

# Towns County Herald

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 95 Number 51

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

## Sarafin, Williams crowned Homecoming Royalty

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Friday, Oct. 11, Towns County High School welcomed new Football Homecoming royalty with the crowning of King Trey Williams and Queen Alexis Sarafin.

The Homecoming Ceremony marked a local tradition that goes back decades, wherein students elect a "King" and "Queen" to represent their grade by choosing classmates who embody their best values or display high morals.

During the halftime of that evening's game against Spartanburg Christian Academy – which the Indians won 21-14 – 2023 Homecoming Queen Hope Chastain returned to the field to pass the crown to Sarafin, and Williams was announced Homecoming King. Meanwhile, Abby Smith

earned Runner-Up Princess. While it doesn't hold as much notoriety as King and Queen, Smith said she was pleased with the outcome of the night.

"I'm still glad that at least I got my flowers, I got the crown, and I'm just really glad to be here," Smith said. "And I'm so happy for Alexis, that she won, and I'm so happy that Trey's our king. It's very well deserved on both parts."

Sarafin described her win as "pretty awesome," saying that the victory cemented her understanding of the positive perception of those around her after she transferred into the school system a year and a half ago.

"I wasn't here two years ago, and then last year they put me in the wrong class, so for me to actually be a senior in the Class of 2025, I'm happy to be a part of it. We're all best friends out of our grade, so it

works well," Sarafin said.

Williams agreed that it was an honor to be chosen for the position, and while neither fully expected to come out on top, both are humble about and grateful for their Homecoming titles.

"I guess I'm just friendly to everyone, and just try to be nice to everyone," Williams said, exploring the reasons why he made the cut.

Williams has plans to continue a family tradition when it comes to a career path. After graduation, he'll become an electrician through Independent Electrical Contractors, Inc., inspired by his father's 25-year-long career and current position as a CEO.

As for Sarafin, she'll take a gap year before immediately leaping into college. She wants to travel and has high hopes of seeing New York City. When the time is

right, Sarafin looks forward to attending a college with a special focus on art and film.

Although currently unsure of which school she's going to attend, Smith said she'll allow scholarships to dictate where she studies. She still has a clear path in mind and hopes to major in psychology before pursuing studies in biomedical science to one day become a dermatologist.

All three seniors admitted to being a bit nervous when it comes to facing an unknown future – it's hard to leave friends and a familiar routine behind – but more than that, they're excited for whatever the next chapters of their lives hold.

"I'm excited, nervous, ready to get out in the real world," said Williams, with the girls echoing his sentiment.

The King, Queen and



2024 Football Homecoming Queen Alexis Sarafin and King Trey Williams were surprised and elated to earn their crowns on Friday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Dye, Walls & Davis will be missed at courthouse



With nearly 90 years of combined experience in the Towns County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Cecil Dye, Jo Ann Davis and Janie Walls will be retiring at the end of the year. Dye was elected to an astounding 10 terms in office. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

After 40 years of dutiful service, Towns County Clerk of Court Cecil Dye will finally be retiring at the end of this year. Along with him, Janie Walls and Jo Davis will be leaving the office after 31 years and 17 years, respectively.

A man with ample supplies of wisdom and loyalty fits well into a career revolving around public service. Dye's office is decorated with humorous posters, and he's the type to readily offer a smile

and help anyone in the community in any way he can.

Born and raised in Young Harris, Dye found himself working as a firefighter in Atlanta before his attention turned toward aiding folks on a governmental level.

"I don't remember exactly what sparked my interest in it, but I've always been in public service," said Dye, perennially mindful of the people around him. "I decided I wanted to be in government and help the people and try to do what I could do to help Towns County, and I hope we've done that. We've tried."

Although Dye practices a healthy amount of modesty, there is proof of his success. He won Georgia Superior Court Clerk of the Year twice – once in 1999 and again in 2016. This title is voted upon by court clerks across the state, and with that much time passing between each nomination, it's possible Dye was viewed in an exceptionally positive light by two different groups of people.

The day-to-day life of a Clerk of Court consists of assisting judges with managing the courtroom and keeping

## Local families can still make the Fall Festival

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds has officially opened its gates for the 2024 Georgia Mountain Fall Festival, hosting the first of two weekends Oct. 11-13. The festival concludes this week with more vendors, live music, old-time demonstrations and historical displays Oct. 17-19.

A decades-old tradition, the Fall Festival utilizes the whole grounds with a variety of things to see and do, much like the Georgia Mountain Fair in summer – albeit with a more pumpkin-spice flavor.

The Pioneer Village, Exhibit Hall and arts & crafts vendors are open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., while the carnival,

courtesy of Midway Rides Unlimited, runs from 5-11 p.m.

Guests can enjoy live entertainment with regular admission, but if they're willing to pay for concert tickets at Anderson Music Hall, they can get an enhanced experience by being able to see everything in the "main" part of the festival along with specialty performances later in the evening.

Thursday, Oct. 17, starts the weekend out strong with Tracy Lawrence, with the Malpass Brothers as guests. A dollar from each ticket sale goes toward Lawrence's charity to feed the homeless, Mission:Possible.

Then, coming in hot on Friday, Oct. 18, will be the long-awaited Three Dog Night concert, followed up on Satur-

day, Oct. 19, by Nate Smith.

People looking for a day trip experience have other entertainment options. Xpogo, touted as "The World's Best Extreme Pogo Entertainment," brings pogo jumping to new and exciting heights. The guys perform in 20-minute shows throughout the day, at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. at Eller Holler.

Featuring Championship Pro Athletes and Guinness Book of World Record notables, an emcee hypes up the crowd while his buddies leap up to 10 feet in the air, clearing increasingly high hurdles and managing repeated flips.

Also, Danny Grant's Cowboy Circus will be there. See Fall Festival, Page 6

## Early in-person voting in full swing now thru Nov. 1

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Advance voting, also known as early in-person voting, began on Tuesday, Oct. 15, for the 2024 General Election.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5, and there will be three weeks of early in-person voting running weekdays between Tuesday, Oct. 15, and Friday, Nov. 1. Early voting will also include two weekend voting opportunities: Saturday, Oct. 19, and Saturday, Oct. 26.

There was no in-person voting on Monday, Oct. 14, due to the federal and state holiday of Columbus Day.

All in-person early voting takes place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. inside the Towns County Civic Center, located in the same building as the Elections Office at 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee.

General Election voters who decide to wait until Election Day to cast their ballots will need to head to their predetermined voting precincts between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Nov. 5.

Towns County has two voting precincts: the Hiawassee Precinct at the Civic Center and the Young Harris Precinct in the Lodge Hall Building at 135 Murphy Street.

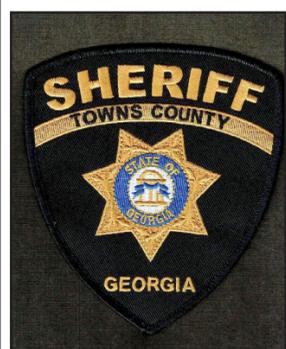
For people voting ab-

sentee-by-mail, ballots may be requested at the Elections Office now through Friday, Oct. 25. Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, as an email attachment, or in person at the Elections Office.

Absentee ballots began mailing Oct. 7. They can be returned using the official Elections Office drop box during early voting hours; mailed back in plenty of time to be counted after polls close on Election Day; or dropped off at the Elections Office through 7 p.m. Election Day.

The deadline to register to vote in this election was

## Blairsville man arrested in domestic-related shooting



News Special

A Blairsville man was arrested Sunday in connection with a domestic-related double shooting that sent him and another man to the hospital

Friday night. Both men were released from medical care over the weekend, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Caleb Avery Hughes, 24, has been charged with three counts of aggravated assault, with other charges pending, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The shooting occurred Oct. 11 at the Sand Bar & Grille on US 76 in Hiawassee. The Sheriff's Office responded to the bar a little after 11 p.m. on Friday, where deputies discovered two males who had been shot.

According to the initial investigation, the shooting took place after Hughes allegedly



Caleb Avery Hughes

forced his way into a vehicle containing three passengers in the parking lot of the Sand Bar. One of the passengers was his estranged girlfriend.

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# Early Voting...from Page 1

Monday, Oct. 7.

Residents may visit <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov> for mail-in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county, sample ballots for upcoming elections, provisional ballot status and more.

As this is a presidential election year, voters will be choosing the next president of the United States as well as several state positions, but there are no contested county-level seats up for grabs in the 2024 General Election.

Voters will also be deciding the fate of a state Constitutional Amendment to cap annual property assessment increases for taxing purposes.

If passed, the proposed constitutional amendment would create a new homestead exemption to cap assessment increases on homesteaded properties at 3% annually beginning on Jan. 1, 2025.

State lawmakers enabled the referendum this year by passing House Bill 581 and House Resolution 1022, with an "opt-out" provision for local governments.

The proposed cap comes as welcome news to many homeowners, who have seen the values of their properties rise dramatically in recent years due largely to an inflated real estate market driven by COVID-19 pandemic-era relocations to the area.

For homes receiving the exemption starting next year, 2024 would stand as the base-year assessed value. Moving forward, the home would then reflect two values: the homesteaded value that is capped for taxing purposes, and the actual fair market value as it changes over time.

"The base year value may increase each year up to the inflationary rate determined by the State Revenue Commissioner, which may utilize the Consumer Price Index," according to information from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

So, annual values could increase from north of 0% to the 3% cap for homesteaded properties, though assessed values would still be subject to accounting for "substantial property changes," which could result in increases or decreases in value depending on what has changed.

If a homestead-exempted property is subsequently sold, then the base-year assessed value for the new homesteader would be set at the assessed value for the year immediately preceding the sale.

A homestead exemption reduces the amount of property taxes a homeowner owes on his or her legal residence, and according to ACCG, "this new floating homestead exemption is in addition to and not in lieu

of all non-floating homestead exemptions."

HB 581 also creates a new 1% local option sales tax that could be imposed for property tax relief. But for the new tax to be put in place, it would have to be supported by voters in a local referendum.

The bill does several other things related to property and sales tax reform, such as improving the sales ratio study methodology by the Department of Audits and Accounts, removing confusing tax estimates from annual assessment notices and more.

General Election ballots also feature a statewide referendum on raising the amount of tangible personal property tax exemption from \$7,500 to \$20,000. If passed, state law would be amended effective Jan. 1, 2025, to apply to all tax years beginning on or after that date.

State Rep. Mike Cheokas (R-Americus) sponsored the bill that created this referendum, saying, "I hope this will be the first step in reducing the burden of high taxes and prohibitive regulations that adversely affect businesses in Georgia."

Proponents of these measures believe they would provide much-needed taxpayer relief in an era of prolonged inflation, while opponents have expressed concern that they could make it more difficult to raise revenues needed to effectively operate local governments and school systems.

# The City of Young Harris' 2024 Porchfest was a Success



On Sunday, September 29, 2024, the City and Main Street Young Harris hosted Porchfest 2024. This marks the third year of Porchfest, which is a nation-wide event featuring musical acts on the porches of businesses and homes. Because Porchfest fell immediately after Hurricane Helene devastated our western North Carolina neighbors, a booth was designated to accept financial donations and post-storm items that were in high demand. Attendees raised over \$500 in cash donations, and two carloads of items were collected and on their way to western NC within 24 hours. The City is grateful for all those who contributed to this effort.



YHC Student Booth

Music was enjoyed at Cable's Gallery where Matt Bodie and Quick Brown Fox played. The YH Wing House hosted Tyler Grimsley & Dawson Hunter, followed by Riverbend, and The Fix hosted Wilder Things Than Us. Food trucks and arts & crafts vendors were spread from the corner lot at Hwy 76/66 all the way down to The Fix. The Union General Clinic lot featured both vendors and local community organizations. Young Harris College student organizations were underneath the large tent at the corner lot and offered face painting, gardening materials, and information on student athlete events. Approximately 350 people were in attendance.



Wilder Things Than Us

Sponsors are key to making events like Porchfest happen, and thanks goes to the following 2024 sponsors: Blue Ridge Mountain EMC; City of

Young Harris; CGH Ventures Wing House. If you missed out on purchasing Young Harris merchandise, insulated mugs are available at The Fix, and Porchfest t-shirts and stickers are available at City Hall.

# Positive Athlete Georgia Opens Nominations



For the eleventh consecutive year, the Positive Athlete organization has opened nominations for the "Most Positive" high school student-athletes in the state of Georgia. All 9th - 12th grade students are eligible to be nominated online by adult parents, coaches, teachers, administrators and fans between now and April 4, 2025 via Positive Athlete's website: [www.positiveathlete.org](http://www.positiveathlete.org).

Over the past 10 years, Positive Athlete and their corporate partners have celebrated over 50,000 high character, high school student-athletes and coaches who have overcome difficult circumstances, given back to their schools and communities in a significant

way, or just have an infectious positive attitude that makes everyone around them a better person. Over \$400,000 in college scholarships have been given away since program's inception, and last year 425 public and private Georgia high schools provided Positive Athlete with close to 7,000 nominations.

Positive Athlete divides the state of Georgia into 14 separate regions including Southeast Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Middle Georgia, East Georgia, West Georgia, Northeast Georgia, Northwest Georgia, South Atlanta, Atlanta, Cobb, Gwinnet, Northwest Atlanta, North Atlanta, and East Atlanta. Approximately 28-30 different boys' and girls' sports per region will be recognized by Positive Athlete in the Spring, and the "Most Posi-

tive" athletes in each sport will be honored at an annual statewide awards event in June of 2025.

"There are thousands of young people participating in some form of athletics across the state of Georgia, and the reality is that most of the recognition of these kids have everything to do with their athletic ability and nothing to do with who they are as people," said Positive Athlete CEO Scott Pederson. "We believe that every young athlete has the ability to make a positive impact on the world around them."

Positive Athlete, INC. is an organization based in Georgia that seeks to promote the benefits of positivity to young athletes around the country through awards, scholarships and special opportunities. is free and open to the public!

# Shooting Arrest...from Page 1

Inside the vehicle, Hughes shot a male victim in the leg with a handgun, and a struggle ensued for the firearm, resulting in Hughes being shot in the arm, according to the Sheriff's Office. Hughes exited the vehicle and attempted to leave the premises but was apprehended by deputies.

Both men were transported to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville and were released from medical treatment by Sunday, ac-

ording to the Sheriff's Office. Hughes was then booked into the Towns County Jail, where he remained at press time, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

GBI is assisting the Sheriff's Office with the case, in which Hughes has been charged with one count of aggravated assault for each passenger in the vehicle: one male and two females. Neither of the females was injured.

Sheriff Ken Henderson

would like to thank the GBI, the GBI Crime Scene Specialists, the Georgia State Patrol and the Young Harris College Police Department for their help interviewing multiple witnesses and crime-scene processing of the vehicle involved in the incident.

The case is considered active and ongoing, per the Sheriff's Office.

Hughes is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.



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## Homecoming Royalty...from Page 1

Smith want to send out huge thanks to the people who helped them get where they are today.

Sarafin mentioned Coach Shannon Floyd, because he was the first to help her feel welcomed when she started attending TCHS.

Williams thanks his mother for keeping him on the right track, in both life and academics.

And Smith acknowledges her mother, too, for bringing her with when moving to Towns County and giving her the opportunity to be on the field.

Ultimately, the trio wants the school – and community at large – to know that the Class of 2025 is unique. Sarafin can attest that everyone seems to get along well, and she believes that, despite so many differences in interests and personalities, the seniors of TCHS are stronger for it.

“We stand out a lot in so many different ways, but I love it,” Sarafin said.

The 2024 Football Homecoming Court consisted of Ansleigh Hardin, Alexis Sarafin, Chloe Crowe, Abby Smith, Scotlyn Fain, Chloe Sutton, Kaleigh Beaver, Emma Wilson, Loftin Turpin, Max Baron, Trey Williams, Connor Williams and Blake Gleaton.



Abby Smith, Hope Chastain and Alexis Sarafin were elegantly dressed for the Oct. 11 Towns County High School Football Homecoming. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Fall Festival...from Page 1

for the second weekend, strolling around the Fairgrounds at 12 p.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Audience participation is essential to the experience, which promises “comedy, bull riding, roping and more.”

The Pioneer Village may be just as extravagantly decorated as the rest of the Fairgrounds, but here, the brooms on display aren't just getaway vehicles for witches. According to demonstrator and craftswoman Denise Taranto of Sweeps and Handles, they provide a lovely outlet for the imagination while showcasing how mountain women of the past took care of their homes.

“I was a teacher for 35 years, and when I retired, I needed something to do creatively,” said Taranto, who uses a variety of sorghum without sugar content to craft her brooms and dusters.

She also weaves baskets, but her fanciful brooms are more popular. They fit the fall aesthetic with their antler-hewn handles, spider charms, and green and purple “witchy” colors that readily draw in customers.

Right down the way, Ol' Soapy, as he calls himself, enlightens festivalgoers about “the all-day exercise” of making lye soap, educating them about the chemical purity that puts plain old traditional soap a cut above modern hygiene products.

“Making soap is all about chemistry, and in those days, they didn't have chemistry. They didn't know exactly the strength of their materials, but Granny had a good idea,” Soapy postulated, comparing the process to the precise art of baking. “What goes in is exactly what dictates what comes out.”

Soapy's interest in the stuff was borne out of desperation. An unfortunate and uncomfortable infestation of mites drove him to pursue a passion for natural ingredients and traditional recipes, leading to an abundance of knowledge, a fun new hobby and a charming moniker.

“They call it (wood splittin'). We're actually making shakes. The name ‘shake’ is applied to shingles if they are done by hand. If they're cut by a saw, they're called shingles, so we're actually making shakes,” James Blalock explained after a long day of cutting wood with his granddaughter and apprentice, Olivia.

“Actually, I think the shakes last longer than the shingles do because the shingles are cut on a saw, and they break the fibers in the wood. But the hand-split shingles are cut right with the grain of the wood, so it makes them more durable, I think,” said Blalock, adding that, along with being a Pioneer Village volunteer for years, he was asked to split shakes by Fairgrounds Manager Hilda Thomason herself.

In addition to soap, shake and broom crafting, visitors to the Pioneer Village can learn how apple cider is made, browse quilts, and take a look inside preserved historical buildings such as a one-room schoolhouse filled with artifacts like old books and articles of clothing.



The professionals with Xpogo seemingly defy gravity with their show, available each day of the Fall Festival. The newspaper does not recommend people try this at home. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



Down in Pioneer Village during the Fall Festival, volunteer James Blalock demonstrates how to cut wood into roofing “shakes” with help from his granddaughter and apprentice, Olivia. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

One more great reason to visit the Fall Festival is the shopping opportunity. Crafters of all types display their wares for folks looking to knock out Christmas shopping early or take home a little treat for the house, wardrobe or kids' toy chest.

Faye Jenrette, for one, is ready for Christmas. She's been making wreaths for the past three years and only started showing two years ago. Some of her best sellers are Grinch-themed wreaths, but she sells door décor for all seasons, occasions and tastes.

“It's my first time (at the Fall Festival), and I've enjoyed it. So far, it's been a good day,” Jenrette said, expressing that she'll make more sports team wreaths before next weekend because they've proven especially popular.

David Sheridan's booth for Copper Creations is perfectly suited for fall. Surrounded by a forest of wire bonsai trees meticulously shaped from copper wire, the color scheme matched the fall nature scene on the lake right outside their window.

Sheridan was inspired by seeing similar crafts online, and after years of woodwork-

ing, he decided to try a different form of expression. The trees, carefully set up in shadowboxes or mounted on wood and rock, follow the natural patterns of Japanese bonsai.

“The sculpture is carefully handmade by twisting and looping strands of copper or aluminum wire to create the roots, trunk, branches and leaves,” states a slip of paper Sheridan sometimes hands out to better explain his art.

Visiting all the way from the Rocky Mountains, the Renzas family was very pleased with what they found in a fellow mountain town. The littlest members were interested in the pogo demonstration, but they also appreciated the nature surrounding them.

“I enjoyed it. Lots of great things, friendly people,” Jimbo Renzas noted, trying to keep an eye on his grandsons while they gathered walnuts around the old schoolhouse in the Pioneer Village. Chuckling, he observed, “Kids are nuts about the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds' Fall Festival.”

For more information, visit <https://georgiamountain-fairgrounds.com/localevents/fallfest>.

# Court Clerk's Office...from Page 1



The turnout for the retirement party was incredible at the Rec Center this month, showcasing the love and respect Dye, Walls and Davis have garnered over the years.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

track of the legalities that help a county run smoothly. That looks like a lot of record keeping and docket management, overseeing jury selection and management, processing appeals, attending court sessions and more.

But Dye's been around long enough to see several changes to the way things are done, mostly from advancements in technology, though it's worth noting that Dye has worked with every commissioner in Towns County's history following the switch from leadership by "ordinaries."

In Dye's own words, the office has become "modernized" with the advent of digital records.

"Since everything's gone online, we don't see as many people as we used to," Dye admitted, though he can still recall the days of an office "slap-full" of walk-ins doing research, title searching, or applying for deeds.

That doesn't mean Dye believes in full computerization. He doesn't trust in "imaginary books," or keeping access to important information confined to an internet connection.

"Of course, we still keep the books, but I'm always going to keep the books," he

said, expressing approval that upcoming Clerk of Court Eric Barrett apparently shares that value. "I like a backup. Especially when the power's off and you can't get anything else — we've still got records."

That's another thing that has helped Dye's relationship with the public over the years. While some people "have to wait months" to get their deeds back from other offices, Dye is proud that his physical copies allow people to "walk in right here, get them recorded, and walk out."

It's no wonder why he says the workload has increased, though he still loves what he does. Proper record keeping is the key to the window through which Dye can look back and see how much he's experienced over his lengthy career.

For example, when he first started the job, there were 78 deed books that accounted for Towns County's then-120-year-old legal records, and there were only two minute books containing the records of civil and criminal courts. Now, four decades later, the office is on Deed Book 735 and Minute Book 148.

"We've worked, but we've enjoyed it while we do," said Dye with a grin. "We've

definitely worked — there ain't no doubt about that."

Part of the draw to his job, Dye says, is meeting people from so many walks of life. Jurors and attorneys from all over the state provide valuable insight and differing perspectives where needed, but there's one group that Dye developed a special bond with.

Tragedy and triumph are shared in equal measure among what Dye calls his "clerk family," with whom he has remained in touch for decades. In fact, Dye tallied up the number of people he has worked with over the years, and out of 159 different counties, he has known 534 fellow clerks. He remembers "just about" every face and every name.

Along with receiving support from local coworkers, Dye can remember so many long-distance friends praying for his wife while she was ill, and he attributes her wellbeing and even survival to their care.

Inevitably, while the people themselves are the best part of Dye's job, the duality of man ensures they are also the worst part — or, more precisely, their relationships are when they're not complaining about jury duty.

Knowing so many in the

community, it's no surprise that when tragedy strikes, it hurts the whole office. Divorces, custody battles and restraining orders bring pain to the public eye, and, as Dye put it, his people are "on the front lines" to mitigate the damage and administer fair treatment.

Together, Dye, Walls and Davis are not afraid to admit that tears have been shed in the office, but on the other hand, things like the joyful proceedings of an adoption make all the difficult moments worth it.

Faith carries people far, and it's something Dye believes in wholeheartedly. Those who know him closely can attest to this.

"Let me tell you, (Cecil) loves his family ... like a man should, as a Christian man should, and He loves the Lord," said Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw at Dye's Oct. 5 retirement party. "When you talk about dedication and loyalty, he could write the book on it."

Organized by Stephanie and Richard McConnell, Fletcher and Ann Griffin, David Barrett, Kris-Ann Poe, Richard "Rick" Stancil, the retirement party at the Recreation and Conference Center celebrated Dye's career along

with those of Walls and Davis.

Snapshots taken over the years were displayed as several speakers described how much Dye — and the rest of his staff — means to them. Magistrate and Probate Judge David Rogers, for example, has known Dye his whole life, and by proxy, the latter's family.

"Towns County is blessed to have — except for me — everyone they have in office," Rogers stated humbly, genuine in expressing his adoration between sharing humorous memories of keeping courthouse staff on their toes. "It's been an honor for me to work with you guys ... Jo, I love you. Janie, I love you."

The evening closed out with special musical performances before the guests were dismissed for a barbecue dinner. In particular, Rec Director Stuart Nichols dedicated an emotional performance of "Come Jesus Come" to Walls.

When the party was over, Dye admitted he was ready to retire, and Walls and Davis agreed. For Dye, this new chapter means more time practicing his hobbies — enjoying the outdoors while fishing and hunting.

Walls, for her part, wants to take advantage of her good

health and travel, but Davis admits it's going to take time to adjust.

"We're going to miss everybody that's here that we see every day," Davis said. "I mean, you know, you speak to them, you talk to them, you see their kids grow up, and you're just part of it."

"I've always loved the work," Walls added. "Cecil has always been such a good boss, and just working for the people that voted for us has been wonderful to be able to serve them. We're all family, and I'm going to miss that part, the day-to-day working with Cecil and Jo."

Ultimately, after their final day at the end of December, it will be time for the team to turn away from the filing cabinets and the record books to create more memories with family and the self. There are, after all, plenty of documents of the mind to look back on.

"I just wanted to tell the people I appreciated them letting me serve them this long and felt honored to be able to serve them for 10 terms," Dye said. "I feel honored, but also, it's a pleasure to be able to serve the people that long. It is."