

STAR Student...from Page 1A

teachers and students, which leads to learning more and having greater opportunities to ask questions.

Offering a little SAT test prep advice to those who come after him, Reece said to stay focused in class, study hard, take a practice SAT, and continue to study for the SAT even after taking it, because students will want to take it more than once.

Going into the test blindly makes it very challenging, Reece said, noting again that it's important to take the test twice. Why? Because after taking the test and knowing what to expect, it will help ease students' stress by being more aware of what to expect.

"It's definitely a good

thing to take it a few times, because the first time is always the hardest," he said.

After graduating high school in May, Reece plans to attend Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, to pursue a degree in biomedical science with a minor in Spanish.

Following college graduation, Reece said he would like to become a physician, though he has yet to decide on a specialty.

Reece is a member of several clubs at Towns County High School, including the Future Business Leaders of America, Beta Club, the United Community Bank Junior Board of Directors and HOSA Future Health Professionals with Vardo.

Reece is also a member of Macedonia Baptist Church and works at Serendipity Clinic with Dr. Kilee Smith, who is chairwoman of the Towns County Board of Education.

Vardo has been teaching in Towns County for seven years. After working in the medical field in Murphy, North Carolina, Vardo made a career change and started teaching at Towns County, where her husband Chris Vardo works as a teacher and Head Middle School Baseball Coach.

"Chase is highly ambitious, very driven, and he is going to be extremely successful in life," Vardo said. "He does everything at 110%."

Elections...from Page 1A

General Obligation Bond not to exceed \$8 million to facilitate courthouse renovations and a possible addition.

The current E-SPLOST, which makes up 1% of the county's 7% sales tax, will expire on Sept. 30 this year, so there will be no disruption to the sales tax rate should voters approve the county's SPLOST referendum on May 19.

Bradshaw is also asking voters to decide the fate of a freepoint exemption to aid existing small manufacturing businesses in Towns County and to attract new ones.

A freepoint exemption would allow businesses to temporarily store certain goods and raw materials without being subject to property taxes on those goods and materials, at least for a time.

Regarding Hiwassee's referendum, County Attorney Robb Kiker, who attended the elections board meeting, presented the city's call to pose the question of fluoride being added to the drinking water

supply that serves many people in Towns County.

"It appears that this matter was considered by the city council on the 27th day of January, 2020, and they are, by resolution, requesting and directing to the Board of Elections of Towns County to issue a referendum to be placed at the election of May 19, 2020, in conjunction with the other called special elections," Kiker said.

State law mandates the fluoridation of public drinking water unless a referendum is called to exclude it, after which an ordinance would need to be enacted.

Hiwassee residents circulated a petition to exclude fluoride in 1983, so it has never been included as an additive in city water, even though it seems no referendum was ever called, nor ordinance enacted.

During the annual inspection by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division last year, the EPD discovered that the city was not

adding fluoride to its water and determined that the city would need to start doing so, pending a referendum and ordinance to exclude it.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and other health organizations promote fluoridated drinking water for the prevention of tooth decay.

As of 2012, an estimated 75% of Americans had access to fluoridated drinking water, and the CDC has said that, "because it is so beneficial, the United States has a national goal for 80% of Americans to have water with enough fluoride to prevent tooth decay by 2020."

Opponents of adding fluoride to drinking water, however, contend that water fluoridation, "in addition to other sources of daily fluoride exposure, can cause or contribute to a range of serious effects, including arthritis, damage to the developing brain, reduced thyroid function, and possibly osteosarcoma (bone cancer) in adolescent males," according to fluoridealert.org.

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with the previous SPLOST.

In other business, Bradshaw went over his decision to introduce a freepoint exemption referendum in May.

Towns County does not currently have a freepoint exemption, which allows a county to forego taxing production materials and finished products a manufacturer has on hand, but has not sold, for a year or less.

Bradshaw said 93% of Georgia counties have enacted the freepoint exemption and that he knows of at least one

business that decided against moving into Towns County because the county has no freepoint exemption.

"The reason we're doing it is to help existing manufacturing businesses in Towns County and to help bring (small manufacturing businesses) here," Bradshaw said. "All of our surrounding counties have it; we don't."

Commissioner Bradshaw also conducted a second reading of the Credit Card Ordinance for Elected Officials. In the absence of any objections, Bradshaw officially enacted the

ordinance.

The Credit Card Ordinance will streamline travel logistics for elected officials, according to Bradshaw, allowing them to use a dedicated credit card - to be kept in a safe when not in use - during out-of-town travel required for trainings and other official county business.

Following the called meeting, the Towns County Board of Elections and Registration met to adopt a resolution to accept the referendums for submission to the Secretary of State's Office for inclusion on the ballot in May.

Sweetheart Arts and Crafts Show at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa

The Sweetheart Arts and Crafts show will be held at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa located in Young Harris, GA. Show dates are February 7th, 8th and 9th. Hours for the show are Friday from 1 PM - 7 PM, Saturday from 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday from 10 AM - 3 PM.

Come out and spend the day or weekend with us leisurely browsing what this show has to offer. Superb handmade arts and crafts will be available for your shopping pleasure. While at the show enjoy the sumptuous food that the Resort has to offer. Great hand made items such as jewelry, photography, wood furniture, basketry, pottery, leather work, decorative art, organic skin care, wood carving, fiber, essential oils, baked goods and hand made fudge, blacksmithing and gourd art will all be available for your browsing and shopping pleasure.



Come out and enjoy the day or weekend with us. You can always find something unique and special for that special sweetheart! This show

offers free admission and parking.

For further information please call 706-897-6179.

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Dance...from Page 1A



TCHS is a place of remarkably close social bonds, which were on full display Saturday as students enjoyed each other's company in a Winter Formal. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

had a safe environment away from campus to socialize on a weekend evening.

"It's something for them to dress up for and get excited for, and they bring their friends to have some fun on a Saturday night," TCHS teacher Sarah Vardo said. "This is something that other schools in the area do, so we thought it would be good for the students if we had one, too."

"We want the students to be actively engaged with each other, and we want them to go out and have fun and not sit around all day, because there isn't always something for them to do. It's also something for them outside of school that is still safe."

The spring semester began for students at the beginning of January, with homework and afterschool activities starting back with it. Fortunately, events such

as these give students a break during the school year and time to get schoolwork off their minds.

The Winter Formal works similarly to Homecoming, wherein all students, regardless of grade level, are invited to join in on the fun and party with each other.

"We wanted something that the underclassmen could attend as well," said teacher Christa Houser. "Since they can't go to prom, we have this for them in the spring semester so that they have something more inclusive."

"We have Homecoming that everyone can come to in the fall, and this in the spring, so that we have something both semesters for students to enjoy. You can see how much they love this, too, because we have them dancing and singing to some of these songs, and it's just so much fun to see them

having a great time."

Students clearly enjoyed gathering on the floor of the Civic Center in a large mass to dance together, thanks to the DJ's steady stream of tunes.

And according to several students who attended, dances give them something to do on a night where they would normally be at home watching movies, so they appreciate the effort the school makes to provide student activities each semester.

Although the dance did not last as long as other dances held throughout the year, a dedicated group of students stayed to the last song, dancing and singing all the night long.

The next big dance for Towns County Schools will be the prom, which takes place at the end of April and is focused more on seniors getting one final celebration together as a class before graduation.

Enchanted Valley...from Page 1A

from Engines 1, 2, 4 and 5, as well as Tanker 1.

Firefighters hooked up to a hydrant on the highway and successfully contained the blaze to the area of the three campers, working into early Sunday morning to knock down the fire and make sure it remained out.

The Fire Department's Salvage & Overhaul Team moved in after the fire was extinguished, expertly working to contain any lingering "hotspots" to protect as much of the existing property as possible.

In the aftermath of the fire, investigators determined that the blaze began at the rear of the middle camper, the one occupied by the man who'd called 911.

All three homes were situated only a few feet apart, which, when coupled with the 8-10 mph winds that evening, contributed to the flames spreading beyond the origin of the fire, Chief Copeland said.

Firefighters departed around 5 a.m. Sunday, leaving a crew with Fire Engine 1 to ensure the fire didn't start back up after they left.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, though Chief Copeland said he believes the fire to have been accidental in nature, with no foul play suspected at this time.

According to the man who was staying in the home, he said he'd been sleeping, only to wake to heavy smoke before escaping outside and calling for help, Chief Copeland said.

"I can't express enough the wonderful work of our volunteers," Chief Copeland said. "We always do good work, but in a situation where the structures are a few feet apart, and being able to roll in there with the wind blowing and



Towns County Firefighters worked for several hours to make sure the Enchanted Valley fire was fully extinguished over the weekend.



A resident took this photo the day after the blaze, showing the devastation of the fire. Fortunately, nobody was hurt.

Photo by Meredith White

establish a knockdown before anything else was damaged - I really can't say enough about their hard work.

"It was spectacular and nothing short of amazing."

In addition to being thankful for his volunteers, Chief Copeland is grateful for

the Enchanted Valley residents who provided water and snacks for firefighters as they labored to contain the fire.

Local American Red Cross representatives have been in contact with the man who lost his home over the weekend to offer him shelter and clothing.