

Shooting...from Page 1A



The Chatuge Regional Hospital Rehabilitation & Wellness Center in Hiawassee was taped off by investigators following the Jan. 26 domestic-related shooting there. Photo by Todd Forrest



Charles Jason Matheson

court of law. This is not Matheson's first family violence arrest, according to Hiawassee Chief Smith, who arrested Matheson in 2017 after he reportedly assaulted his own mother where they both worked.

He was also arrested twice last year for domestic violence-related crimes in Clay County, including on July 13, 2020, for assault by strangulation and again on Oct. 9, 2020, for violation of Domestic Violence Order, Sheriff Deese said.

A GoFundMe page has been set up for Crystal at [https://www.gofundme.com/f/recovery-](https://www.gofundme.com/f/recovery-for-crystal-matheson)

for-crystal-matheson.

"She is trying to recover in the hospital right now," page organizer Luke Goodman said. "She currently has everyday bills, utilities, and a mortgage to pay for, on top of the hospital bills that she will soon have."

"We would also like to get her an attorney that specializes in domestic violence abuse. She has been through enough as it is before all of this happened!"

"We would like to ask everyone to help us reach our fundraiser goal for her. And also, please pray for her and a full recovery! She is a God-fearing, God-loving Christian and a wonderful person!"

The Clay County resident said Saturday she was grateful to God and the many professionals who have been working in her corner, including local police, GBI, her office nurses, Towns County EMS, Air Life Georgia, ER staff, and the trauma team and surgeons who operated on her.

"I have eight gunshot wounds – I know I shouldn't be here, but I am," she said. "My God is beyond comprehension in His goodness. I am doing my best to keep focused on getting better. It's hard. It's not pretty. And some days I'm not as strong as I want to be."

"I've never had pain like I've had, but at least I'm here. It's slowly easing up some, and I am so grateful. I can't get around; I can stand and take a few shuffle steps, but it's a blessing to do that. It wears me out just to do that, but I'm determined to keep trying."

"I have quite a bit of nerve pain issues in one leg. I ask that y'all keep praying for me. I pray for pain relief and strength so I can do things a little easier. I ask that you pray for my blood pressure to normalize so that I can work with Physical Therapy and get stronger."

"I ask you to pray for wounds to heal so I can move around without fear of hurting something more. I'm trying to answer messages. There's a lot, so please bear with me."

"I love all of you. You have no idea what you mean to me and my son and my family. Overwhelmed doesn't even describe it. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Ninth District...from Page 1A

be accountable for it and try to get their act together."

The offices of Towns and Union counties are looking to receive around \$5,000 each, which is less than other grants but will still assist select eligible families in paying a month of rent or utilities.

Sullivan said many people's rent payments have gone up during the pandemic, and that "there's no available housing."

"It is heartbreaking, really. We have just struggled with that," she said. "On this particular program, we can only pay like one month. But on other programs we had, we were paying three months at a time for some of these people."

Residents in dire

circumstances can reach out to Ninth District Opportunity for assistance finding a place to go in their time of need, though as Sullivan pointed out, it can be challenging to locate eligible living spaces in the area.

"We can help with homeless families and with people that are being evicted," Teresa Stephens of Towns County's Ninth District office said. "And right now, money that is tied to the eviction (assistance) is on hold because of that mandated federal moratorium."

"If families are without a home, then we have to find what is called fair-market value homes or they have to be rent reasonable. In this area, it is very hard to find homes that are rent reasonable or that are

on the level that the federal government wants."

The use of these programs by people in need in the North Georgia Mountains is more common than many folks might think.

"We use this quite a bit," Stephens said. "It is a definite need, and there are several homeless families in this area."

"If they are willing to work with us, then we can get them into a hotel or motel for a limited number of days until we can find them housing. Most of the time we have to transfer them to other counties."

Stephens can be reached at the Towns County Food Pantry by calling 706-896-4783. For more information on Ninth District Opportunity programs, visit NDO.org.

Memory Hearts...from Page 1A

"They aren't coming in, but they can call us, and we can meet them at the door and take their donation and information of who they want to make it in memory to. One heart will provide a meal for someone in our community."

"It is something that we are happy to do every year, and our community really supports this and our seniors. It is a great help and fundraiser for the seniors in our community."

The number of meals the center sends out each week constantly changes, and the center is eager to continue providing seniors with the best care and support possible, even during times when the seniors cannot visit the center.

"The meals we serve are weekly, and it varies because of people going out of town or coming back into town," Bradley-Parker said. "But we try to take care of all the seniors that we serve, and we keep track of them."

"We actually have a home-delivered route for the entire county, and we also have

frozen routes. We deliver to our members that came to the center for meals, so everyone is getting what they need."

"The need is growing because there have been new people that have moved into our community, and we continue to be able to grow and serve the seniors of our area and provide them with what they need. That is why we need to do fundraisers, to support that growth and let us serve them."

To alleviate some of the loneliness and stagnation experienced by seniors at home, many of whom are even more isolated than ever due to COVID-19, the center sends out activities for them to participate in to keep their brains and bodies moving.

"We do a virtual program, and we are actually a virtual center," Bradley-Parker said. "That means that we send activities for them to do at home so they are not just sitting there doing nothing. We send exercise packets home, so they can do exercise and puzzles and just things to keep them

busy."

As far as community assistance goes, the center needs donations more than volunteers currently, as the pandemic has reduced the need for manpower.

"Right now, during COVID, there is not a lot to do," Bradley-Parker said. "We do have volunteers that help deliver the meals, and we are doing well with that."

"Our staff is actually delivering the meals as well. The hearts are really the best thing that people can do right now, as it gives those seniors a meal."

People and businesses interested in purchasing Memory Hearts or getting more information can call the senior center at 706-896-3138. All proceeds go to the Meals on Wheels Program in Towns County.

For those not wanting to venture out, Memory Heart information and checks made payable to Meals on Wheels can be mailed to Towns County Senior Center, 954 North Main Street, Hiawasse, GA 30546.

TCSO Tip Line...from Page 1A

campaign promise being fulfilled by Henderson, who has a long list of Sheriff's Office improvements he wants to implement over time to forge the most exceptionally trained and highly professional law enforcement outfit around.

Among his many priorities, the sheriff wants to restart the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy with regular classes; host drug intervention programs; provide deputies with active shooter and other trainings; and encourage neighborhoods to participate in community policing.

Additionally, Henderson will be increasing public outreach through social media, the legal organ, the Sheriff's Office website, and with direct contact between officers and residents; instituting a youth outreach program with training; creating a new look for the department; and much more.

Also new last week, the recently sworn-in sheriff fulfilled another campaign promise by getting a dedicated department Facebook page up and running for the public at "Towns County Sheriff's Office, Georgia," with the

following excerpt from the page's inaugural post:

"The Towns County Sheriff's Office maintains a social media program for the purpose of engaging and interacting with our community, providing relevant and timely community news, information and events, distribution of crime prevention and public safety tips, or urgent notifications of critical incidents which may affect residents, business owners and visitors of Towns County, and for those people having an interest in the Towns County Sheriff's Office."

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

emergencies or other issues in their area or citywide.

"Let's say we have a main water leak on Omega Way," Ordiales said. "We could go in there and circle that area and broadcast and tell them they are going to be out of water because of this break, it will be four hours or three hours or whatever."

Continuing, "If something is going on with road closures, any kind of police emergency that we need to notify them, we can notify the whole city limits, or we can just do a portion of it; you can do a little circle or triangle, or you can even go down to a block."

People within the city will receive CodeRED sign-up information with their February water bill.

As for the 2020 year in

review, Ordiales was happy to report significant repayments on loans and progress toward reducing debt for Hiawassee.

"We paid off one loan which was \$679,996," Ordiales said. "We had paid \$850,000 in interest on a \$1 million loan. We saved over \$500,000 in interest on the remainder of that loan; it was 18 years left on it."

"We paid an additional \$287,585 in principle towards other loans. Since 2017, we have paid off \$1.9 million in debt. We still have \$2.5 million, but that is a 41% reduction in debt since 2017."

Other 2020 accomplishments included the completion of the mural, multiple project completions to make Lloyd's Landing a recreational area, and other efforts to develop Hiawassee.

In 2021, the Mayor and City Council are hoping to see the decline of COVID-19 – especially as vaccination efforts expand – and the ability to reach even more of their goals.

"We are going to focus on two major projects," Ordiales said. "The big one, of course, is the Paris buildings, and while the DDA is going to handle that, we need to give them as much support as possible. The second one is the water treatment plant expansion."

Added Ordiales, "It is a massive project, and I think we are going to be able to do it well with no problems. They are looking at starting that in October, and that is a \$1.2 million project."

Rec Center...from Page 1A

more important to get this thing knocked out and hopefully get to a little bit of normalcy."

During the pandemic, the Rec Center has taken recommended COVID-19 precautionary steps to ensure the safety of Foster Park staff and patrons.

Still, the center is seeing fewer people due to COVID-19, though Youngblood is optimistic that the vaccine will ease the minds of some of the older regulars to encourage them to maintain their physical

health at the facility without as much fear of the virus.

"Now that they are giving the vaccines, I think it is giving people a little bit of hope that they can get to their normal lifestyle," Youngblood said. "We recommend that you wear a mask, but it is not required."

"We want you to social distance, and we have a couple of our machines roped off, so if they are sweating and running on a treadmill, they are not right next to somebody. Our locker rooms are still shut down for

sanitation purposes.

"We have added sanitizers, and the county bought us some foggers to spray and disinfect. We clean everything at the end of the night."

Some classes usually available at the Rec Center have been postponed until later this year, but the facility continues to remain operational and focused on the community during this time.

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings/times

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope, in order to solve their common problem and help others to recover from Alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Blairsville: Lutheran Church, 83 Earl Shelton Monday 5:30 PM, open

meeting. Mountain Presbyterian Church, 2945 Hwy 76: Monday 7 PM, open meeting; Wednesday 7 PM, open meeting; Saturday 8 AM, open meeting. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Hwy 76 next to Presbyterian Church: Tuesday 7 PM, Ladies Meeting; Wednesday noon, open meeting.

Young Harris: Sharp Memorial Methodist Church

on College Campus: Tuesday 7 PM, Men's Meeting.

Hiawasse: Methodist Church, 1139 Hwy 76: Wednesday, noon, open meeting. 1298 Jack Deyton Circle: Friday 7 PM, open meeting; Sunday 7 PM, open meeting.

For more meeting info, call 828-837-4440.