

# Jarrard...from Page 1A

and a half years working for Georgia Boot, then seven years for GNO Crown and Bridge in Hiawassee.

She first heard about the clerk job from friend and then-GNO colleague Sheila Chapman, who called her straight away after learning of the position. Jarrard applied, went through three rounds of interviews, and got the job two weeks later.

"I didn't have any idea what to expect, because I didn't even know what a city clerk did," Jarrard said. "Susan Shook was the city clerk that was leaving, and she had vacation days built up. She used some of her vacation during her two weeks' notice, so I didn't have very much training."

"I had always worked in the finance department at the two other jobs I had. Sheila told me, 'Just handle it like a business, and the city clerk stuff will fall into place.' And that's what I did."

The position of city clerk is extensive, to say the least. The job description is three and a half single-spaced typed pages, and it begins with the following catchall phrasing: "This position plans, directs, manages and oversees the functions, programs and operations of the city."

Of course, much has changed since Jarrard took over as city clerk. Back when she started, the city had only 325 water customers; now, the city has 800. Computer work has come a long way, too, growing from just billing in 1991 to all city business being conducted digitally present day.

"When I came, there weren't even files for the customers. It's really improved, and we've done a lot of things. These past two years, we've accomplished a lot in Young Harris," Jarrard said, noting the recent Sewer Plant expansion and many fixes to roads and sidewalks around town.

Added Jarrard, "Everything's really improved for the customers and the citizens. Andrea's a really hard worker. She's working now on a Trails Grant to connect the trail that we have at Cupid Falls to the other trails in Young Harris."

Reflecting further on her 28 years with the city, Jarrard said other changes have been



Recently retired Young Harris City Clerk Shirley Jarrard sharing a fun moment with Mayor Andrea Gibby in the May 2017 council meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

apparent, such as the growth of Young Harris College and the reshaping of the surrounding cityscape.

"A lot of the buildings in town are gone, and most of the older people are gone that were here when I came," Jarrard said. "Zell Miller is gone - it's just different."

"Zell brought me his last book when he wrote it, and in the front of it he wrote, 'To Shirley, who watches over Young Harris like a mother hen.' I thought that was neat."

In retirement, Jarrard plans to spend much of her newfound free time with family, enjoying full days with her husband of 42 years, Robert, in their home off Sunnyside Road, which is just down the street from the spot where she grew up.

Jarrard will also continue to do the financials for her hometown church, Hiawassee Church of Christ, and she's looking forward to taking full advantage of her love of reading.

It's definitely a bittersweet occasion for Jarrard, however, who was conflicted about retiring but ultimately decided it was the right thing to do for her family.

"I'm going to miss it," Jarrard said. "When you've been somewhere for 28 years, it's like you spend almost as much time here as you do at home. I'm going to miss all the people. That'll be the saddest part. I won't get to see all the people I normally get to see."

One of the people she visited with on a daily basis was Deputy City Clerk Nicolette Wade, who handles billing for Young Harris.

Wade has been with the city for over six years, and she appreciates the difficult job Jarrard carried out with seemingly the greatest of ease, handling state law, city ordinances, resolutions and more on a regular basis.

"Shirley has been a wonderful mentor to me," Wade said. "I still sometimes run into situations where I have to ask Shirley what I should do. I'm not sure what I will do when she is no longer here to ask questions!"

"She is very knowledgeable, and we have had many good conversations about life which I will miss when she is no longer here."

As far as Jarrard's replacement as city clerk, the council last month hired Bobbie Thompson, who served most recently as the Assistant Director of Athletics for Business and Marketing for Young Harris College.

Thompson will have big shoes to fill, but Jarrard told her to call anytime she needed help.

Fortunately, Jarrard said she doesn't plan on being a complete stranger to the city of Young Harris in retirement, and she hopes to see some of her city friends and former customers around the county for years to come.

"I'm going to miss the people, getting to talk with them," Jarrard said. "That's the one time I get really emotional, is when I think about the people - that's what I'm going to miss the most, and the people I work with. We've always had good people working here."

# Silver Jubilee...from Page 1A

As usual, the New Year's Eve celebration featured plenty of perks for people wanting to ring in the new year with style, including plenty of champagne and other specialty drinks, a bountiful dinner buffet, four hours of dancing, and a live performance by the Xtreme Party Band.

Couples from the surrounding area have been joining Brasstown Valley Resort for 25 years, turning their New Year's celebrations into mini Georgia mountain vacations, Brasstown General Manager Charles Burton said.

Guests always rave about how great the band and overall experience is, Burton said, with an annual performance by the Xtreme Party Band turning into a tradition of its own each year. The group seems to be a big draw for a lot of guests.

The band has been performing a variety of music for the resort's New Year's Eve event for several years now, with its members somehow seeming to enjoy the night as much or more than the guests who attend the celebration, Burton said.

One local couple who certainly backed this idea up was Mike and Cheryl Riley, both of whom come back each year because they love the band.



Brasstown Valley Resort always offers a festive experience on New Year's Eve, complete extravagant ice sculptures like this one. Photo by Chad Stack

"It's the best New Year's party ever," Cheryl Riley said.

Other attendees that evening have returned time and again to Brasstown Valley to celebrate the new year as well, such as Daniel and Connie Luker from Cumming, who were observing their 10th New Year's Eve Gala in a row.

Daniel Luker said events around Atlanta cost double and don't compare to what Brasstown Valley Resort has to offer, including the best band around.

As guests reported to the ballroom at 8:30 p.m., they were greeted by a hallway filled with black and silver balloons,

loads of glitter and a 2020 New Year's Eve sculpture.

After guests enjoyed an elegant meal, couples made their way to the dance floor for hours of dancing until the countdown began at midnight.

As the clock ushered in 2020, couples toasted to 25 incredible years at Brasstown Valley amid the ever-popular balloon drop. After the drop, couples danced for another 30 minutes before heading back to their rooms when the party ended for the night.

Following a long night of music, fun and dancing, guests woke up to a breakfast buffet and the start of a new decade.

# Bradshaw...from Page 1A

budget, so we had to add that to keep the budget balanced," County Finance Director Andrea Anderson said. "The \$56,000 wasn't in the budget to start with, so that's why we're adding the \$56,000."

Similarly, the budget for the Towns County Jail went up over \$30,000, which was double what the Commissioner's Office had to add to cover the cost, meaning they were able to pay for almost half of the increase with the original budget.

Anderson said the jail budget went up due to an increase in the jail population driving up food costs.

The new Young Harris Fire Station located on Georgia 66 was originally budgeted to cost \$70,000, but Anderson said they had to increase the budget to \$95,000 throughout the build.

Money utilized to cover additional Fire Station construction costs came out of reserved budget funds for the Fire Department, meaning the department's budget was still intact, Anderson said.

Fire Chief Harold Copeland is always very good at conserving the Fire Department's money, Anderson said, adding that the Fire Station in Young Harris is still under construction and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2020.

The county's Emergency Medical Services exceeded their 2019 budget by \$35,000 because of a staffing shortage resulting in a lot of overtime

pay last year. With the EMS back to full capacity, Anderson said the overtime pay should go down significantly.

The Towns County Emergency 911 Dispatch Center budget was also amended for an additional \$95,800 for renovations to accommodate updated equipment, phone and mapping systems, along with a pay increase for dispatchers.

At the Transfer Station, the 2019 budget went over by \$75,000 due largely to a higher than expected haul bill of \$50,000, Anderson said.

"If you look at the revenues from '19 to '20, they also went up, so that means we were busier at the Transfer Station and got more business, so that's why that increased so much," Anderson said.

Renovations and the new roof at the Old Rec Gym came in over budget by \$30,000 from the original budgeted amount of \$35,000, though Bradshaw feels the county did well only spending \$65,000 to redo the gym, as some of the quotes to replace the roof were \$78,000.

Bradshaw said he was thankful for the current good economy, since it costs more now than ever for the county to operate with the increased population and tourism.

"Your public service, your EMTs, the firefighters, the road crews - everybody is that much busier," Bradshaw said.

In other Dec. 31 called meeting news, Bradshaw approved the tentative 2020 Towns County Budget as

originally presented in a public hearing on Dec. 23.

As previously reported, Towns County's Fiscal Year 2020 budget is up over 2019, though prudent financial management has allowed Bradshaw to cover additional expenses without raising taxes.

The FY20 tentative budget balances to \$11,174,990, or \$982,945 higher than in 2019, with the biggest increase coming in the form of a new \$325,000 Fire Department grant.

Consisting of a \$310,000 federal to \$15,000 local match funding scheme, the Federal Emergency Management Agency grant will be used to purchase new self-contained breathing apparatus for the Fire Department.

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.

Bradshaw concluded his Dec. 31 meeting by wishing Towns County residents a "very Happy New Year," reiterating that his door is always open to the public.

# Flu...from Page 1A

Palmer said. "There's two main types of flu."

"You have the A-type, which is the worst type of flu. It's the one that can shift and drift and change into different viruses. It tends to make people a lot sicker than the B strain."

"But the B strain is still a severe form of illness for a lot of people, especially the very young and the elderly."

Tamiflu is one antiviral medication used to fight influenza, though there are other highly contagious viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms, Palmer said, such as the virus responsible for the common cold.

"We really recommend washing your hands often with soap and warm water. And

if you don't have soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers," Palmer said, adding that people should cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing to help prevent the spread of germs also.

"One of the most important things is, if people are sick, they need to stay home away from other people," Palmer said. "If you're healthy, you want to avoid sick people, so limit contact with sick people."

Furthermore, Palmer encouraged folks to keep items shared by others in their work and home environments clean.

Lead Nurse Bethany Barrett of the Union and Towns County Health Departments added that, if people are

experiencing flu-like symptoms, they should wear a mask.

Both Palmer and Barrett said the statistics they have are statewide and that there was no county-specific information available at press time.

"Sometimes we may see high activity in part of the state, not so much in another part," Palmer said. "But this year it's been statewide; it's all over the state."

Palmer and Barrett also said that, though Health Departments do administer flu shots, they do not treat influenza. Therefore, it is recommended that people experiencing flu-like symptoms seek help from health care professionals.

# Food Pantry...from Page 1A

us the most.

"Sometimes, we have to go outside of our source and buy food on our own, because sometimes the distribution center only has certain types of food, and we will have to give people the same thing every week."

"We can only order what the source has, and what they have is what we have ordered the last two weeks. Cash donations help us go to the store and offer people something different so that they aren't getting the same meals every week."

Families wishing to take advantage of the Food Pantry's resources can come to the open distribution twice a month, every other Tuesday, or visit the office and schedule an

appointment for food pickup.

Community support levels for the Food Pantry vary throughout the year, with donations picking up around the winter.

"In the wintertime, our support is great, and we get regular donations," Thomas said. "In the wintertime, I can deposit around \$5,000 or \$7,000 in a week, and that helps a lot. But come spring and summer, those numbers kind of dwindle, and we get down to a couple hundred or maybe \$1,000 in a week."

"During the summertime, I have a donation letter that I send out to every address that I have access to, whether it be a business or an individual. Those letters most of the time don't yield more than \$1,500.

"I do have my own outreach as well, but they don't come anywhere near what we do in the winter months."

For more information, visit the Food Pantry at 1294 Jack Dayton Circle in Young Harris during business hours, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or call 706-896-4783.

"The Towns County Food Pantry is a ministry of the Towns County Cooperative Ministries," according to townscountyga.org/food-pantry.html. "Its purpose is to help the needy of Towns County."

"The Towns County Food Pantry is a nonprofit organization supported solely by area churches, businesses, groups and individuals."

# Colt Ford...from Page 1A



Confederate Railroad

A self-taught musician, Ford plays the drums, guitar, sings and writes his own music about everyday life.

He records and performs with a five-person band, and he said he loves to be on tour and playing music.

"My band is so good live, we just have so much fun playing," Ford said. "You might not love every one of my songs, and you may not buy any of my records, but I promise you, you'll have fun. We will have a good time - I guarantee you that."

As far as Ford's Jan. 11 opening act, "Confederate

Confederate Railroad

Railroad first rolled onto the national country music scene in the early '90s with its unique style and sound," according to confederaterailroad.com.

"From rowdy country to raw emotion, a Confederate Railroad concert today covers

a wide range of feelings," the band's website continues. "Young people will be there rocking to 'Trashy Women,' while their parents and even grandparents will likely be singing along to 'Jesus and Mama.'"

# Clarification:

An article in the Jan. 1 edition of the North Georgia News/Towns County Herald reported briefly on comments made by Blairsville-based minister Carlos Gonzalez in the December regular meeting of

the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors.

Following publication, Gonzalez reached out to the newspapers to clarify and expand on his comments.

As originally reported,

Gonzalez asked the EMC to simplify the language surrounding the contract early termination fee for fiber service to make it easier for people to understand.

He also asked the board to reconsider the EMC's policy of charging full contract price for early termination of contracts, adding that he believed the contract language to be misleading and the policy itself to be illegal.

Furthermore, Gonzalez took issue with the existence of a separate customer charge for residential customers, contending that the money collected from members for the power they use should cover the costs of the EMC without the need for a separate fixed charge.

# Avita Board of Directors meeting

Avita Community Partners will hold the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors on Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 7 PM at Avita Community Partners' Administrative Office, located at 4331 Thurmon Tanner Parkway, Flowery Branch, GA.

The public is invited to attend. For further information or directions, please contact Regina Grisham at 678-513-5748 or 1-800-525-8751 or by email regina.grisham@avita-partners.org. NTU18878CA