

Towns County Herald

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Bradshaw on budget: 'We've got it covered'; SPLOST vote in March

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County's Fiscal Year 2020 budget is up \$982,945 over 2019, though prudent financial management has allowed Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw to cover additional expenses without raising taxes.

All Georgia counties are required by law to operate under a balanced budget, meaning revenues and expenditures must match, and the FY20 tentative budget balances to \$11,174,990, or \$982,945 higher than last year.

Fortunately, the Commissioner's Office has spent the last year building

up the county's general fund in anticipation of needed expenditures in 2020, only spending when necessary.

This fiscal conservatism, coupled with \$621,213 in additional revenues expected in 2020 due to an increasingly good economy, has allowed Bradshaw to cover the 2020 budget increase, even after adopting the rollback millage rate in September.

A budget is considered tentative until it is finalized at the end of each fiscal year, which runs Jan. 1 through Dec. 31 for the county.

Bradshaw held a public meeting to discuss the details of the 2020 tentative budget on Monday, Dec. 23, and he was

expected to adopt the tentative budget in a called meeting that occurred after press time on Tuesday, Dec. 31, at 10 a.m. inside the Towns County Courthouse.

As for what makes up the increased expenditures, the biggest increase comes in the form of a \$325,000 fire department grant, new in 2020.

The grant arrives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the form of a \$310,000 federal to \$15,000 local match funding scheme, and it will be used to purchase new self-contained breathing apparatus for the Fire Department, according to the Commissioner's Office.

And starting in January, all full-time and permanent part-time county employees are expected to receive an hourly pay increase of 50 cents, which accounts for another \$150,000 of the budget increase, Bradshaw said.

Excluded in the pay raise are the employees of the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, whose pay is set by the district and district attorney.

With 2020 being an election year, Bradshaw said his office is adding roughly \$50,000 to the budget to help run the elections.

Elsewhere in the county, the Tax Commissioner's Office

See Budget, Page 6A



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw held a budget public meeting on Dec. 23, and he was expected to adopt the 2020 tentative budget in a called meeting that occurred after press time on Dec. 31. Photo by Chad Stack

After years of waiting, hospital crosswalk coming to Main Street

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Finally, after years of discussions with the Georgia Department of Transportation, Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales is happy to announce that the city is getting a Main Street crosswalk at Chatuge Regional Hospital.

Historically sought after by both city and hospital officials to alleviate concerns over foot traffic crossing Main Street to and from Chatuge Regional, Ordiales is hopeful that the entire project can be completed by the end of January.

An announcement long in the making, Ordiales has spent the last three years trying to acquire the flashing crosswalk, though it has been a city priority for several years longer than that.

Past GDOT studies assessing the need for a hospital crosswalk determined that there either wasn't enough pedestrian traffic to warrant a crosswalk, or that the line of sight from either direction on Main Street was too limited for oncoming vehicle traffic.

Fortunately, recent



GDOT will soon be installing a crosswalk across Main Street/Georgia 2 at Chatuge Regional Hospital. Photo by Chad Stack

visits from GDOT officials have helped to resolve those concerns, Ordiales said, paving the way for the mid-block crosswalk connecting the hospital side of Main Street to the Town Plaza shopping center side.

For the mayor, it's a big win for public safety, as traffic has only gotten worse in recent years along the local Main Street corridor that's also

part of busy federal and state highway systems.

"This is a huge accomplishment for both the city and the hospital," Ordiales said. "We have had a few incidents there - no fatal incidents, but we've had folks that have been hurt trying to cross the street."

"Directly across the street from the hospital is a

See Crosswalk, Page 6A

Indians make history with first Battle of the States win in 26 years



For the first time in school history, a Towns County team won the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament on Saturday, Dec. 28, when the Indians defeated Union County 67-61.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

For full Battle of the States coverage, see Sports Section, Page 2B

Smith earns Eagle Scout rank with fairgrounds sign project



TCHS senior Blythe Smith designed and installed this new sign at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds for his Eagle Scout project. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School senior Blythe Smith recently earned the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America for his work creating a new welcome sign at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

"Since 1912, the Eagle Scout rank has represented a

milestone of accomplishment - perhaps without equal - that is recognized across the country and even the world," according to scouting.org. "Those who have earned the Eagle Scout rank count it among their most treasured achievements."

"Eagle Scout" is not just an award; it is a state of being. Those who earned it as youth continue to earn it every day as adults. That is why an Eagle

Scout IS an Eagle Scout - not was."

And furthermore, Smith has earned the hard-won title of Eagle Scout.

A little over two years ago, Smith started looking around the community for something that needed work or for a potential project that he could start planning to earn his Eagle Scout rank.

See Smith Eagle Scout, Page 6A

Shop with a Hero warms volunteers' hearts as kids buy for Christmas

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE - The Hiwassee Police Department, Towns County Family Connection, area law enforcement and other volunteers took 45 schoolchildren Christmas shopping at the Blairsville Walmart on Dec. 20.

It was an early release day ahead of winter break for the students of Towns County Schools, and for 45 students who were selected for this year's annual Shop with a Hero, the early release was the start of a Christmas shopping spree.

Shop with a Hero serves underprivileged children of the county, ensuring that they have something for their families to put under their Christmas trees come the morning of Dec. 25.

Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith looks forward to the event every year. He said the 2019 shopping experience was a great success due to the level of donations the Police Department received, which allowed them to take more kids than usual.

"The event was wonderful," Smith said. "We



School Resource Officer Donnie Jarrard of the Towns County Sheriff's Office was one of many area law enforcement officers to help with the annual Shop with a Hero event on Dec. 20. Photo by Chad Stack

had 45 kids with us this year, which is one of the largest groups we've taken.

"Thanks to the generosity of the community, we were able to bring some elementary and high school students in addition to the middle school students we normally take."

Every year, the people at Family Connection, a Zell Miller legacy organization, bring in volunteers and officers

with Hiwassee PD and other area law enforcement agencies to partner up with kids to shop for Christmas.

This year, local donations from fellow Towns Countians, as well as the Smokies GT Porsche Car Club, enabled 45 students to use \$200 apiece to buy almost anything they wanted for Christmas.

The Porsche club that

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Blue Ridge	1,668.00	Church	5B
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BASKETBALL

Jan 3. vs. Providence 7 PM

Jan 4 @ Hayesville, NC 6 PM

S.A.F.E., Inc.

Volunteer Workshop

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We Are Towns County Schools

See page 2A

FREE GED Classes in Hiwassee

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