

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 92 Number 51

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

## Students speak on drug abuse at Civic Association forum

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Civic Association hosted an Oct. 11 public forum on something that is a huge problem in the North Georgia/Western North Carolina area, specifically in Towns County: drug abuse.

Drug abuse and its effects on young people and the culture are not subjects normally brought up in polite conversation. Everyone knows about it, but, like anything else that's horrible and unsightly, it typically gets swept under the rug.

As such, drug abuse has become the proverbial elephant in the room, with part

of the reason being that people don't know what to do about it. The consensus is to let law enforcement and the courts handle it, but they can only attack the problem after the fact.

To better address this problem locally, the Towns County Civic Association, Towns County Sheriff's Office, Towns County Schools, District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw came together last week to tackle the issue before the fact.

As Civic Association President Michael Foster said during the forum at Foust Park, "If we can halt the demand for drugs, then the drug abuse problem will resolve it-

self." And how better to start down that road than to present those who are most at risk – the youth of the county – with a platform to share their thoughts and perspectives on the use and abuse of drugs.

With that in mind, Towns County Middle School students Dylan Mason, Kaitlyn Walls and Leland Wilson were invited to give their unique perspectives on drug abuse, as were Towns County High School students Layne Rouse, Sarah Shook, Collin Crowder and Kayla Peacock.

Elizabeth McKeon, the Clinical Liaison and Relations Manager for Homestead Hospice and Palliative Care, See *Student Forum*, Page 8A



Towns County High School students Kayla Peacock, Sarah Shook, Layne Rouse and Collin Crowder at the Oct. 11 forum on drug abuse. Photo by Mark Smith

## Fall Festival concludes; Brew, Stew & Que Oct. 23



Georgia football legend Herschel Walker introduced country music icon Lee Greenwood at Anderson Music Hall Oct. 14. Photo by Derek Storm

By Antonio Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

For decades, the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival has captivated locals and guests alike with stunning autumn scenery, demonstrations of historical mountain living, music concerts and other live

performances, and dozens of vendors with diverse products to offer.

And all that held true for the 2021 edition, which concluded nine glorious days of family-friendly fun at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday, Oct. 16.

From food to household decorations, tailoring to smith-

ing, the Fall Festival has done something for everyone since about 1969, according to Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. The first fair, sans fall theme, was held in 1950 and has been a community staple ever since.

This year marked the return of the Hamilton Gardens See *Fall Festival*, Page 8A

## Electric co-op GM Glidewell addresses Movers and Shakers

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC General Manager Allan Glidewell addressed the Mountain Movers and Shakers in their weekly breakfast meeting on Friday, Oct. 15, to offer updates and touch on the co-op's 10-year pledge to get broadband internet to everyone wanting it in Towns County.

Glidewell began his presentation with a brief personal story. He hails from Brownsville, Tennessee, a small, rural community where he went to work for an electric co-op while in high school, which inspired him to become an electric co-op operations engineer.

He graduated from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with an engineering degree and has worked in the



BRMEMC General Manager Allan Glidewell talked local history and broadband in the Oct. 15 Movers and Shakers meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

power industry his entire career.

"When the lights go out, that's when you matter," Glidewell said. "That's when people

need you.

"And that's why I believe – and you can back this up with scripture – the secret to See *Glidewell*, Page 8A

## July Term 2021 Grand Jury Indictments, continued

The following individuals were indicted during the July Term 2021 of the Towns County Grand Jury, which met again this month:

Phillip William Wilder, aka William Phillip Wilder, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Robin Michele Gunnells, aka Robin Michelle Gunnells, Robyn Michele Gunnells, Robin Michele Gunnells, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; two counts possession of drug-related objects; distracted driv-

ing.

James Thomas Stancil, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); reckless driving; speeding; failure to maintain lane; driving on wrong side of roadway; two counts improper use of central lane; driving without headlights.

Timothy Shawn Byers, criminal damage to property in the second degree; battery.

Joshua Ian Rhodes, possession of a Schedule I controlled substance; tampering with evidence; driving while

license suspended; operation of unregistered vehicle.

Joseph Lee English, possession of methamphetamine; failure to maintain lane; tail-light violation.

Dalton Alexander Massey, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Sharon Denise Robinson, aka Sharon Denise Allen, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Katie May Barrington, manufacture of marijuana;

possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects.

Bruce Douglas Partin Jr., manufacture of marijuana; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects; criminal trespass; theft by taking.

Johnathan Leroy Maskell, aka Jonathan Leroy Maskell, four counts obstruction of an officer; two counts simple battery; public drunkenness; public indecency; three counts simple assault; pedestrian under the influence; pedestrian on roadway.

Demone Trivek Haynes, theft by taking; theft by deception.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Towns Co. Sheriff's Christmas Parade  
See page 3A

## Early voting on liquor sales nets 27 ballots in first week

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Advanced in-person voting for the City of Hiwassee referendum to allow packaged liquor sales inside city limits kicked off last week, with 27 of the city's 777 registered voters having cast ballots through Friday.

This is an off year for countywide elections, and only Hiwassee residents are eligible to vote in this election. By press time, zero absentee-by-mail ballots had been requested in the municipal election.

Voting continues weekdays through Oct. 29 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Towns County Board of Elections and Registration Office, with an additional day of Saturday voting on Oct. 23.

As previously reported,



Early in-person voting for the Hiwassee Municipal Election takes place at the Board of Elections Office next door to the Towns County Courthouse.

all incumbents for the 2021 Hiwassee Municipal Election qualified unopposed, so the sole ballot item is the referendum asking registered city voters to consider enabling the establishment of package stores

in Hiwassee.

Should the referendum pass, a limited number of liquor stores will be allowed to set up shop within Hiwassee City Limits, with restrictions

See *Early Voting*, Page 3A

## City Council accepts rollback, talks economic development

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Hiwassee City Council members voted in their October regular meeting to accept the 2021 rollback millage rate of 1.977.

Due to its property tax digest increasing from the previous year, the City of Hiwassee's 2021 levy will raise \$7,711 in additional tax revenues, a decrease of 0.09 mills over the 2020 rate of 2.067.

The council voted 3-1 to accept the rollback millage rate. Councilwoman Anne Mitchell was the lone dissenter, as she believes going with the rollback year after year will potentially hurt the city as additional revenues become needed in the future.

Out on a work-related call with Towns County EMS, Councilman Jay Chastain Jr. was unable to make it to the Oct. 5 meeting until the executive session toward the end.

Council members also approved the 10-year Service Delivery Strategy as arrived at by the Towns County Govern-



Hiwassee City Councilwomen Nancy Noblet and Amy Barrett in their Oct. 5 regular meeting at City Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

ment and the cities of Hiwassee and Young Harris.

The agreement spells out public services such as animal control, fire protection and law enforcement that are provided to a town or city that doesn't have such services.

By all accounts, negotiations for the latest Service Delivery Strategy went smoothly between all parties, which has not always been the case in the past.

In other business, the

council approved the purchase of an \$8,400 shed at City Hall to store items from the Police Department and Downtown Development Authority. The shed will offer a centralized storage solution instead of having to utilize unrelated space at, say, the Water Department.

Mayor Liz Ordiales opened a discussion about creating a new job for a dedicated city economic development position, which

See *City Council*, Page 2A

## TCSO seizes 4.5 pounds of meth in traffic stop

News Special  
Towns County Herald

On Oct. 11, the Towns County Sheriff's Office made a traffic stop on US 76 that resulted in the seizure of approximately 4.5 pounds of methamphetamine. This is in addition to the multiple other pounds of meth taken off the streets this year.

Donna Lynn Livingston, 55, of Hiwassee, was arrested on charges related to possession of drug-related objects, window tint requirements, possession of methamphetamine,



Donna Lynn Livingston

See *Meth Bust*, Page 8A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Lake Levels

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| Blue Ridge | 1,674.95 |
| Chatuge    | 1,920.32 |
| Nottely    | 1,767.01 |

Barcode: 0487919315

Inside

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**SPORTS**

**FOOTBALL**

10/22 VS. GREENE CO

7:30 PM

Towns Co. Sheriff's Christmas Parade

See page 3A

**Appalachian Brew, Stew & Que Festival**

Oct. 23

See page 8A

Habitat for Humanity  
Towns/Union Counties, Inc.

**Habitat for Humanity Home**

See page 3A

## Shannon Larsen to speak to Movers and Shakers

We enter this world with joy, parties and presents. How we leave, however, is another matter. And so please welcome Ms. Shannon Larsen, Volunteer Coordinator with Homestead Hospice & Palliative Care in Blairsville. Homestead Hospice and their staff deal with the ending phase of life, helping patients and their families cope with this transition by using a Whole Family Approach. Ms. Larsen supervises dozens of volunteers, covering eight counties in North Georgia. Many families are dealing with elderly parents, and it is a daunting challenge. Find out how Homestead Hospice can help your family with caring for our loved ones as they travel to the great beyond.

Everyone is invited to join the Mountain Movers & Shakers, a grass-roots, non-partisan civic organization,



**Shannon Larsen** dedicated to serving the North Georgia/Western Carolina Mountain Region.

Come join us for information, conversation, and breakfast every Friday at 8 a.m. at the Sundance Grill, as we welcome civic leaders, elected officials, safety and forest officials all coming to share information of vital importance to all.

Like us on Facebook: Mountain Movers & Shakers.

## Weekly Patriot Reflection



### Tyranny and Control

Tyranny. A word that represents loss of freedom and liberties. By definition it describes a government in which a single leader, or party exercises absolute control over all citizens and every aspect of their lives. In 1776 our founding fathers declared that they would no longer live under tyranny. Samuel Adams helped the colonist understand the dangers of continuing under oppressive rule when he wrote: "Is it not high time for the people of this country explicitly to declare, whether they will be Freemen or Slaves? It is an important question which ought to be decided. It concerns us more than anything in this life. The salvation of our souls is interested in the event: For wherever tyranny is established, immorality of every kind comes in like a torrent. It is in the interest of tyrants to reduce the people to ignorance and vice. For they cannot live in any country where virtue and knowledge prevail. The religion and public liberty of a people are intimately connected; their interests are interwoven, they cannot subsist separately; and therefore they rise and fall together. For this reason, it is always observable, that those who are combined to destroy the people's liberties practice every art to poison their morals. How greatly then does it concern us, at all events, to put a stop to the progress of tyranny."

Knowing the dangers of absolute power we must be vigilant and aggressive in preventing its' grip on our society.

A Patriot Reflection is presented weekly by www.joshuawarriors.org. NT(Oct20,28)CA

## 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

- 10/17/21 Benjamin Jeffery Brown, age 40  
Drivers to exercise due care, DUI - drugs, Expired vehicle tag or decal, Failure to drive w/in single lane, Marijuana - possess less than 1 oz., Possession of Schedule II controlled substance
- 10/15/21 Randy Scott Crisp, age 41  
Serve 14 days
- 10/16/21 Stormi Karislee Hardy, age 31  
Driving while license suspended or revoked, DUI - drugs, Endangering child by DUI, Impeding traffic flow, Turning position; signals required
- 10/17/21 Jeffrey Scott Kasten, age 52  
DUI - alcohol, Failure to drive w/in single lane
- 10/11/21 John Leo Lezinski, age 55  
Failure to appear, Possession & use of drug-related objects, Possession of firearm or knife during commission or attempt to commit, Possession of meth, Purchase, possess, manu., distrib. or sale of marijuana (2 counts), Receipt, possession or transport of firearm by convicted felon or felony first (2 counts)
- 10/11/21 Donna Lynn Livingston, age 55  
Possession & use of drug-related objects, Possession of meth, Trafficking in cocaine, illegal drugs, marijuana or meth, Violation of window tint law
- 10/16/21 Brandon Michael Bolick, age 32  
Driving while license suspended or revoked, Tail light requirement
- 10/11/21 Michael Keith Helms, age 64  
Violation of family violence order
- 10/12/21 Kelsey Kathryn Reese, age 25  
Hold for White County

### TC Fire Department RESPONSE REPORT From: Fire Chief Harold Copeland



- 10/8/21 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (5)  
Dispatched and cancelled en route (4)  
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries  
Central station, malicious false alarm
- 10/9/21 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)  
Watercraft rescue  
Dispatched and cancelled en route  
Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS (2)  
Assist police or other governmental agency
- 10/8/21 Dispatched and cancelled en route  
Assist police or other governmental agency  
Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)
- 10/11/21 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (4)  
Public service assistance, other
- 10/12/21 Medical assist, assist EMS crew
- 10/13/21 Dispatched and cancelled en route  
Public service assistance, other  
Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)  
Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)
- 10/14/21 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (5)

## Towns County Community Calendar

|  |                    |         |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| <b>First Monday of each month:</b>         |                    |         |
| School Board                               | HS/MS Media Center | 6:45 pm |
| <b>First Tuesday of each month:</b>        |                    |         |
| Hiaw. City Council                         | City Hall          | 6 pm    |
| Young Harris City Council                  | YH City Hall       | 7 pm    |
| <b>Second Tuesday of each month:</b>       |                    |         |
| Conventions & Visitors Board               | Civic Center       | 8 am    |
| <b>Second Wednesday every other month:</b> |                    |         |
| Board of Elections                         | Elections Office   | 4 pm    |
| <b>Third Monday of each month:</b>         |                    |         |
| Planning Commission                        | Civic Center       | 6 pm    |
| Water Board                                | Water Office       | 6 pm    |
| <b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b>        |                    |         |
| Commissioner's Mtg.                        | Courthouse         | 5:30 pm |

### CVB Grant applications now available

The Towns County Conventions & Visitors Bureau, Grant Guidelines and Application for 2022 advertising support for 501C3 & C6 organizations in Towns County are ready. The request for the forms can be e-mailed to Jane

Holland at [janehholland@windstream.net](mailto:janehholland@windstream.net).

As a reminder, all grant requests are due back to Jane Holland by November 9, 2021. If you have questions or need our assistance, please call 404-219-3461. T(Oct20,F1)SH

## City Council...from Page 1A

requires council approval. Ordiales said the possibility of creating such a position was discussed a couple of years ago during development planning.

"I'm looking for someone who can just focus on city business three days a week, part time," Ordiales said, adding that the pay for this position would likely be about \$20 per hour and that the city would definitely be able to afford the new hire with hotel/motel tax revenues.

According to Ordiales, the city has many development initiatives in the works, and Towns/Hiwassee/Young Harris Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay and the volunteer Hiwassee DDA are not able to effectively concentrate on all of them at once.

She likened McKay's role to that of Union County Development Authority Executive Director Mitch Griggs, and the new position, if it is ultimately approved, to the job being done by Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Program Manager Darren Harper.

In recent years, the city has created the DDA to promote, beautify and develop the downtown area, which McKay believes will assist the city and DDA take their development goals to the next level.

The DDA has been instrumental in pursuing multiple local development initiatives, such as the Paris Business Center that will be overseen by the DDA, and helpful designations, like becoming a Plan-First Community and Rural

Zone, plus involvement in the Main Street Program.

And on top of McKay's Hiwassee-specific pursuits, she has taken on several countywide projects, including inclusion in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing that will hopefully assist Towns County and its cities in fostering the development of more affordable housing.

"With all the projects that we have going on everywhere, to give (these programs) the time that they need, we do need help," McKay said in response to Councilwoman Amy Barrett asking if she felt the position was necessary.

The council decided to table the creation of the job pending additional information and input from the full council, and Ordiales asked council members to let her know what information they were requesting before the next work session.

"We can table this — just let me know what you want," Ordiales said. "If you don't want it, that's fine, we'll just forget about it, but then we've got to ease up on all these projects that we've got going on because it's impossible for one person to do it."

Councilwoman Mitchell said she views a dedicated Hiwassee DDA person as essential to forwarding the city's development goals, and that postponing creation of the position was delaying the likely-to-be-tedious search to find a qualified applicant for the job.

"I just think it's going to take time to find somebody who has the skills to do what needs

to be done here," Mitchell said. "It won't be easy, so if we wait, and then it takes a long time to get there, all we get is further and further behind."

Also in the meeting, the council approved a new rate for force main sewer tie-ons, followed by the first reading of the Sewer Force Main Requirements Ordinance, with further discussion planned for the Oct. 25 work session before the expected second reading in November.

"(The rate) is going to go to \$3,500 from what it was depending on whether you were inside the city limits (\$2,250) or outside the city limits (\$2,700)," Ordiales said. "I hate doing that, but I think it's our only choice to provide economic development in the areas where we don't have lift stations and manholes and that kind of stuff. It just requires more equipment and supervision."

At the end of the meeting, the council and mayor went into executive session to discuss submitting a bid for the Kubota utility vehicle being sold by Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge.

Mitchell, who sits on the organization's Board of Directors, recused herself from the discussion, and afterward, from the successful vote to submit a sealed bid, with results of the bidding process being unavailable by press time.

Council members and Mayor Ordiales will meet again on Oct. 25 for their work session and Nov. 9 for their next regular meeting. Both meetings will take place at 6 p.m. inside City Hall, with livestreams available via Facebook.

**Interested in applying for a Habitat for Humanity home?**



The next house by Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties, Inc. will be located on Gumlog Road in Towns County.

Here's some basic information about being a Habitat Homeowner:

The homeowners must have lived in Union or Towns Counties for 2 years, or worked in Union or Towns Counties for 4 years. They must meet income requirements, pass a background check, have a reasonable credit score, and the family must contribute 350 hours of "Sweat Equity," that is, work on either their home, in the ReStore, or with another Habitat Project. There is a small down payment required.

Anyone who is interested in applying MUST attend one of the four upcoming orientation sessions:

Nov. 6 @ 10 a.m. and Nov. 9 @ 7 p.m. at the Towns County Civic Center, 48 River Street, Hiwassee, GA 30546

Nov. 11 @ 7 p.m. and Nov. 13 @ 10 a.m. at First Baptist Church, 296 Blue Ridge Street, Blairsville, GA 30512

Habitat people will be present at the orientations to explain everything and generally help participants with any

Habitat for Humanity

## Orientation

Interested in Applying for a Habitat for Humanity Home?  
Find out how to qualify and apply!

**RSVP**

In store: 225 Wellborn St. Blairsville  
or call us at: 706-745-7101  
Email: [operations@townsunionhabitat.org](mailto:operations@townsunionhabitat.org)

**Hiwassee**

Sat. Nov. 6th @10AM  
Tues. Nov. 9th @7PM

Hiwassee Civic Center  
48 River St. Hiwassee,  
GA 30546

**Blairsville**

Thurs. Nov 11th, @7PM  
Sat. Nov.13th @10AM

First Baptist Church  
296 Blue Ridge St. Blairsville,  
GA 30512

Children welcome at orientation

questions they may have. Please call the Habitat Office at 706-745-7101 or email us at [development@townsunionhabitat.org](mailto:development@townsunionhabitat.org) to be put on the list for one of the

orientations. The Habitat Mission is: Putting God's love in action. We envision a world where "everyone has a decent place to live." NT10x20Z6CA

**Early Voting...from Page 1A**

based on proximity to schools, churches, etc.

Packaged liquor sales would contribute a significant amount of new tax revenues to the City of Hiwassee, generating local tax dollars that would otherwise be flowing to neighboring municipalities.

Election Day voting will take place Nov. 2 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Elections Board Office.

Voters may pick up a copy of the new "Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot" from the Elections Board Office located at

67 Lakeview Circle, Suite A, in Hiwassee or print a copy at [https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021\\_Absentee\\_App.9721\\_2.pdf](https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021_Absentee_App.9721_2.pdf).

"Georgia law allows for absentee-by-mail ballots to be requested no earlier than 78 days and no later than 11 days prior to an election," per sos.ga.gov. "Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or in-person to the local County Board of Registrar's Office."

People are encouraged to request and return their absen-

tee ballots early to give their ballot "enough time to travel through the mail and resolve any issues that may arise when voting by absentee ballot," per georgia.gov.

For the November election, the deadline to return absentee-by-mail ballot applications is Oct. 22. Folks wanting to utilize the official drop box to turn in their absentee ballots can find it inside the Elections Board Office main entrance during early voting hours.

Voters can also drop completed absentee ballots off at the Elections Board Office through Election Day.

**The Tri-State Community Band presents a Fall Concert at Young Harris College Sunday, October 24th**



The Tri-State Community Band Clarinet Section

The Tri-State Community Band will present a fall concert at 3 PM on Sunday, October 24, 2022 in the Glenn-McGinnis Hall on the campus of Young Harris College. The concert is free and open to the public.

Conductors for this concert will be Dr. Patrick Young, Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music, Young Harris College; Kerry Rittenhouse, Instructor of Music Education, Young Harris College; Alan Denmon, retired music educator and founder

of the Young Harris College Community Band; and Daniel Foster, Band Director, Union County Middle School.

Our program will include: British Eighth by Zo Elliot, No One Is Alone by Stephen Sondheim, Suite of Old American Dances by Robert Russell Bennett, Kentucky 1800 by Clare Grundman, Chant and Jubilo by Francis McBeth, Dance of the Jesters by Ptr. Tchaikovsky, and Iowa Band Law by Karl King.

The Tri-State Community Band serves a threefold

purpose. The band provides an opportunity for local musicians to perform quality musical literature. Our membership includes students and adults from several nearby counties. It serves as an educational resource for area schools and presents several free concerts every year for the residents of Young Harris and surrounding areas.

Young Harris College strongly encourages that all individuals wear masks indoors while in public and sit less than six feet from others.

NT10x20Z7CA

Towns County Sheriff's Office

Christmas Parade

The Towns County Sheriff's Office Christmas Parade will be kicking off the Christmas Season Saturday, December 4, 2021 @ 5:30 p.m.

This year's theme is "Have a Holly Jolly Christmas".

The parade route will begin in the parking lot of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds with lineup beginning at 4:00 p.m. If you are planning to enter the float contest you will need to be lined up and fully decorated by 4:15 p.m.

**NO ENTRY FEE IS REQUIRED**  
**UNLESS YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE TO SHOP WITH THE SHERIFF**  
\*All parade entries must be well-lit.

\*Children under the age of 18 must be supervised by an adult.

\*We ask that entries do not have Santa on their float.

Please call Towns County Sheriff's Office to let them know if you are participating in the parade.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Towns County Sheriff's Office at 1-706-896-4444.

# Student Forum...from Page 1A



Towns County Middle School students Leland Wilson, Kaitlyn Walls and Dylan Mason participating in the Towns County Civic Association's forum Oct. 11. Photo by Mark Smith

moderated the middle school forum. McKeon is a board-certified registered nurse specializing in addiction recovery and psychiatric and mental health.

She asked the middle school students a series of questions regarding drugs, alcohol and vaping, and how each affected their school relationships and lives.

Sixth grader Dylan Mason said drug abuse could prevent him from getting a job he might want someday and even affect his mental or physical health.

Seventh grader Leland Wilson said, "I think drugs are extremely, extremely bad, and this is a problem that needs to be resolved."

Seventh grader Kaitlyn Walls said some friends and fellow students have tried to influence her to engage in vaping, but she resisted, causing diminished relationships with some of them.

Obviously, these middle school kids are aware of drugs/alcohol, vaping, and other unhealthy behaviors, and that there is the potential for these bad behaviors to enter their lives through their relationships at school and through life in general.

It is this time of a child's life when they most need positive influence from parents, older siblings, and other influential adults.

Following the middle school forum, McKeon gave a PowerPoint presentation with a narrative on methamphetamines, alcohol and opioids, the latter of which include heroin and its derivatives.

McKeon informed those gathered that Cherokee County, North Carolina, was currently ranked No. 1 in that state for methamphetamine

and heroin use, which gives an idea of the proximity of those drugs to Towns County.

The theme of the high school student forum was "Active Students Make Great Choices."

Each student stood before the audience and gave their perspectives on how students with a purpose, those who are reaching for something and pursuing goals, make much more mature choices, thereby enabling them to keep away from drugs and the people using/pushing them.

High school junior Layne Rouse recommended to his fellow students a book titled "Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets" by Andy Stanley, which suggests five questions a person should ask of him or herself before making decisions, basically to think before acting.

Junior Sarah Shook suggested becoming involved with career-related clubs and activities at school.

"Doing things like this motivates students to want to join clubs, which then inspires them to make better choices when (they) have something to work toward," Shook said.

Senior Collin Crowder quoted poet and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, saying, "Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it," and he added that student involvement in sports is another way of being active.

Fellow senior Kayla Peacock suggested work-based learning as a way for students to occupy their time.

"By working, whether it be at school or off campus, we also earn school credit, which, in turn, inches us closer to acquiring our high school diploma," Peacock said.

In an abbreviated speech, Rep. Gunter pointed out that during his years as a prosecutor and Superior Court Judge, about 90% of criminal cases involved drugs or alcohol.

"So, if we were able to do away with that, you see how much we would reduce crime," Gunter said. "Sitting as a judge all those years, most of the civil cases that I dealt with – divorce and car accidents, things like that – usually involved drugs or alcohol. Our court system would just about shut down if we could get rid of that."

Towns County Coroner Pamela Cooper also led a presentation discussing deaths caused by drug overdose and the toxicology involved. Because there are so many cases at present, toxicology reports on overdose fatalities in Towns County are taking three to four months to process.

Chief Deputy Gene Moss said the Towns County Sheriff's Office had made "162 substance-related arrests in the first nine months of this year," with 33 of those involving DUIs.

That's in addition to the 11-plus pounds of methamphetamine the Sheriff's Office has confiscated since the start of the year.

One major idea that sprang out of the student forum was to bring more young people into the discussion around drug abuse and to educate them so they can make more informed decisions on their own, when parents or other responsible adults aren't around to protect them.

This idea, coupled with the efforts of law enforcement and the drug courts, will hopefully have a positive impact on what is a major problem in Towns County.

# Fall Festival...from Page 1A

Exhibit to the Fall Festival, and despite public rumors, the gardens will not be closing.

Hamilton Gardens will be coming back under management of the Georgia Mountain Fair at the end of the month. Already, plans are in the works for a big Rhododendron Festival to run April and May in 2022, to feature the gardens' many gorgeous rhododendrons and native azaleas.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the property, the Music Hall was aflutter with music aficionados and performing stars. Known as Georgia's Country Music Capital, the fairgrounds was honored to host popular singers of the genre like Tracy Lawrence, Lee Greenwood and Ronnie Milsap.

On Friday, Neal McCoy's concert in particular drew a sizable crowd, with guests enjoying his outgoing personality as much as his music.

McCoy's gritty, rockin' version of the "Beverly Hillbillies" theme was interrupted by the country original when he realized some members of the crowd weren't "really into it." Satisfied with the newfound enthusiasm, he continued his show and undoubtedly had as much fun as the audience.

Live music could be found all throughout the Fall Festival, including by porch pickin' performers Gene Johnson and Lucy Cole of The Sea Notes, set up just inside the fairgrounds. The duo dressed in historical outfits complete with notched hat and laced bonnet.

Johnson strummed the guitar while Cole played the fiddle. Their specialties included country, bluegrass, and even blues, and it was hard for anyone to pass them by without at least tapping a foot or two.

Behind Johnson and Cole's cabin stage were rows of booths set up like miniature garages with pull-down doors for added overnight security. During the bright light of day, however, homemade goods were out on full display.

Bruce and Jolene Hendrix of The Honey Hustle set up shop with necklaces, body butter, towels, and of course honey from their hives located in Hiawassee and Bonaire. The couple found a use for crystallized honey in their flavored creamed honey spreads.

Made with honey and dehydrated fruit, the tasty spreads pair well with pancakes, toast and cereal, and can be either sweet as with the blackberry or pumpkin spice flavors, or savory like the jalapeno flavor.

"It's healthy, it's good for you. It's really good for



Neal McCoy was a crowd favorite during his Oct. 15 shows at the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



T.G. Sheppard performed for adoring fans on Tuesday, Oct. 12, inside Anderson Music Hall. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

your immune system, it's good for your digestion – it's a super food." Jolene Hendrix said of the creamed honey, emphasizing its health benefits as a natural sugar.

Within shouting distance of The Honey Hustle's booth was that of We Bee Jammin', a business owned and operated by Christy Bush. Last year, Bush was released from her job due to COVID-19 lay-offs. Making use of her passion for culinary arts, she decided to start her own business.

"Nervous as all get out" at her first and second shows around November 2020, Bush brought 35-50 jars of jam in just three different flavors. This October, Bush and her husband Mike hauled 2,000 jars in over 10 different flavors to the Fall Festival, their first large-scale event.

"I didn't think that this would be my calling, but it really feels like it is," Bush said with apparent pride. "I figure if I wake up someday and I don't want to go to the kitchen, that's the day we shut down, because there's not one day I wake up and say I don't love what I'm doing."

Another Fall Festival mainstay was the Pioneer Village, complete with daily historical craft demonstrations. In buildings dating back to the 1800s, experts on moonshin-

ing, blacksmithing, quilting, and other arts borne of necessity showed how past generations lived in the mountains.

The only occupation without a live demonstration was the sawmill, which had been closed for safety reasons. Still, a guest speaker was there to educate the public.

And though the nine-day Fall Festival has concluded for 2021, there's still plenty of fun to be had at the fairgrounds, as the Appalachian Brew, Stew & Que Festival returns for another year running on Oct. 23 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Featuring more than 60 breweries and five distributors, the celebration showcases some of the best craft beer in the Southeastern United States. In addition to fine drinks, local restaurants will set up in the on-site booths to present some of their most popular dishes.

There will be entertainment on two stages as well, picnic tables set aside for folks interested in the unlimited brew taste testing, and vendors selling related arts, crafts, and even seasonings to go along with the primary gustatory delights of the festival.

Tickets will be \$40 at the gate or \$35 in advance online, and food will be available for an additional fee. For more information, visit [georgiamountainfairgrounds.com](http://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com).

# Glidewell...from Page 1A

happiness is in serving somebody else," he said, adding that serving customers is what BRMEMC is all about.

Glidewell then segued into what he really came to talk about, which was fiber optic service in North Georgia, specifically in Towns County.

Historically, he said, around the time that the lakes were being built to control flooding in the 1930s, someone realized that electric power could be generated with the dams. But, once done, it wasn't cost effective to run long power lines to just the few customers who could afford it.

Recognizing the benefits of electrifying large areas of the South, the federal government stepped in and offered low-interest loans to groups of people who banded together as electric cooperative companies, making the astronomical cost of running power lines affordable for individuals.

It was also a good thing, said Glidewell, because when the federal loans were paid back, the electric co-op, that is, the membership, owned the infrastructure.

"Among all the government programs that I've been privileged to witness in my life, I would argue that it's been the most successful, because the government didn't expend any of its money," he said. "Every bit of (those low-interest loans) was paid (back) by the rate payers."

"Remember this: the story was people banding together to get for themselves what no one else would bring them."

Continued Glidewell, "In 1930 we served (people) with an electric system. Today, we're taking on the opportunity to serve them with a broadband system. I want to point out to you the stark similarities in the paradigm between 1930 in electricity and today in broadband."

Glidewell said the same problem of cost effectiveness to run fiber optic lines exists generally today as it did to run

power lines nearly 100 years ago.

The difference today is that the federal government is distributing money for increased broadband infrastructure through grant programs. Still, the co-op membership ends up owning it.

And, said Glidewell, "we have our own set of circumstances today, like supply shortages, labor shortages and rising prices."

# Meth Bust...from Page 1A

and trafficking in methamphetamine.

The drugs field-tested positive on the scene, and the case is considered an open and ongoing criminal investigation.

"But we've got the opportunity, we've got the capability," he said. "We've expanded our technical expertise and launched out the business, and we are building that out."

"And today, our Board of Directors is committed to supplying this everywhere (within 10 years through initiatives like the Neighborhood Networking Program)."

For more information on the Neighborhood Networking Program, call BRMEMC at 706-379-3121.



Sheriff Ken Henderson posing with his agency's most recent meth bust totaling about 4.5 pounds. Photo/Facebook