

Towns County Herald

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TCHS Boys, Girls Soccer Teams head for Final Four



Lady Indians Goalkeeper Laura Mauldin has made many phenomenal saves this season, helping her teammates make it into the Final Four for the first time in program history.

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The fifth-ranked Towns County Indians (11-2) used their third consecutive shutout to down No. 6 Atkinson County 3-0 at home May 5 to advance to the first State Semifinal in program history.

With time winding down

in the first half of a scoreless tie that Wednesday, the host team exploded with a pair of goals in the 40th minute, beginning with a Garrett Oakes putback and followed by a Jensen Brown score moments later to spot the Indians a 2-0 advantage at break.

Still sporting a two-goal lead at the midway point

of the second half, Peyton Barrett killed the match with an unassisted goal, set up by a lengthy goal kick from keeper Luis Quijada.

After collecting an Atkinson County shot, Barrett penetrated his way into the box, where he blasted a shot past the Atkinson goalie and into the

back of the net.

With a three-goal margin, the Towns County defense tightened the clamps over the final 20 minutes to preserve Quijada's second clean sheet of the tournament and third straight overall.

"I'm really proud of these guys," Head Coach Rollie Thomas said. "I promised them during their sophomore year that if they made the Final Four, I'd rock a suit at the match, just like in the Premier League, so I guess I'll be doing that."

The Indians will once again defend their home pitch with a Class A Public State Semifinal fixture versus No. 2 Georgia Military College on Tuesday, May 11, at 5 p.m. This game occurred after press time.

Region 2 second seed GMC enters with a 10-6 record after finishing as region runner-up to top-ranked Academy for Classical Education. The Indians and Bulldogs share

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Senior Indian Jensen Brown celebrated with sophomore teammate Grant Ingram immediately after scoring Towns County's second goal in the 3-0 shutout victory against Atkinson County at home May 5.

Brasstown Manor delights in 'Veterans Visitations' returning

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Thursday, May 6, was a joyous occasion for the Brasstown Manor Senior Living Community in Hiwassee, as residents there welcomed back members of the American Legion Post 23, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 and other local veterans.

Since 2012, a group of dedicated veterans has been visiting monthly with Brasstown residents, cheering them up, bringing them news, and simply spending time with them out of respect for their elders.

That all came to an end with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring, which shuttered much of society for nearly a year, including senior living facilities, to protect those most vulnerable to the disease.

Fortunately, COVID



Brasstown Manor resident Shirley Sonnenfeld was honored last week for being the county's oldest female veteran, having served in the Navy's WAVES military unit during World War II.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

metrics have been improving for months, allowing places like Brasstown Manor to restart some visitations, certainly a welcome change from window visits by family and friends in a

time when many residents had to stay in their rooms around the clock.

Brasstown opened its doors to family members mid-

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High School celebrates seniors pursuing careers in education

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Monday, May 3, eight Towns County High School seniors received recognition for their goals of becoming teachers with a special reception celebrating Georgia Future Educators' Signing Day.

High School Faculty and Staff commemorated the occasion in the Middle/High Media Center with a signing and a cake, giving the students an experience akin to an athletic signing ceremony celebrated by other students.

Lelia Barnard, Maci Walls, Samantha Matheson,

Jensen Brown, Breanna Burnette, Kaylee Dillard, Reace Hampton and Madison Hickey each have college plans for the teaching field.

Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong was happy to see such a large group of students going into education

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TCHS Seniors Madison Hickey, Samantha Matheson, Lelia Barnard, Maci Walls, Kaylee Dillard, Breanna Burnette and Reace Hampton attended the May 3 Georgia Future Educators' Signing Day. Not pictured: Jensen Brown.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Hiwassee Night Market runs every first Friday thru October

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's official – the popular Hiwassee Night Market has returned for 2021, and people far and wide are invited to attend on the Town Square every first Friday of the month between now and October.

Running from 5-9 p.m., the first installment of the open-air Night Market took place on Friday, May 7, featuring artisans and artists, fresh produce, live music from band GAS, food trucks, games and more.

The family-friendly inaugural outing Aug. 7, 2020, planned by Mayor Liz Ordiales and Economic Development Director Denise McKay to promote Hiwassee and to give the community and local vendors something to enjoy together outdoors.



The Hiwassee Town Square was a little windy and chilly Friday evening, but that didn't stop residents from enjoying the return of the Hiwassee Night Market May 7.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

McKay was excited to see a large turnout Friday night and hopes it heralds the success of future night markets.

"This is fantastic," McKay said. "I think it has really caught on and people are

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Sheriff's Office, GBI investigate shooting off Hall Creek Road

News Special
Towns County Herald

A white male is in critical condition at a nearby hospital as a domestic-related shooting that occurred the afternoon of Sunday, May 9, in the Hall Creek Road community, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Due to the domestic nature of the case, the Sheriff's Office is not releasing names at this point.

The case is under investigation by the Sheriff's Office and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and an update will follow at a later date.

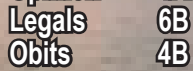
No arrests had been made in the case by press time Monday, and Sheriff Ken Henderson said there is no threat to the general public.



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Basic Pistol course presented by Chatuge Gun Club

The Chatuge Gun Club will present a course titled "Basic Pistol", a 12-hour course demonstrating fundamental handling of handguns and the legal ownership, storage, and use of firearms and information pertaining to the citizen's right of self-defense will be presented by the Chatuge Gun Club, Inc., of Hiawassee, GA. The course will be conducted on Saturday and Sunday, 22 & 23 May 2021.

The course is a basic handgun course enhanced by emphasis on self-defense and the law, so it is suitable for experienced, as well as novice shooters. Ignorance and carelessness are the two leading causes of firearm accidents. Our aim is to eliminate both of them! Safe gun handling and storage techniques are paramount and are presented as a priority throughout the course.

Firearm Safety is the focus of the presentation. Other topics visited include selection of a firearm, the anatomy of

a handgun and its ammunition, loading and unloading of firearms, cleaning and maintenance of firearms. We also explore methods and techniques that may be used to prevent home invasion or other occurrences which might evolve into a life-threatening situation requiring the use of deadly force.

The 8-hour classroom portion of the course will be held on Saturday beginning at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be included this day. In addition to the course, questions and information pertaining to the legal, ownership, possession, transportation, and the use of firearms and deadly force will be fielded by an Attorney that practiced in Georgia.

Supervised live firing will be conducted throughout the day on the following Sunday at the Chatuge Gun Club's firing range. The single thing that makes this class unique is the fact that we are able to provide one-on-one coaching on the firing line. Having at-

tended other courses over the years, although their content is generally excellent, they are not able to provide the intensive firing line assistance. For safety and a more complete learning experience, the one-on-one experience is essential. This is made possible by qualified members of the Chatuge Gun Club who are willing to donate their time and expertise to afford a safe, entertaining, and rewarding experience.

Participants should provide a suitable handgun and 100 rounds of appropriate ammunition. A "suitable handgun" is defined as one capable of firing a minimum of five shots without reloading; it should also be capable of being fired without manual re-cocking. Single action revolvers are allowed but not recommended. High performance or magnum loads are not necessary nor are they desirable. A target load is adequate.

A certificate of attendance is awarded at the completion of the course. The course is a "must" for anyone who has a handgun for personal protection. The minimum age for participation is 16; those under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

A nominal fee of \$40 will be charged to cover the cost of classroom materials, texts, snacks, lunch, targets, etc. (Yes, it says lunch).

The instructors, coach-

es, instructional and law enforcement personnel contributing to this course are strictly volunteers donating their time and efforts as a public service to educate and possibly quell some of the negative images being given to firearms by the media for whatever reason.

Pre-registration is required to a class capacity of 30. For information and/or registration, call Ed Jones at (706) 896-1783 or edjones@brmemc.net between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Health Dept. hosts COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic May 15th

The Towns County Health Department will hold a Saturday morning COVID-19 vaccination clinic on May 15 from 8:15-11:45 a.m.

Appointments are recommended but walk-ins accepted. To make an appointment, call 706-896-2265.

People may find the Health Department at 1104 Jack Dayton Circle in Young Harris.

Hunter part of UNG team that places in NSA Cyber Exercise

The University of North Georgia (UNG) finished sixth out of 11 schools participating in the National Security Agency Cyber Exercise (NCX) held virtually April 8-10.

Alyssa Hunter of Young Harris, GA, was one of the UNG participants in NCX.

After entering as an expo team in 2019, this was the first year UNG participated as a competition team. UNG faced off against the nation's five other senior military colleges, three service academies and two National Security Agency (NSA) units.

UNG's team included 17 cadets and eight civilian students, including 11 seniors. Fourteen of these students are eligible to compete again next year.

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
5/8/21	Jeffrey David Ashton, age 37 Pending per 112
5/7/21	Richard Dewayne Green, age 31 Probation violation
5/5/21	Gary Wayne King, age 50 Serving time
5/6/21	Tony Curtis Ledford, age 47 Aggravated stalking
5/6/21	Ryan Fletcher Turbyfill, age 42 Probation violation
5/5/21	Sandra Kay Cheek, age 65 Deposit account fraud - felony
5/5/21	Tyler James Ponder, age 32 Simple battery - family violence
5/6/21	Matthew Troy Benjamin Smith, age 36 Driving while license suspended or revoked

Tax Commissioner Anderson to speak to Towns County Republicans

This is the official call for The Towns County Republican Party Monthly Meeting for May. The meeting will be held on Thursday, May 20th at 5:45 PM at Daniel Steak House, Hiawassee, Georgia 30546. The room will be open 5 - 5:45 PM for social and dining: the actual meeting will start promptly at 5:45.

Please join us as our guest speaker will be our newly elected, and first Republican Tax Commissioner of Towns County, Michael Anderson.

After the opening exercises, the first five minutes of the meeting will be delegated to a discussion on the US Constitution regarding Taxation.

Our esteemed Commissioner, Cliff Bradshaw, will

introduce Commissioner Anderson who will allow a question-and-answer period after his presentation.

A brief review of the 9th District Republican Convention held May 14-15 at Dillard House will follow.

Two people have notified me that they would like to speak during our announcement portion of the meeting which will then be followed by, after gaveling the meeting closed, door prize drawings.

All are invited and it is "Rib Night" so please join us or watch us on our live streaming Facebook page.

For further information contact Betsy Young at tcgop-chair@gmail.com or 904-382-1912.

ArtWorks announces new location

ArtWorks Artisan Center, owned and operated by members of the Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc. a 501(c)3 organization, recently moved to a new location at 243 Big Sky Drive in Hiawassee.

The Center, located across the street from Bacchus Wine Shoppe will continue to offer art supplies, new and exciting classes and the creative works of many local artists

and crafts persons.

We welcome you to visit and explore our many new and exciting offerings at the new location during our "Soft" opening on May 20th.

For recent news, announcements or to learn more about ArtWorks and the Guild, look for us on Facebook at facebook.com/wwwmountainartscrafts or on our website at www.mountainartscrafts.org.

School Board...from Page 1A

A Forensic and Environmental teacher at the High School, Rowland also has previous coaching experience. On top of being Head Coach of the softball team in past seasons, Rowland has spent many years assistant coaching for Stowers on the wrestling team.

His extensive background in wrestling extends to both practicing and coaching, including five years as an athlete, having placed Third in State in 2004, and 16 years as an assistant coach under some very successful coaches around the state.

Now, he'll be leading the team as Head Coach, and he can't wait for the opportunity.

"It's an honor to have been chosen for the head wrestling coach position," Rowland said. "I have been preparing for this moment for over 16 years.

"I feel that I will bring a fresh new perspective to the program that will build upon the legacy that Coach Stowers has established here at TCHS. I have some huge shoes to fill and am up for the challenge."

Rowland's goals for the upcoming year will be to "set the bar high and give us a foundation" from which to build, including a feeder program by way of a recently returned middle school wrestling team headed up by Coach Evan Woodard.

"Even though this will be a transitioning and growing year, I still have high hopes for this season because we have quite a few dedicated and hard-working young men and women," Rowland said.

REACH Georgia Scholarship Program

In other business, the board voted unanimously to approve the REACH Georgia Scholarship Program at the Towns County School District. Nearly every other school system in the state takes part in this program.

REACH stands for Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen and is a \$10,000 need-based youth development and scholarship program "with specific financial, academic and behavior eligibility requirements," per the Georgia Student Finance Authority.

Scholarship funding comes predominately from the REACH Georgia Foundation in conjunction with a one-time \$1,000 match per student from the school system, raised at the

local level. And the \$10,000 award may even be doubled or tripled depending on the college being attended.

Eligible students start the program in the eighth grade, and with the assistance of an academic coach and mentor, students who complete the program requirements receive the scholarship after high school graduation for use toward "any component of the cost of attendance" in college.

FY22 Budget Talk

Prior to the start of their work session May 3, the school board held a public hearing to receive input on the tentative Fiscal Year 2022 operating budget, which will be \$21,216,820. This was the second such public hearing in the last month, and again, no one from the public attended.

The Tentative Budget presented in the May 3 meeting incorporated \$2,116,998 in additional federal funding not included in the budget presented last month because School Finance Director Myra Underwood was waiting to hear back from the Georgia Department of Education before including the additional funding.

Basically, the main difference between the FY21 and FY22 budgets is the level of CARES Act funding, with the schools set to receive a second payment of \$942,623 from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or ESSER Fund, in FY22 as part of the CARES Act.

"We will also be receiving ESSER III funds in the amount of \$2,116,998 to be used during FY2022, FY2023 and FY2024 if needed, to help offset General Fund expenses," Underwood said previously.

There will be no change for the General Fund in FY22, which will remain the same as FY21 at \$14,503,440. There will be, however, an FY21 Budget Amendment of \$1,199,873 for special revenue funds due primarily to CARES Act monies.

Underwood said the schools continue to dramatically outperform recent years in sales and property tax collections. For example, the property tax collection report for May 2020 reflected just \$67,000, while the report for the May 2021 meeting was four times that at \$272,000.

This is good news for the

district, as is the projected \$5 million fund balance, though Underwood will maintain her usual conservative budgeting practices due to ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

The budget is being advertised this week in the legal organ of the county and will be considered for final adoption at 6:45 p.m. on Monday, June 7, at the Towns County Middle/High Media Center.

Other Business

Also last week, the School Board gave the go-ahead for a SPLOST project to repaint the interior of the Elementary School this summer, including hallways and classrooms. The inside has been touched up over the years, but it hasn't been fully re-painted since it opened nearly 20 years ago.

The Board Office is expecting quotes from the district's project manager Charles Black Construction. Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong believes costs will be above \$100,000, which would trigger the need for board approval before moving forward, hence the May 3 vote.

Board members voted to hire Wade Hodges as a replacement math teacher for Rob Benson. Hodges is coming over from Union County High as a math and engineering teacher. He'll be helping with Indians football as an assistant coach next season.

In the leadup to the vote to hire Hodges, Board Member Stephanie McConnell asked that the High School always make sure it is recommending teachers who can teach advanced courses.

All three school principals reported zero COVID cases among students as of last Monday, though two staff members at the Elementary School did come down with serious cases of the illness and had to be hospitalized.

Both patients were on the mend at press time, according to Superintendent Berrong, who continues to urge everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

The schools are now in the process of getting ready to close out the year, with the last day before students head to summer break rapidly approaching on May 21. High School graduation is set for May 22.

Final Four ...from Page 1A

One common opponent in Commerce, whom ACE sent packing with a 10-0 rout in the second round of State.

Meanwhile, Towns County and Commerce faced off twice in early March, with the Indians easily taking both matches, 4-1 in Hiwassee and 6-3 on the road. The two squads last met on March 11, well before Towns County hit its stride in April.

Following back-to-back losses to Lake Oconee Academy and Hart County, the Indians have outscored the opposition 25-1 in four outings, including 8-0 in postseason play.

The winner of the Towns County-GMC match will face the winner of No. 1 ACE and No. 3 Lake Oconee Academy for the Class A State Championship.

As for the Towns County Lady Indians, their remarkable postseason run now includes a program-first Final Four berth after the team recorded its third straight road victory of the tournament in a 2-0 win over third-ranked Screven County May 4.

Towns County jumped out front with a pair of goals

in the first 20 minutes before keeping the home team at bay with a stingy backline anchored by goalkeeper Laura Mauldin.

Jayden Taylor broke the ice in the early going courtesy of a feed from Miranda Spain. The Lady Indians quickly made it a 2-nil contest moments later when Sarah Shook tacked on an unassisted goal, proving more than enough for Head Coach Clay Livingston's defense.

Towns County visited No. 4 Atlanta Classical Academy on Monday evening after press time. The 2-seed from Region 6, Atlanta Classical Academy already owns a win over Region 8-A after stunning top-ranked and undefeated Commerce 2-1 in the Sweet 16.

The winner of Towns County's semifinal fixture will face either No. 9 ACE or No. 6 Armuchee this weekend.

Georgia High School Association has not set a date or location for the State Championship matches, but they will be held between May 13-15 at one of four locations: McEachern High School in Powder Springs, Duluth High School, Mercer University or

Savannah Memorial Stadium.

Despite entering the Class A Public State Tournament ranked 10th, the Lady Indians needed two tiebreakers, and a calculator, to punch their postseason ticket after finishing the regular season with three consecutive region losses that included a 10-0 loss to Social Circle in the finale.

The Lady Indians would limp to the finish line with a 6-6 record, forcing a three-way tie for third place in Region 8-A Public with Lake Oconee and Lincoln County.

With all three teams splitting their two regular-season meetings, the seeding was determined by goals allowed in region play. Lake Oconee secured the No. 3 seed by giving up the fewest goals (40) between the three, leaving the final playoff spot to either Towns or Lincoln.

In the two head-to-head meetings, Towns County outscored Lincoln 7-6 to clinch the fourth seed by a single goal. Even if the two clubs broke even, the Lady Indians would still have owned the tiebreaker by surrendering 44 goals in region play, compared to 50 by the Red Devils.

High School ...from Page 1A

and said he looks forward to some of them returning home one day to give back to their school and community.

"My favorite thing about this day is to look at you guys and say I can only hope your students drive you as crazy as y'all did us," Berrong said, joking a bit before growing more serious. "It really is a rewarding career. We get to sit here and see you guys go off and do the things you want in life, whether it is teaching or whatever career path you want to take."

"This is a large group for us. This is exciting, because this is what we do, so it is exciting to see people that want to follow in those footsteps. My hope is that you come back to Towns County and take my place or Mr. (Roy) Perren's place or Mr. (Jim) Melton's place or all these other teachers."

High School Principal Roy Perren complimented

the educators on his staff for making such a difference in young people's lives and inspiring students to pursue teaching.

"It is a reflection on the school that, somewhere along the way, they have been impressed enough to say they want to do this, too, and they want to give back to future students," Perren said. "It is really touching to see particularly this many that want to do that."

Reace Hampton plans to attend Reinhardt University to learn how to coach and teach students about fitness.

"I'm going into education because of the influences my coaches have had on me," Hampton said. "I am going to be a strength and conditioning coach and a football coach. My football coaches are some of the best people I have ever met, so I want to be that kind of influence."

Maci Walls will attend the University of North Georgia and work to become an elementary school teacher.

"I want to be a teacher because my teachers have had an impact on my life, and I want to have the same impact on other kids," Walls said. "I just want to thank my family and all the teachers that have been there."

Lelia Barnard also plans on attending the University of North Georgia, where she will study to become a High School history teacher.

"I just want to be there and help kids be successful and learn," Barnard said.

Perren congratulated the students and wished them the best moving forward.

"It is a rewarding career," Perren said. "I am in my 29th year as an educator, and I was thinking about y'all today and looking back. They say that you will touch tomorrow, and that is the truth. As an educator, you are going to touch the lives of people."

'Veterans Visitation' ...from Page 1A



U.S. Army Veteran Bill McClain led guests of the Veterans Visitation program in prayer May 6, pictured here with Shirley Sonnenfeld and Coastie Scott Drummond. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

March, and the administration there looks forward to welcoming more people from the public soon.

"We are getting back to normal and are gradually letting more people come in," said Brasstown Manor Executive Director Bobbie Rohr. "This is one of our first events that we've had since all this happened, so we are gradually getting back."

"We are having families visiting one or two at a time, so unless something happens like our positivity rate goes way up, then I'm hoping that we're going to be able to stay open and let families come back in."

And the return of the "Veterans Visitation - Brasstown Manor" program is a go for the time being, with local veterans living in the community having already signaled their commitment to returning to regular monthly visits.

The May 6 re-grand opening of the visitations featured a celebration of one of Brasstown Manor's own veterans in residence, Shirley Sonnenfeld.

A World War II veteran, Sonnenfeld will turn 99 in September, and she was honored Thursday for being Towns County's oldest female veteran.

Sonnenfeld served her country from 1943-1946, enlisting in the WAVES military unit of the U.S. Naval Reserve as a stenographer. WAVES stands for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

The World War II veteran was ahead of her time, as it wasn't until 1948 that Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act,

enabling women to become permanent regular members of the military.

Recent recognitions of Sonnenfeld's service include an "Honor Flight" trip to Washington D.C. in 2017 and being presented with a Quilt of Valor in 2018.

She moved with her husband Marty from Florida to Brasstown Manor in October 2008 to be closer to their daughter, Nancy Simile, who lives locally. Marty, also a World War II veteran, passed away at the age of 94 in 2014.

The last 14 or so months have been incredibly isolating for Brasstown residents, including Sonnenfeld, who has taken everything in stride despite acknowledging how difficult it has been staying in her room all the time and not being able to visit with people outside the manor.

Back when veterans visitations were regular, Sonnenfeld said she attended "every meeting, every month." She enjoyed hearing military history as well as being brought up to date regarding the goings-on of the various branches, and she looks forward to the visits continuing in perpetuity.

Supporting their mother in the May 6 gathering were daughters Simile and Sandy Smelker, both of whom are proud of their mother, her service to the country, and of all veterans everywhere.

More than 50 people attended the event, staged out front of the facility for fresh air and sunlight. Of these attendees, roughly 30 were residents, and nearly half of those were veterans.

American Legion Post 23 Chaplain Scott Drummond

emceed the program, welcoming guests, introducing speakers and recognizing the staff of Brasstown Manor for their hard work keeping residents as safe as possible.

U.S. Army Veteran and Brasstown Manor resident Bill McClain opened and closed the event in prayer, and Air Force Veteran Brandy Creel led everyone present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Towns County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Gene Moss thanked veterans and manor residents on behalf of Sheriff Ken Henderson, who was unable to attend for being called away last minute.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw lauded the administrators of the facility and similarly thanked the residents of Brasstown Manor and the veterans there gathered.

"Right now, I could get in my car and go anywhere in this country I want to go," Bradshaw said. "It's a free country, and my heart goes out to our veterans - thank y'all so much for making that possible for each and every one of us."

Added Bradshaw, "I also want to say Happy Birthday coming up to Vaughn Barrett. He's a very good friend of mine. I go to church with Vaughn and have for many, many years with his family. He'll be 100 years old, a World War II veteran, the 13th of this month."

Sherry Drummond with the American Legion Auxiliary, Julie Andrews with the VFW Auxiliary and Brasstown Manor employees assisted with refreshments inside the facility that day, which included a patriotic cake for everyone to enjoy.



Residents of Brasstown Manor were excited to welcome local veterans back from the community last Thursday to re-start their regular monthly visitations. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Night Market ...from Page 1A



Like the other vendors at the first Hiwassee Night Market of 2021, Steve Hutchinson of Papa Steve's Jams, Jellies & More is incredibly excited for the start of the season. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

here enjoying the music and the vendors. With how cold and windy it is, this is a great turnout tonight. We are really excited, and I hope it goes like this every month."

Added McKay, "We don't have quite as many vendors as last year, but it is the first one, so we hope that we will get more people to come out and enjoy it. I think we are going to get more, because this is a fantastic turnout."

Vendors such as Steve Hutchinson of Papa Steve's Jams, Jellies & More are making a return in 2021, and he believes it will be a crowded season as people get out of their homes for a return to normalcy after COVID-19.

"This year, I have made some new pineapple jam and pickled pears," Hutchinson said. "I have carrots and potatoes for a roast and some other jams and jellies. I did some Stevia pears

for my diabetic people. "I think this year is going to be a good one because people are really wanting to get out and not be at home now that COVID is on the decline almost everywhere, I'm really looking forward to it."

Sandra Hampy of Towns County is happy to see events like the market coming back to the area, and she supports the city and Downtown Development Authority in their decision to continue the outdoor affair in the coming months.

"This market is one of the best things to have in our community," Hampy said. "It is great to get people out on the square and to enjoy the evening with some music and food."

"I'm really looking forward to what else will come this year and to seeing how this grows with more vendors and people."

For her part, McKay looks forward to seeing other local events met with just as much enthusiasm as the returning Night Market, as the city works to identify what else is needed and desired in the community.

In conjunction with Towns County, Hiwassee and Young Harris, the Joint Development Authority is surveying area residents and employees "to understand the state of housing in our community." People may participate in the survey by visiting SurveyMonkey.com/r/6DQRHJG.

The next Night Market will be held on Friday, June 4, from 5-9 p.m. The first concert in the "Enchanted Music on the Square" live music series will be held on Saturday, May 29, with Mountain Breeze taking the stage.