

# Towns County Herald

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## Reace Hampton signs to play football at Reinhardt University

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald

Following an impressive four-year career playing football for Towns County High, senior linebacker Reace Hampton will be advancing to collegiate level play in the fall.

Joined by family and friends, Hampton signed a letter of intent in the School Media Center on Wednesday, Feb. 3, to continue his playing career at National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics football power Reinhardt University.

The Indian has always dreamed of suiting up to play college football on Saturdays, going back to when he was a kid throwing the ball around with his brother, and moving one step closer to fulfilling that dream has given Hampton an incredible sense of achievement.

"It's something that I never thought I would actually accomplish, but when you put the work in, it's crazy what comes out of it," Hampton said.

He plans to study physical education at Reinhardt so that after graduation he can fulfill his goal of becoming a PE teacher and high school football coach. From there, he hopes to lead younger generations and impact them in similar ways to the positive experiences he's had in Towns.

But first things first – upon graduating from Towns County High School in a few months, Hampton said he'll be concentrating on doing whatever it takes to stand out and get a shot to play on Saturdays as an Eagle.

Joining Hampton in celebrating his signing ceremony were his mom

Susan Hutton, grandmother Patty Dula, head coach Jason Roquemore, assistant coaches Evan Woodard, Chris Drury and Ken Camp, several teammates and Towns County High School staff members.

"This is a great opportunity for Reace and his family," Coach Roquemore said. "It says a lot about where we are compared to where we were two years ago. It says a lot. This is a process of a young man who from Day 1 bought into our core values. He understands what it means to be contagious."

"I am so, so happy for him, his mom and grandma. I look forward to seeing him excel, get a great education and have a chance to be a great physical education teacher and coach like he wants to be."

Hampton was a team  
See Hampton, Page 6A



Needless to say, TCHS senior Reace Hampton's mom Susan Hutton, left, and his grandmother Patty Dula are incredibly proud of him for signing to play football with Reinhardt University. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Matheson extradited; shooting survivor continues recovery

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Hiwassee shooting suspect Jason Matheson, 41, of Hayesville, North Carolina, made his first appearance in the Towns County Courthouse shortly before lunchtime on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

Matheson stands accused of attempting to murder his estranged wife in a Jan. 26 shooting at her workplace, the Chatuge Regional Hospital Rehabilitation & Wellness Center, after which he fled to his father's house in Hayesville where he was arrested later that evening.

He had been in the custody of the Clay County, North Carolina, Sheriff's Office since his Jan. 26 arrest, where he was awaiting an extradition hearing after initially refusing transport to Georgia to face charges here.

When Matheson decided to waive extradition after all, Towns County Sheriff Ken



Jason Matheson was escorted to and from the Towns County Courthouse by Sheriff Ken Henderson for his initial Georgia appearance last week. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Henderson traveled to Clay County that Tuesday morning to pick him up and take him for booking at the Towns County Jail prior to his first Georgia court appearance.

At the courthouse, Towns County Chief Magistrate Judge David Rogers presented Matheson with his felony charges: aggravated assault, See Matheson, Page 6A

## Students make Valentines for Brasstown Manor residents



Towns County Elementary School students have created handmade Valentines for residents of Brasstown Manor Senior Living. Hopefully, now that the residents have been vaccinated, they can start getting more visitors soon. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Elementary School students crafted Valentine's Day cards last week to show some love to the residents of Brasstown Manor Senior Living ahead of the Feb. 14 holiday.

For Lake Chatuge Chamber President Candice

Lee, the chamber-sponsored event was a great way to get students involved with the community while celebrating the upcoming day of love.

Inspiration for the event came in a recent 2021 strategic planning session held by the Chamber Board.

"One of the things that came up was that, during the pandemic and before then, not a

lot of attention was given to the folks that were in the assisted living and the retirement communities in town," Lee said.

So, the chamber provided crafting supplies to the Elementary School, and more than 80 students between kindergarten and third grade participated in making

See Valentines, Page 6A

## Vaccinations continue amid improving COVID-19 numbers

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

COVID-19 vaccination continues week after week, and while supply remains limited, the shot is steadily making its way into the arms of eligible individuals.

Eventually, everyone who wants the vaccine will have access to it, but for now, early vaccination efforts remain focused on medical workers, long-term care residents and staff, first responders, and adults age 65 and older as supplies last.

Without question, members of this last demographic, which includes most long-term care residents, have the highest risk of dying or hospitalization with severe COVID-19.

Couple this with the fact that the population of senior citizens in Towns County is roughly 2.5 times the state



Martha McKenzie of Blue Ridge got her shot from Certified Medical Assistant Brynn Francona of Synergy Health at the Feb. 5 vaccine clinic. McKenzie is a patient of Dr. Samuel L. Church at Synergy. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

average, and the imperative for local vaccination takes on even greater weight.

Fortunately, alongside ongoing vaccination efforts, the metrics for COVID appear

to be declining regionally – percent positivity for testing and hospitalizations are down, and the local death rate seems to be on a downward trend

See Vaccinations, Page 6A

## School Board members discuss COVID-19, student progress

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In their Feb. 1 meeting, Towns County Board of Education members received an update on how students have been doing after the first full month of the second semester.

At the Elementary School, Principal Shannon Moss said he was happy to report low COVID numbers going into the last half of the year.

"We currently have zero positive students at the Elementary School," Moss said. "We have four (students) in quarantine, and we have one positive staff member.

We currently have two staff in quarantine."

Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs said the Middle School was following a similar low trend, with everyone doing what it takes to keep staff and students safe for in-person instruction, while also making a welcome environment for online students to return to campus when they are ready.

"The Middle School has one positive faculty case at this time; she is expected to return soon," Hobbs said. "We have two students positive and six students who are quarantined due to exposure to someone



Dr. Darren Berrong  
Superintendent

See School Board, Page 6A

## FBLA Students compete at Region Leadership Conference

News Special  
Towns County Herald

Twenty-five Towns County High School Future Business Leaders of America students competed at region level competitions during January 2021, with 22 of these students finishing in the Top Ten in the state and 20 advancing to state level competition.

Competitors were: Zach Franklin and Mai Lim, Graphic Design; Emily Vargas, Business Calculations; Kindra Bryant, Client Service; Macy Brinson, Public Service Announcement; Eden Hill, Word Processing; Layne Rouse, Introduction to

Public Speaking; Will McConnell, Database Design & Applications; Eli Phillips, Introduction to Financial Math; Jay Grimsley and Brant Youngblood, Introduction to Business Presentation; Kenzie Livingston, Word Processing; Sarah Shook, Introduction to Financial Math; Maci Walls, Word Processing;

Abby Mauldin, Business Communications and Economics; Lelia Barnard, Spreadsheet Applications; Bazya Smith, Business Ethics;

See FBLA, Page 6A



The Towns County Future Business Leaders of America

2 Sections 12 Pages

Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,669.33  
Chatuge 1,917.19  
Nottely 1,760.20



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**SPORTS BASKETBALL**

Region Tournament  
@ Commerce  
Girls 2/9 4PM vs. TBA  
Boys 2/11 Time TBA vs. TBA

Iwo Jima Remembrance  
Scheduled for February 15  
at Foster Park has been  
**CANCELED**  
due to COVID-19

Young  
Harris  
Library to  
reopen Feb. 10

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