

Health Board...from Page 1A

International Airport. "For us in the Department of Public Health here in Georgia, the concern is not really the folks who are coming through those screening points, but other cases that might turn up who didn't come through those screening points," Logan said. "So, the Department of Public Health is reaching out to providers to let them know to be suspicious of this coronavirus, and not just suspect that it's flu."

People may remember another well-known global coronavirus outbreak called SARS-CoV, standing for severe acute respiratory syndrome, which was first reported in Asia in 2003 and contained later that same year, according to the CDC. "I also wanted to give you an update on hepatitis A," Logan said in the Jan. 23 meeting. "You remember we've been in a hepatitis A outbreak for quite some time now in our state, as well as in the Carolinas and in Tennessee. "They started recording data on hepatitis A on June 1, 2018, and since that time, we've had 903 cases in (Georgia).

Mostly, the cases are drug users, both injection and non-injection drug users, men who have sex with men, and people who are in confined environments – prisons, detention centers and homeless shelters. "So, the CDC has given us additional pre-vaccines, and we're going out and aggressively vaccinating in our district. We're doing so well, in fact, that the state has given us some additional funding – I believe it's \$20,000 – to expand our efforts."

Measles is also of concern, Logan said, with over three times as many cases reported nationally in 2019 as there were in 2018, and even a tripling from 2017 to 2018. "Cases are still coming in for 2019 from the CDC," Logan said. "And those numbers are climbing. In our state alone, in November, we had 11 cases, so all the cases for November are not yet recorded."

Logan said there is concern that the World Health Organization, which declared measles eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, may take that elimination status away. District Administrator

Lisa Hocker reported that the Towns County Health Department had a fund balance of \$315,420 as of Dec. 31, 2019, which, she said, translated to approximately nine months of operating funds.

Towns County Nurse Manager Bethany Barrett reported that Catherine Mummaw was the new part-time RN and that, as of end of day Jan. 23, she would be starting phone interviews followed by in-person interviews to fill a full-time RN position. "There is a new requirement for a booster dose of meningitis vaccine," Barrett said. "That will be starting in the high school for 16-year-olds and older, and/or for 11th-graders. It goes into effect this school year."

Environmental Health Manager Tony Berrong reported that there were three rabies investigations for the quarter, with one positive for a racoon on Byers Creek.

Also in the meeting, Board Chairman Dr. Darren Berrong introduced new Board Member Bobbie Thompson representing the city of Young Harris.

Robotics...from Page 1A

build, program and operate robots to compete in a head-to-head challenge in an alliance format. Participants call it "the hardest fun you'll ever have!"

Guided by adult coaches and mentors, students develop STEM skills and practice engineering principles, like keeping an engineering notebook, while realizing the value of hard work, innovation and sharing ideas. The robot kit is reusable from year to year and can be programmed using a variety of languages, including Java.

Teams also must raise funds, design and market their team brand, and do community outreach for which they can win awards. Participants have access to tens of millions of dollars in college scholarships.

Dragons & Tiaras ended the day successfully, placing second in overall robot competition and walking away with two major accomplishments by winning the Connect Award and placing third in the overall Inspire Award.

Finishing Third Place for the Inspire Award advanced the team to the State Championship, which will be held Feb. 21-22 at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta.

The Connect Award is given to the team that most connects with their local science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) community. A true FIRST team is more than a sum of its parts and recognizes that engaging the local STEM community plays an essential part in success.

Recipients of this award are recognized for helping their community understand FIRST, the FIRST Tech Challenge, and the team itself.

FIRST is an acronym meaning "For Inspiration and



The Dragons & Tiaras Robotics Team will travel to the State Championship on Feb. 21-22 at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta.

Recognition of Science and Technology."

The team that wins the Connect Award aggressively seeks and recruits engineers and explores the opportunities available in the world of engineering, science and technology. This team has a clear team plan, with members who have identified steps to achieve their goals.

A team awarded the Inspire Award is acknowledged as a team that best embodies the "challenge" of the FIRST Tech Challenge Program. The team that receives this award is a strong ambassador for FIRST programs and a role model FIRST Team. This team is a top contender for many other judged awards and is a gracious competitor.

The Inspire Award winner is an inspiration to other teams, acting with Gracious Professionalism® both on and off the playing field. This team shares its experiences,

enthusiasm and knowledge with other teams, sponsors, the community and judges.

Working as a unit, this team will have showed success in performing the task of designing and building a robot.

Team members are Bentley Floyd, Laura Mauldin, William McConnell, Curtis Ledford and Alex Mullins. The team sponsor is Jo Ray Van Vliet.

Anyone interested in connecting with or mentoring the team, please contact Jo Ray Van Vliet at Towns County High School. The team welcomes those with experience in the STEM community, whether retired or active, who would like to provide information and share experiences with the team.

For more information on FIRST Tech Challenge and other FIRST programs, see gafirst.org and firstinspires.org.

Speech Contest...from Page 1A



Top of Georgia student speakers met for their first week of training on Tuesday, Jan. 21. Photo by Chad Stack

contest committee.

A past homeschool competitor in the contest, Church is now a full-time student at Young Harris College. In her new position as chairwoman, Church said she will serve as lead organizer and is in charge of scheduling, training sessions and contests. "There's a lot of work involved, and it's a lot of responsibility, but all the people I'm working with, they're really great," Church said. "It's really a team effort doing this. It couldn't be done by just one person."

The Towns County GOP and the Towns County Democratic Party have come together for the first time in hopes of making this year's contest the county's biggest yet, GOP member Sam Fullerton said.

Public speaking training will take place over six weeks, with the big contest scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, at the Senior Center.

Currently, about 30 students have confirmed as training/contest participants, and Church said they are still taking applications for any students looking to get

involved. The speech contest is a great way to develop skills the students will use for the rest of their lives, Church said.

"I know it can be scary for first-time students," Church said. "I was nervous my first time three years ago, but the training we do really helps to alleviate that nervousness."

Fullerton encourages contestants to speak publicly throughout the year so that they continue to develop their public speaking skills, even after the contest.

"I did a lot of speaking engagements in the community," Church said. "I've gotten the opportunity to introduce senators and congressmen."

Joining the students for the training are community trainers, represented by local businesspeople, civic leaders and educators with experience speaking publicly who want to promote those skills in future generations.

The students met for their first training meeting on Jan. 21, and Church said several middle school contestants attended. After basketball season ends, Church expects things to pick up with the high school

students.

A new contestant this year, sixth-grader Aubrey Figg said she's planning to speak on the 4-H project achievement. Looking to step outside of her comfort zone, Figg hopes to develop skills to allow her to communicate with others and ease her fear of speaking to crowds of people.

Trainings take place Tuesday nights at 6 p.m. inside the Senior Center, and Church said anyone looking to get involved is more than welcome to visit the center Tuesdays.

While students are training and working on their speeches, Church said they have snacks and refreshments, and they will also be giving away gifts and cash prizes to students.

Four winners from both high school and middle school divisions will be selected following the March 10 contest, with First Place receiving \$400, Second Place \$300, Third Place \$200, and Fourth Place \$100.

Applications for the Top of Georgia Speech Contest are available inside the Towns County Public Library, Towns County Schools and at the Towns County Senior Center.

VFW...from Page 1A

Eighth-graders Zoe Woody, Brant Youngblood and Cale Kirby joined freshmen Jenna Durham, Jayden Taylor and Abby Pate for the recognition that Thursday.

Several students submitted essays in October, Halfon said, giving judges plenty to choose from, and they settled on the above students as producing the top essays.

The judges continued to pore over the finalists' essays to decide on the order of the Top Three from the Patriot's Pen group and the Top Three for the Voice of Democracy, Halfon said.

"Of all the entries we had, there wasn't one that stood out as being bad," Mel White said. "They were all great."

Pleased with the number of students who entered this year's VFW essay contest, White said he hopes to have the same level of student participation next year, if not more.

Winning this year's middle school Patriot's Pen contest was Woody. Coming in Second Place was Youngblood,

followed by Kirby at Third Place.

The high school-level Voice of Democracy essay contest features a speech component, and selecting a winner this year was tough, Halfon said, as all students drafted excellent audio-essays.

Durham was announced as the Voice of Democracy winner, though she was unable to make the award/scholarship presentation at the school on Jan. 16.

Taylor placed second, and Pate received Third Place honors for the Voice of Democracy essay and speech competition.

All six contestants were awarded and praised for writing great essays, Halfon said. Second-Place winners received \$50 in scholarship money, and Third-Place contestants received \$25.

Both the middle and high school First Placers received \$100 from the VFW and will get the chance to compete at the district level. At district, they will receive another chance to

advance to state and potentially to nationals.

The high school students who make it to the national level will have an opportunity to earn a \$30,000 scholarship, and all state winners will receive \$1,000 and an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C. for the national competition.

Middle school Patriot's Pen winners who advance to nationals receive the opportunity to win \$5,000 in scholarship money, with the state award being \$500.

Also on Thursday, high school history teacher and Head Baseball Coach Shannon Floyd was honored for being named Towns County Teacher of the Year. Along with honoring the essay winners each year, the VFW recognizes an exceptional teacher.

The VFW awards the Teacher of the Year with \$1,000 for professional development expenses, \$1,000 to the school, two plaques – one for the teacher and one for the school – and an all-expenses paid trip to attend a VFW conference to receive their award.

ICL course on Great Lakes begins February 6

The Great Lakes and Their Islands, With a Focus on Middle Bass Island in Lake Erie by Michael and Jean Gora: 3 Sessions, Thursdays, February 6 – February 20, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., cost: \$16.

Starting with an overview of the Great Lakes and their major populated islands, the course will then zoom down to Lake Erie and further to Middle Bass Island in Ohio, a quiet island community of about 500 homes. The course will cover the history of the islands, the major tourist attractions on several of them, and then focus on the issues of living on the larger and smaller islands. The issues are both similar to and different from those of small rural communities on the mainland. We will cover jobs, schools, medical services, infrastructure and more, and focus on some water quality issues such as algal blooms.

Michael Gora was a

physicist and then a computer scientist and has taught ICL courses on cosmology, but his other passion in retirement has been writing books about the history of the Lake Erie Islands. He currently serves on the steering committee of the Great Lakes Islands Alliance, which works with 14 Great Lakes islands and also partners with the Island Institute in Maine serving 15 more islands. The Great Lakes hold one-fifth of the world's fresh water and have a fascinating history and current role in our country.

Jean C. Gora retired in 2008 from a 33-year career as a researcher for the banking and life insurance industries. She has a BA from Mount Holyoke College and an MA from Johns Hopkins University. She taught three previous ICL classes, one on the financial crisis, one on life under the Third Reich, and one on the Bosnian war. Jean's family arrived as summer resi-

dents on Middle Bass Island (Ohio) in Lake Erie 100 years ago. Jean has spent most of the past 70+ summers there, a significant part of that time actually in the lake. (No shower in the original family cottage.) She has also written a book about Lake Erie island history.

The Institute's curriculum committee continually reviews members' interests and expands the curriculum accordingly. Individual course registration fees normally range from \$12 to \$24 each. ICL offers a new series of subjects every quarter, commencing in January, April, June and September.

For more information please visit www.iclyhc.org for registration and detailed course information or call 706.379.5194 and leave a message or send an email to icl@yhc.edu. You can also find us on Facebook as "ICL at YHC".

Communications...from Page 1A

analog to digital radios last July, 911 Director Marty Roberts said.

Now, all law enforcement and emergency services in the county are able to communicate on the new digital system.

There are many benefits with digital communications, Roberts said, noting that the experience over a recent two-week trial run was a lot better than anyone could have imagined.

Before switching to digital radios, county and city public safety used analog radios, which would go in and out of range depending on where first responders were located when using the radios, Roberts said.

Digital radio technology helps eliminate coverage gaps, allowing for law enforcement and first responders to have clear and strong radio signals throughout the county.

With the new digital system, Roberts said they have been able to communicate in areas that their analog radios struggled to receive or send a

signal. It was an officer safety and public safety concern that the radios sometimes didn't work, Roberts said.

A slight learning curve is expected due to the difference in sound from the analog to the digital radios, Roberts said, as the sound is clearer but different from what people are used to hearing with analog-only radios.

The digital radio upgrade will bring the county in compliance with industry standards and improve communications among various agencies like the county law enforcement, EMS, Hiwassee Police and the Young Harris College Campus Police, Bradshaw said.

And there are other benefits of switching to digital radios, said Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith.

The new radios are Bluetooth capable, which, when coupled with headsets, will improve officer safety by keeping potential suspects from hearing what is being said to an officer during a traffic stop or

investigation, Smith said.

During the two-week test run of the new radios to ensure everything was ready to go, officials tested communications in the buildings at Towns County Schools and Young Harris College.

With their analog handheld radios, Towns County school resource officers and college police had to go outside of buildings to communicate, Bradshaw said. In the test run, however, the officers were able to use their radios from anywhere inside buildings.

Also during the trial run, Roberts said he was able to communicate via radio with Fire Chief Harold Copeland all the way in Tate City.

"It's amazing the difference it's made," Roberts said. "There are so many benefits. I really think it's going to be a great thing for the county."

Towns County E-911 will retain the use of analog communications with their new equipment, and they will continue to use analog to communicate with the Georgia State Patrol, Department of Natural Resources and emergency medical flight transportation, Roberts said.

Residents of "scanner land" who use old analog scanners will not be able to tune in to the digital system unless they acquire a digital scanner.

Chicago Blues Legend Mac Arnold back at The Peacock

This old school blues band has played to a full house at the Peacock Performing Arts Center, 302 Church St. in Hayesville, NC last year and was gracious enough to accept our offer to play for us again on Saturday, February 8th. The concert begins at 7 p.m. and doors open at 6 p.m. His music will make you move, feel and see why he was given an Honorary Doctoral Degree in Music from the University of South Carolina.



Mac Arnold

Mac Arnold started his career at an early age and it reads like a "Who's Who" of Blues and R&B legends. His high school band included James Brown on piano. At the age of 24 he joined the Muddy Waters Band and help shape the electric blues sound that in-

Brashier on guitar and vocals, Max Hightower on keyboards, harmonica, guitar, bass and vocals, Tez Sherard on drums and vocals and, of course, Mac Arnold on vocals, bass and his legendary Gas Can Guitars.

The show begins at 7 p.m. Saturday February 8th. Tickets are \$29 for adults, \$25 for students, get your tickets early because they'll go fast!

Tickets are available on line at www.thepeacocknc.org, click on the blue "Show Times & Tickets" button. You may also stop by our theater between 10 AM - 2 PM, Monday – Friday at 301 Church Street, Hayesville, NC call the box office at 828-389-2787 Ext 1, or visit Tiger's Department Store on the Square in Hayesville.

Egged...from Page 1A

Authorities were still looking into the probable chain of events at press time, though it's likely the vandalism occurred between late Sunday evening and early Monday morning, as the shattered eggs had yet to fully dry by the time they were

discovered.

Young has also reported several local GOP members having to replace stolen signs campaigning for the re-election of President Donald Trump.

Anyone with information about the perpetrator(s) of the "egging" or stolen signs should call 911.