it a crisis."

"If we think that because we're here in Georgia and not a border state that we really don't have to worry about it, that would be a mistake," Clyde said. "We should be very concerned about safety, because every community is at risk.

"In total, over 1.3 million illegal aliens have crossed our border this year alone. We are on track to reach over two million illegal aliens crossing over the southern border by the end of the calendar year. This is a crisis, ladies and gentlemen – a true crisis."

The congressman said he introduced the COVID-19 Border Protection Act (HR-2076) after the Secretary of Homeland Security admitted to him, on the record, that the government was releasing untested illegal immigrants into the homeland.

According to Clyde, the act requires the Department of Homeland Security "to devise and implement a strategy to ensure no illegal alien with COVID-19 in DHS custody may be released into the community during a public health emergency."

"The cost of that bill is completely paid for," Clyde said. "It borrows no additional money because it simply redirects unspent funds back to the United States that (Biden) had set aside through the State Department to help refugees overseas.

"Thousands upon thousands of illegals are being sent all across our nation by the current

administration, many of them not even tested for COVID-19. They have no idea whether they have it or don't have it. That's why I say every state is a border state."

Next, Clyde touched on the ballooning national debt that stands at more than \$28.6 trillion and counting, driven ever upward by a precipitous rise in debt from multiple rounds of COVID-19 relief funding.

And now, Washington is poised to spend more than \$4.5 trillion in the coming weeks to enact a massive infrastructure bill and budget reconciliation process that will broaden the footprint of the federal government, according to Clyde.

"The result of all this spending will be to further fuel inflation," Clyde said. "Prices are already up 5.4% compared to this time last year, which means you and I have less money in our pocket than we did six months ago.

"And while both inflation and Washington spending habits continue to go unchecked, we will soon be faced with a debt ceiling crisis because the government is running out of money to borrow.

"I personally do not believe that lawmakers should vote to raise the debt ceiling without an iron-clad agreement that we will get our fiscal house in order, reduce spending to below what we receive in revenue, and begin reducing our nation's debt load."

To contact Congressman Clyde, call the District Office at 470-768-6520 or his Washington, D.C. office at 202-225-9893.

Celebration of Pets and Gnarly Fingers in Hayesville

The Hayesville square is a great venue to listen to wonderful music by "Gnarly Fingers" with your family and your canine companion on Friday, August 27, 2021 starting at 5 p.m. for food, and 7 p.m. for music. Yes, your canines are invited. This is a co-op opportunity where Gnarly Fingers is playing music on the square and all gathered donations will go to the Celebration of Pets foundation. We all love great music. This concert will benefit eight dog/cat rescues in our tri-state region. The Celebration of Pets is sponsoring this concert in the hopes that it will be fun, as well as beneficial to our local rescues.

There will be hot dogs, and hamburger plates available to purchase for dinner. Some great opportunities like guessing, "How many Spots are on Charlie the Dalmatian," for half of the money collected. Charlie will be coming to visit from Jacksonville, Fl. and be at the concert. Watch for Charlie, he will be there! You won't be able to touch him or roll him over, but you will get to see him and make your best guess as to how many spots are on that perfect Dalmatian body.

Charlie was rescued by Vicki J. Bowers in 2011. Vicki has also rescued another Dalmatian named "Marshal" and we mustn't forget Sugar Bella, a tiny Chihuahua. Despite her already busy life as a lawyer Vicki devotes many hours in Jacksonville helping to rescue stray cats, getting them to a veterinarian and rescued out.

Another opportunity will be a booth set up by Matt Gomez and his wonderful shoes that he designs, "Punk Your Chunks." You will have



Vicki Bowers, Charlie and Sugar Bella

the opportunity to enter for the drawing that will take place at the concert. Another drawing will be held at The Celebration of Pets September 18, 2021.

Remember, if you decide to bring your pet, make sure they are on a leash and well controlled, pick up any waste product and have fun. Eat a hotdog or hamburger for dinner and maybe purchase one for you dog. He/she would love it!

Also "Save the Date" September 18th for the 10th annual "Celebration of Pets." This all-day activity will start at 9 a.m. with a rabies and shot clinic sponsored by Chatuge

Animal hospital. There will be many opportunities for you and your dog's participation such as "Backwards Obedience," "Agility," and "Hot Dog Eating Contest." Demonstration will take place all morning long. There will be "Blessings of the Pets" by Pastor Bill Breedlove and Pastor Dwight Moss, and a "Weiner Dog Race," "Costume Contest," and "Parade".

All morning long you will have the opportunity to place a bid on items at our "Silent Auction" handled by our wonderful auction ladies Michele Poole and Karen Vaughn. T(Aug25.F3)SH

Unopposed...from Page 1A

ber to determine the ballot referendum regarding packaged liquor sales inside Hiwassee city limits. The ballot question will read:

"Shall the issuance of licenses for the package sale of distilled spirits be approved? Those desiring to vote in favor of the issuance of the licenses shall vote 'Yes.' Those desiring to vote against the issuance of the licenses shall vote 'No.'"

Local students named to LU Dean's List

Lee University has announced its Spring 2021 Dean's List. Dean's List recognition is earned by full-time, on-campus students with a semester grade point average between 3.7 and 4.00.

The following local students made the list: Larson Church and Hannah Green, both of Hiwassee. T(Aug25.F1)SH

Opportunity to change a life

Do you know a loved one who struggles with addictions or strongholds?

Unity Farm, a biblically based, 12-step Men's Recovery Home is located in Union County. For more information please call 706-851-5390 or 706-455-9043. NT(Aug25.Z1)CA

four years to have the city be debt free."

"We have paid off 77% of the old debt and have reduced our total debt to \$2.2 million," Ordiales said. "My hope is to have zero debt by the end of my second term, and to continue the re-vitalization of our downtown area while filling every open storefront with viable businesses to serve our community and our tourists."

For her part, Councilwoman Barrett said she decided to run again "because I love where I live," sharing goals she has for the city that highlight the much-unified vision of the current council and mayor.

"In the next four years, I hope to continue to accomplish lowering our debt and to maintain city infrastructure," she said. "To me, this is one of the most beautiful places there is to live, and the people are the absolute best!

"I want to make our city the most effective and efficient city to benefit our community."

Councilwoman Patsy Owens seconded the above sentiments, saying her call to seek re-election was rooted in a similar place of wanting to improve Hiwassee.

"We as a council are all working together to making our city a great place to live," Owens said. "We have a lot of great ideas and would love to help see these through."

Miss GMF ...from Page 1A

Brittany Hemphill received \$25 after her fellow contestants voted the Blairsville native as the pageant's Miss Congeniality.

Other contestants included Hope Ledford of Cherokee County, North Carolina, Tia Proctor of Clay County, NC and Brianna Hemphill of Union

County. Bria Chastain, Eva Donaldson and Maddie Thomas rounded out the remaining Towns County contestants.



Young ladies from around the area dressed to the nines for a chance to win the title of Miss Georgia Mountain Fair last week inside Anderson Music Hall. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

COVID Surge...from Page 1A

Residents in need of medical care to feel confident in going to the hospital.

"Our staff and medical staff continue to push through this difficult time," she said. "They are working long hours and harder than ever to do their best to provide great care to our community. We appreciate the community's patience and gestures of care and kindness to our staff."

The Towns County School District had to close its Elementary School last week after staff shortages due to a COVID-19 outbreak, but thankfully, the situation improved during the hiatus to the point of allowing classes to resume in person this week.

As of Monday morning, the Elementary School was down from 14 positive staff cases to just two, with four student cases and six student quarantines.

The Middle School had no positive staff cases, one student case and one student quarantine, while the High School likewise had no positive staff cases but two positive students and nine student quarantines.

Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said the system has come up with a policy to enable the schools to transition between optional and required masking, with a minimum five-day mandate triggered when COVID positivity among each school's student body exceeds 1.5% in a five-day period.

The district announced recently that, following the temporary closure of the Elementary School one week into the school year, the system would be offering online-only instruction for all grade levels at least through December for families wishing to pursue that option.

"I and all of my administrative staff who have helped

come up with these protocols, we're happy with where we're at now," Berrong said. "We're really hoping that this was just a big spike and an isolated situation to where we got it under control."

"And we're hoping not to see another dramatic spike like that so we can actually continue to have school the rest of the year without having such a situation again."

The superintendent said this experience kicking off a brand-new semester has certainly been humbling, especially after not having to close a single day for COVID last school year.

"I understand that (the vaccine) is keeping people out of the hospital, but I was under the impression that it was also going to be a significant reduction as to who would actually test positive," Berrong said. "And that just didn't happen in my school."

"We went in (to the new school year) thinking we had this barrier of protection, because the majority (of our employees) are vaccinated. Come to find out, when we first started this (outbreak), almost half the cases were vaccinated people. So, I'm having to send people home I never dreamed I was going to be having to worry about."

In vaccination news, the Food and Drug Administration granted full approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on Monday. Previously, the vaccine was only being administered under an emergency use authorization. Moderna and J&J vaccines still await full approval.

According to the New York Times, approving the shots will accomplish several goals, including paving the way for vaccine mandates "by public and private organizations who

were awaiting final regulatory action," such as the U.S. military, and hopefully compelling greater acceptance by vaccine hesitant people.

Full approval is also expected to address the apparent waning of vaccine immunity amid the delta variant's rising tide by enabling booster and off-label uses of shots; President Joe Biden has already announced plans for vaccinees to receive booster doses, some as early as next month.

On Aug. 19, all District 2 Public Health Departments began making boosters available for moderate to severely immunocompromised people who meet the requirements to receive a third shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, excluding J&J recipients for the time being.

"This is an additional dose for individuals that have specific health conditions that limit their ability to make antibodies to fight off COVID-19 with only two doses of the vaccine - this is not a booster dose for the general population," said District 2 Public Information Officer Natasha Young.

Anyone who has yet to receive a COVID vaccination may do so for free and without an appointment at any county Health Department. Presently, Towns County is above the state average of fully vaccinated residents at 46%.

Also last week, Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Chief Judge Raymond George ordered a re-instatement of the previous mask mandate inside the courthouses of the circuit, effective Monday, Aug. 23.

"Due to the rapid increase in the number of COVID cases and the variants thereof, it has become necessary to implement the requirement of masks/face coverings, social distancing and temperature checks again," according to the order signed Friday, Aug. 20.

Qualifying Over...from Page 1A



City of Young Harris Incumbents John Kelley, Donald Keys and Andrea Gibby all qualified for re-election last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard/2018

"The City of Young Harris is small with limited resources," Van Horn said. "One of the key purposes of being incorporated is to offer better services to the municipality's citizens. The city needs to be encouraged to ask and investigate if its current methods of delivering its services are sustainable, or if there are partnerships that could better meet the needs of the citizens at a lower cost."

"Our county and region need affordable beginning housing. The college, with some of its landholdings, can assist such an effort through public/private partnerships. I want to work with the county commissioners of Towns and Union counties and the municipal leaders within those counties to encourage innovative solutions for affordable beginning housing that I believe are possible."

Van Horn has been president of Young Harris College since 2017. He has approached City Hall in recent years about adjusting an arrangement with the city for utility rates that he believed to be unfavorable to the college.

"The water and sewer rate disagreement demonstrated that dialogue and discussion of alternative solutions were not welcome," Van Horn said. "In leading a municipality, especially one the size of the City of Young Harris, dialogue has to occur more than at committee meetings and community hearings."

"The city leadership must initiate dialogue, and in some cases, require more investigation and conversation. With that said, there are many reasons that I have chosen to seek to be mayor of Young Harris."

Enumerating those reasons, Van Horn listed his desire to serve the community, supply fresh perspective at the level of city leadership, and provide a larger voice at the table for the 750 students "that reside in Young Harris for nine months a year."

"We have wonderful talent in our faculty and staff who care about the city," he said. "And citizens have enjoyed our facilities, performing arts and athletic events. What we have not had for some time is a voice at the municipal table."

"As mayor, I want the city to benefit from the knowledge and influence that the college can bring and truly strengthen the tie between the college, the city and its citizens."

On Friday, Aug. 20, the last day of qualifying ahead of the upcoming municipal election, just 293 residents were registered to vote in Young Harris.

At Young Harris College,

"all full-time undergraduate students are required to live in campus housing," located completely inside city limits, so it will be interesting to see the impact of students returning to campus on the number of new voter registrations in the coming months.

Oct. 4 is the voter registration deadline.

Young Harris College is a private nonprofit entity with tax-exempt status, so it is not required to contribute property taxes to help fund the efforts of the city.

Incumbent Mayor Gibby

First elected to her post in 2008, Mayor Gibby she said her reasons for seeking re-election were many, with the top of her list being to finish some of the projects she and the City Council have begun and to continue economic growth and development in Young Harris.

"Our little city is a jewel and is on the cusp of magical growth," Gibby said. "I want to be part of what comes next. In the next four years, I want to complete work at our parks, such as completing the walking ramp at Cupid Falls so that access to the lower trails is safer."

"I want to complete our vision for a third park along the banks of Brasstown Creek, creating walking trails and providing water access. In our plans, we have visions to connect all our parks, trails and sidewalks to residential areas as well as businesses. I want to oversee this creation of a true walking village."

"Our city needs to continue our economic growth and development. We have begun to rebuild, bringing in businesses and new growth. Over the next four years, I want to bring in more businesses and provide affordable, workforce housing so that young people and families can live and work here."

"We are currently securing money to extend the sewer lines into the valley to the old college farm. When completed, this project will provide opportunities well into the future. While those are some of my reasons for running again for the position of mayor, the main reason I am seeking re-election is because of the people."

"I love this city and valley. We have a strong sense of place and connection. We do not need to be divided. My goal every day is equity and inclusion, to continue the connection that is already here. Community is what makes a place. Our community makes our enchanted valley more special. The people who call this place home creates the community where we all want to live."

Incumbent Councilmen

Dr. John Kelley is a fifth-generation resident who has served his city on the council since 2009, and he said his desire is to preserve the culture and heritage of the valley while establishing infrastructure for development "that follows a pattern consistent with a mountain village."

In essence, he wholeheartedly agrees with Gibby's vision for the future, saying that "things are headed in a great direction."

"The valley is poised for development," Kelley said. "We've got proper ordinances and zoning in place, and with interest rates being low, once building materials start coming down, I think you're going to see some development within the city limits. We're ready."

A major reason he chose to run for office again, Kelley said, is because "we have an excellent working relationship among the council members and the mayor."

"Everybody's willing to attend extra meetings, which is uncompensated," Kelley said. "Whenever it's necessary to get the job done, everybody's willing to roll up their sleeves and do it. If it weren't for that, I probably would not want to keep running."

"But I think as long as we're getting things done and making progress, then I'll continue to serve my community."

Added Kelley, "I would love to see a much more harmonious relationship with the college."

Like Kelley, Councilman Donald Keys has history serving on the City Council and is a lifelong resident of Young Harris, with local members of the Keys family going back "forever."

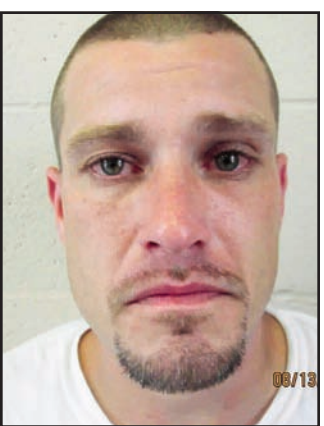
"I'd like to see Young Harris grow some," Keys said, "but I'd like to see Young Harris stay as the way we used to know it - no supermarkets or any big development areas into Young Harris, but just something that we could be proud of and just keep some of the old heritage."

"Some of these homes that are going downhill, I'd like to see them refurbished, and places like Cable's (service station across from the college) opening up, whatever they're going to do; they're renewing the place, and that brings back old memories the way things used to be."

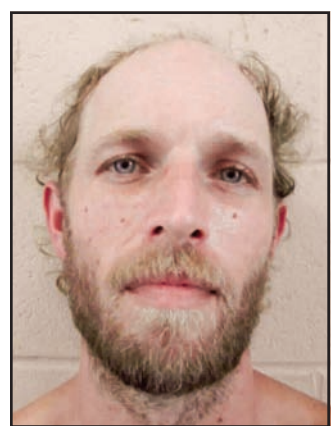
"But I know we're moving forward, and this is a new age and time, but I'd kind of still like to have the old look and some of the new look, too, to see things stay as is and some improvement, see things grow."

"I wish we had on the outskirts of Young Harris a gas station, and maybe we will. Just things like that."

Theft Ring...from Page 1A



Brandon Todd Odell



Jeremiah Allen Giddens



Larry Scott Johnson

have been a victim of any of these people, please call the Towns County Sheriff's Office at 706-896-4444.

Sheriff Henderson would like to encourage the community to please report any suspicious activity.

erty, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of drug-related objects.

The above individuals

have been charged only and are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Anyone who feels they

Mountain Regional Library

Storytime!

Every Wednesday, 10:30 am
Beginning September 1st*
ages 3-5
*all events subject to change