



Happy Thanksgiving

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Shop with a Hero now taking donations for Christmas

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Ten years ago, Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright started a beloved local tradition – the annual Shop with a Cop program for Towns County children.

When Wright unexpectedly passed away three years ago in December 2015, Shop with a Cop carried on in his memory, as he would have wanted.

And in accordance with Wright's wishes to expand the program to include all public safety workers in Towns County, the event came to be known as Shop with a Hero the year following his passing.

The goal of the program has always been simple – to give kids a special Christmas experience by taking them

shopping.

No one likes the idea of children waking up Christmas morning without presents under the tree, which is the thought that drove Wright to start the program in 2008.

"The main thing is the kids," said Chief Wright in the leadup to a past Shop with a Cop. "We want them to have a ball, have a good time. That means everything in the world to us."

Of course, the Christmastime program relies completely on community donations to take kids shopping, and organizers Amy Gibby-Rosser of Towns County Family Connection and Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith hope to accommodate between 25 and 30 kids this year.

So far, Shop with a Hero has received a few donations

toward the 2018 event, and the program still needs the community's monetary support.

Looking ahead, all the Christmas magic will happen when students make their way from Towns County Schools on the last day of the semester – an early release day heralding the start of winter break – to the Walmart in Blairsville, where they will shop for presents.

The middle-school aged children will be joined by volunteer chaperones from all areas of Towns County public safety, including firefighters, EMS workers and paramedics, police officers and sheriff's deputies, and other first responders.

After leaving Walmart with their presents, which will likely include many gifts See Shop with a Hero, Page 6A



Amy Gibby-Rosser of Towns County Family Connection with Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Kemp wins governor's race; two contests headed for Dec. 4 runoff

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Republican Brian Kemp will be the next governor of Georgia, after Democrat Stacey Abrams ended her bid in the gubernatorial race on Friday, Nov. 16.

The drawn-out governor's race has been a contentious one, involving extremely close vote margins and interventions by a couple of U.S. District Judges to make sure every vote counted.

In the end, Abrams acknowledged that she just didn't have the votes to continue her challenge of Kemp, the majority vote getter.

Kemp's final margin of victory was about 55,000 votes, or 50.22 percent of the statewide vote to Abrams' 48.83 percent.

And while there will not be a runoff election for the office of governor, there will be two races appearing in a Dec. 4 Runoff Election: Secretary of State and Public Service Commission, District 3.

The runoff will feature Republican Brad Raffensperger



Gov.-elect Brian Kemp

facing off against Democrat John Barrow for Secretary of State, while Republican Incumbent Chuck Eaton will be aiming for re-election to the Public Service Commission, District 3 seat against Democrat Lindy Miller.

Early voting in the Dec. 4 Runoff Election will take place Monday, Nov. 26, through Friday, Nov. 30, between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Board of Elections Office.

There will be one day of extended early voting, on

Thursday, Nov. 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The board office is located in Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiwassee, and it will remain open to voters even during lunchtime.

Runoff Election Day will be on Tuesday, Dec. 4, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and instead of voting at the board office, voters should report to one of the four pre-assigned Towns County voting precincts: Hiwassee, Young Harris, Macedonia and Tate City.

The Macedonia Precinct has changed from the campus of Towns County Schools to Macedonia Baptist Church.

"Georgia law requires registered voters to show photo identification in order to vote in person," according to the Secretary of State's office. "When you vote in person, you must show one of the following photo IDs:

"A Georgia driver's license, even if expired; any valid state or federal government issued photo ID, including one issued by the Department of Driver Services or your Voter Registrar; valid

See Election, Page 6A

Hiwassee man killed in hit-and-run accident in Hayesville, NC

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

A Towns County man's death is being investigated as a pedestrian hit-and-run accident by the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and the Clay County NC Sheriff's Office.

The accident involved Randall "Shorty" David Penland, 49, of Hiwassee, who was killed on U.S. 64 in Clay County, North Carolina, sometime around 3 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 16.

According to the NC State Highway Patrol, the investigation is still active and ongoing, and no one had been taken into custody by press time Monday.

Services for Penland were held on Monday, Nov. 19, at Banister Funeral Home, where family and friends gathered to honor his memory.

"Shorty never met



Randall "Shorty" Penland

a stranger, he would talk to anyone," according to his obituary. "He actually would go out of his way to make certain he spoke to people and made them feel special.

"He put other people's needs and even wants before his own. He had a huge heart,

he would leave a paying job to go help someone for free.

"His sense of humor was never-ending, just his presence made any event more enjoyable. Everyone who met Shorty instantly fell in love with him, because he just made people feel good about themselves.

"He was a hard worker, he loved big, and had an unforgettable smile. He was his mama's 'gentle giant.'" Surviving Shorty are his parents, David and Anna Dean Penland; son, David Chandler Penland; sisters and brothers-in-law, Theresa and H.D. Parker, and Nicole and Austin Gibson; nieces, Adyson and Harper; nephew, Josh Parker; and two great-nieces, Jaylen and Kiley.

Updates to this story will appear in future editions of the newspaper and at TownsCountyHerald.net.

Mountain Country Christmas! In Lights to shine brightly on Thanksgiving

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With winter rapidly approaching, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is ready to welcome area residents to the annual Mountain Country Christmas! In Lights display and other events.

The light display opens Thanksgiving night at 6 p.m. and runs every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday until Dec. 29. Admission into the lights is \$5 per person, with children under 12 being free.

This is the third year for the Christmas-themed light show at the Fairgrounds, and General Manager Hilda Thomason hopes to bring in more attendees than ever before.

"It is a walkthrough Christmas light show, and we call it the Mountain Country Christmas! In Lights," said Thomason. "This year, we have all the craft booths filled with businesses, churches, civic organizations, and other vendors selling crafts and food."

Also new in 2018 are brand new light displays,



Be sure to check out the Mountain Country Christmas! In Lights at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds starting Thanksgiving night. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

including a giant walkthrough ornament in which attendees can take pictures.

"We hope to have great attendance this year, because last year we had a little over 1,500 in attendance, and it just keeps growing and growing," said Thomason. "It's a great tourism attraction during the wintertime, when things are slow in the mountains, and our whole purpose of doing it is

to bring people to this county and boost the economy in the wintertime."

Apart from the lights, the event will also have the exhibit hall decorated, and Jerry Taylor will play Christmas music on the antique reed organs.

"We have all the tables down in the exhibit hall filled," said Thomason. "On Dec. 1, we will have a concert down there See Christmas, Page 6A

Commissioner Bradshaw signs application for federal transit funds

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signed a Transit Grant application in a called meeting on Monday, Nov. 12, at his office in the courthouse.

Bradshaw said the Transit Grant must be applied for every year, and that the total amount of money, which includes a local amount and a matching grant from the federal government, is \$99,020.

This works out to \$49,510 supplied by Towns County and \$49,510 granted to Towns County from the federal government.

Bradshaw said yearly revenues from transit operations is approximately \$19,000. Towns County picks up the tab for the balance of about \$30,000.

In order to qualify for the Transit Grant, it was necessary to update the definitions in the Transit Procurement Policy, though this does not affect pricing for those who use the transit buses.

Towns County Finance Director Andrea Anderson explained that a procurement policy is a set of guidelines that must be followed when there is a transfer of assets from the granting agency to Towns



Towns County Transit Secretary Betty Greenwood with Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw in the Nov. 12 called county meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

County. When Towns County applies for a grant from the federal government, the county must adhere to the procurement policy guidelines set by the federal government.

Anderson said Towns County has its own procurement policy, but the federal guidelines were adopted in this case.

This Transit Procurement Policy update is simply a paperwork change that is required by the grantor and has no bearing on transit fares. The Towns County Transit Fares policy will remain the same: "As of Jan. 1, 2010, the

current one-way fare is \$2 for the first mile and \$0.40 for each additional mile rounded to the nearest dollar. Two dollars for each additional stop.

"A flat rate of \$6 to Union County (\$12 round trip) will be charged, and a flat rate of \$4 from Hiwassee to Young Harris (\$8 round trip) will be charged."

A copy of the complete Towns County Transit Fares policy may be acquired at the commissioner's office in the Towns County Courthouse.

It is estimated that the Towns County Transit Service

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