

Hamilton Gardens...from Page 1A



A total of 15 trees fell at Hamilton Gardens due to high winds on Jan. 11, necessitating an extensive cleanup effort. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

front.” Services from the county, EMC and the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council helped mitigate some of the concern with getting everything cleaned up so the gardens could reopen soon and get started on the recovery of any salvageable plants that survived

the damage. The gardens have received a challenge grant that matches a set amount of donation money to go toward the cost of garden repairs and cleanup activity. Howard and other members of the nonprofit organization are asking the

community to help in any way they can by mailing donations to Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, P.O. Box 973, Hiawassee, GA, 30546, or donating online at HamiltonGardens.org. The deadline for challenge grant donations is Saturday, Feb. 8.

Rotary...from Page 1A

sponsorship can contact Kerry Clem at 706-897-0291 or kerry@bwboating.com. Also in the Jan. 14 meeting, Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce President Candance Lee introduced Hailey D. Silvey as the guest speaker to discuss suicide prevention. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in Georgia, according to Silvey, who discussed new one-hour trainings about suicide awareness and how people can intervene if someone is suicidal. Silvey currently serves as the Suicide Prevention Initiative Project Director for the Council on Alcohol and Drugs. She is also a licensed associate professional counselor and a certified school counselor.



Local Rotary Club President Gerry Gutenstein presided over the group's Jan. 14 meeting. Photo by Chad Stack

Her current project is to reduce the suicide rate in the area, and she said grants are available for anyone looking to pursue suicide prevention training. The “Question, Persuade and Refer” training, or QPR, discusses topics such as signs and symptoms of suicide, ways to intervene and resources to turn to in the area. “It teaches people to ask the suicide questions,” Silvey said, noting that troubled people are reaching out all the time without getting the help they so desperately need. The one-hour QPR training earns each participant a “Gatekeeper” certification, which qualifies a person to provide the proper help in talking to someone who is suicidal, Silvey said. “Towns County is 5% above the national suicide average,” Silvey said. “Towns County has the highest need for suicide prevention.” The QPR suicide prevention training is completely paid for by the

state, and Silvey said her goal is to have as many people trained as possible to help lower the number of suicides. For more information or to schedule a QPR suicide prevention training course with Silvey, call 706-400-9874 or email hsilvey@livedrugfree.org. Towns County High School senior Sophia Shook was recognized as the Rotary Club Student of the Month in the group's Tuesday, Jan. 7, meeting. Shook is a straight-A student/athlete who, according to High School Principal Roy Perren, always goes above and beyond. She stands out for her positive personality and solid work ethic, and she is completely dedicated to any task at hand in the classroom, Perren said. The senior is also very involved in the community and has been a member of HOSA – Future Health Professionals and the Future Business Leaders of America all four years of high school.

In the Jan. 7 meeting, Shook spoke about her accomplishments over the past four years as a student at Towns County High, Rotary Club Member Ketron Moss said. She also talked about her work in the community and her plans after graduation. After graduating high school in May, Shook said she plans to attend college in pursuit of a medical degree, citing her experience with HOSA as influencing her desire to enter the medical field. Post-graduation, Shook said she hopes to have left a lasting impression on her younger peers at Towns County. The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawassee was expected to hold its annual holiday meeting after press time on Tuesday, Jan. 21, at Enrico's Pizza Restaurant at 6 p.m. Rotary Club meets every Tuesday at 12 p.m. at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa.

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closing ceremony. “I fell in love with the whole experience,” Anderson said. “The students were treated like world leaders, and an array of nationalities were represented. Coming from a school so well versed in the promotion of diversity, the aim of cultural inclusivity outlined in the conference resolutions was worth aligning with. “Conversation was productive and enlightening; I am honored to have been invited to speak before such an impressive group. Most importantly, I have never received such a warm welcome! “A student at the Shenzhen Senior High School by the name of Angel was our volunteer guide, and she could not have been any more lovely. The long journey was made worthwhile by a conference with such a valuable purpose, attended by such wonderful people!”



L-R: Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School Director of International Student Programs Lynda Ann Loring, senior Tori Anderson and Dr. Mao Lin of Georgia Southern University at the 2019 Shenzhen International High School Students Forum in China.

Bagpipe instruction
The Appalachian Saint Andrew's Pipes and Drums Bagpipe Band is offering free instruction to all who want to learn how to play the Great Highland Bagpipe or to learn Regimental Drumming. The band meets each Saturday from 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon in the Parish Hall of St. Clare's Episcopal Church for instruction and practice. For further information, call 770-833-5411 or 1-828-557-3812. NTUJan22/1CA

The students who attended the forum also had the opportunity to explore some of what the modern city of Shenzhen had to offer. They traveled together to visit a museum on the history of the city, which is the gateway to free trade in China, and saw Tencent, the world's largest gaming company. The group also enjoyed a traditional Chinese meal at a famous restaurant in Shenzhen. Anderson and Loring were able to connect with some Rabun Gap families as well. They were treated to a delicious

traditional Chinese meal by the families of students Leo Zhang '22, Summer Tian '23, and Vivian Guo '24. “We left Shenzhen having made friends, experienced the great Chinese food and wonderful hospitality of the Shenzhen Senior High School,” Loring said. “While it did cut into Tori's and my Christmas holiday, we both feel the sacrifice of time with family and friends was worth the investment that was made into the future of global inclusiveness and the equity of economic prosperity.”

TVA...from Page 1A

on Chatuge. We'll get a little above normal pool level for this time of year, but we should be able to recover that in the next few weeks.” Finalized 2019 numbers for the Tennessee River Basin came in with a rainfall total of 66.47 inches, which ranks second in the rainfall record books behind 2018's 67.02 inches. “So, we were about a half inch short of breaking that record,” Guinn said. “What was unique about 2019 was we also had a short drought that we ... had below normal rainfall in September. Only about a half inch or so fell across the valley. “If we'd had average rainfall in September, we would have beaten last year's record by a couple of inches.” Given weather

predictions from the National Weather Service, Guinn said the TVA is expecting above normal rainfall in the Tennessee Valley for the first three months of 2020. “Flooding is why the winter drawdowns are so important,” TVA said in a recent press release. “Preparing for the recent rains, TVA's River Forecast Center has been spilling excess water at all nine Tennessee River dams and continues to release large amounts of water from tributary dams to recover and preserve flood storage.” Guinn said systemwide hydroelectric power generation for 2019 stands at 116%, given the high amount of rainfall for the year, adding that elevated rainfall amounts spread over long time periods will tend to generate more power than

elevated rainfall amounts in short time periods. TVA General Manager of River Management Tom Barnett said there were several important takeaways from the February 2019 rainfall event. “We learned a few things, particularly in communications,” Barnett said. “We reach out to a lot of stakeholders that are immediately impacted by our releases. “We do an after-action on every flood event. We go through and talk about what we can do better and how we can make improvements. A lot of it tends to be with that communication collaboration piece. “I'd say that's one of the biggest improvements that we've had over the last five or six years, is how fast we're getting information out to people.”

Sentencing...from Page 1A

charges. At the same time, the jury convicted Mike Gowder of 27 counts of acquiring controlled substances by fraud, and jurors found Heaton guilty of aiding and abetting those 27 counts. Additionally, Heaton was found guilty on 27 counts of dispensing prescriptions without a legitimate medical purpose to two other patients. All told, Gowder will be sentenced based on 102 counts against him, and Heaton is facing sentencing on a 129-count conviction. Originally confronted with dozens of federal charges as a co-defendant in the case,

David Gowder pleaded guilty before Judge Story in March 2019 to a single count of prescribing oxycodone without a legitimate medical purpose. His single count comes with a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1 million, though Assistant U.S. Attorney William McKinnon said last year the prosecution may recommend a downward adjustment of that sentence. David Gowder was first arrested for prescription fraud in April 2015 in Fannin County. He was arrested again in February 2016 by the Union County Sheriff's Office,

as were Mike Gowder and James Heaton, in connection with other prescription drug charges. Regarding the state's outstanding charges against the three men, which were brought prior to the April 2018 federal indictment, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said he would make a decision about moving forward with local charges after the federal sentencing. The Gowders and Heaton initially pleaded not guilty to both their state and federal charges, and all three men have remained free on bond while awaiting sentencing.

Legislative Session...from Page 1A

stunt by the Democrats in the House,” Gooch said. “I was honored (Jan. 15) to be invited to the White House to witness the signing of the China Trade Agreement. “I flew up there on Tuesday night and I spent (Wednesday) at the White House participating and watched the event. I was right there in the room, just feet away from the president. “You had all these CEOs from all over the world, and you had these Chinese leaders – the Deputy Prime Minister of China was there. And we're sitting there signing a trade agreement that is a historic document that could be the biggest trade agreement of our time. “While all that good news was going on, the Democrats were over at the House staging a bill-signing ceremony at the same time, signing the Articles of Impeachment to be delivered to the Senate after they've been sitting on them for nearly 30 days. “And so, it was clear that it was just a stunt that was orchestrated by the Speaker of the House (Nancy Pelosi) to try to embarrass the president on the same day that he's signing this historic trade agreement.

She orchestrated it to be going on simultaneously. “Then, they hand-delivered it on the silver platter with all the pens and making a big deal about it, celebrating the fact that they were trying to impeach the president when he's done more good, in my opinion, in the three years he's been (in office) than we've seen in decades from a president – somebody that actually campaigned on something and delivered on their promises. “I think it's time for state legislators all over the country to stand up and send a strong message to Congress to quit playing games with the people's money and get back to work and get serious about solving the problems of our country.” As fellow senators in a mountain district, Gooch and Wilkinson count each other as longtime friends and political allies, and Wilkinson echoed Gooch's sentiments about their reasons for drawing up SR 538. “With all the issues facing our federal government today, the budget deficit and all the things they need to be spending time on, we just feel like this was more of a political thing,” Wilkinson said. “We

really think that the people of America spoke four years ago who they wanted for their president. “They're going to have another opportunity to speak this year, and we just feel like that ought to be their decision who's serving as president. We don't feel like there's been wrongdoing to the extent that would call for an impeachment process, and we feel like that wasted a lot of time and money that could have been better spent looking at more pressing issues.” Wilkinson attended Gov. Brian Kemp's State of the State Address in Atlanta on Jan. 16, and he offered some insight into what people can expect in the upcoming Legislative Session, including budget cuts proposed by the governor. “I think the budget is going to be a big item this year,” Wilkinson said. “We gave everyone a state income tax break; that cost the state some money and our revenues have been flat, so the governor is recommending some cuts. “We'll be looking at what gets cut and what doesn't get cut, so I think the budget is going to be a big focus this year during the session.”

Historical...from Page 1A

would have affected Towns County was conducted here in 1840, Taylor said, and the census and questions on it have changed much over time. Taylor explained that the census keeps track of the population over 10 years, and that its numbers reflect congressional representation for each state. Furthermore, the census helps city and county governments obtain federal grants and other funds. Also in the meeting, self-taught artist Marty Hayden from Pennsylvania showed off an impressive piece of local history he is planning to craft with his art. Hayden moved to Towns county about a decade ago, and he retired recently as a supervisor at the Chick-fil-A in Young Harris College, where he'd worked for the past five years. One of Hayden's goals he wanted to realize after retirement was to find a beautiful small community where he could live and reproduce the history of the community on canvas. Hayden said, and he found that in Towns County. He has spoken with tons of people about the history of Towns County over the years, and one thing he kept hearing was how many families were uprooted in 1941 after the Tennessee Valley Authority approved the construction of Chatuge Dam and Lake Chatuge. “The more that I dug into the history, I locked into this thing about Lake Chatuge,” Hayden said. With a vision in mind for an original artwork showcasing the history of the dam and its effect on the local population, Hayden visited the Towns



Historical Society Vice President Jerry Taylor led a presentation on the census for his fellow society members last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

County Herald recently to see if he could locate any news articles from that time in 1941. Fortunately, he did, and with a few articles in hand, Hayden was able to complete a sketch of the larger painting he's planning to undertake, and he presented that sketch during the Historical Society meeting that Monday. His sketch is of an elderly woman holding a Towns County Herald newspaper while sitting in a rocking chair as she stares outside watching all the land and trees be demolished, Hayden said. The finished painting, which Hayden is going to donate to the Historical Society, will be in color and framed. In other business, Society Secretary Tyler Osborn spoke on the group's “Christmas Family” initiative, which consisted of society members getting with Towns County Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page about donating gifts to a local family in need. It was a much bigger success than they ever thought

it would be when they originally came together with the idea of helping a family in need during Christmas, Osborn said. They had several gift cards donated, including gift certificates to local businesses, restaurants and Ingles, in the amount of \$200, Osborn said. Society President Sandra Green and Osborn packed his car full of donated toys and, along with the gift cards, delivered everything to Page at the elementary school on Friday, Dec. 20. The family remained anonymous to the Historical Society, and Page said the donation was by far the best outcome they could have achieved for a family in need. The Towns County Historical Society will reconvene on Monday, Feb. 10, at 6 p.m. inside the Old Rec Gym.

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