

# Habitat for Humanity welcomes families interested in new home

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**YOUNG HARRIS** – Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties hosted its annual orientation and introduction meeting on Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Mountain Regional Library.

The meeting was for those wanting to apply for the next home built through the organization.

With a room full of individuals eager to learn how to get their chance to own a home, the presentation went underway to explain the goal of the organization and what requirements need to be met in order to be eligible.

“This meeting is the start of the family selection process,” said Executive Director Bryan Thomas. “We are working on choosing the next family, and this process goes on for months before we make a decision.”

“Basically, this is where we tell them about the program and give them the application, then they have two weeks to get everything to us so that the committee can meet and begin going through the families.”

Selection Committee Member John Seymour gave the presentation to the attendees of the orientation meeting, starting with everything they need to know about the organization



**Bryan Thomas is the executive director of Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties.**  
Photo by Jarrett Whitener

and the selection process.

“The most important thing to know is that this is not a free house, and you will work for it just like anybody else would work on getting their house,” said Seymour. “You also have to participate by doing sweat equity. Depending on the number of adult members in your house, you have to have 150 hours of sweat equity or 250 hours of sweat equity.”

Seymour emphasized that the completed project would be the responsibility of the applicant and things that

need repairs down the road would require that the applicant fix it.

The application requires a background check, income paperwork, current debt information, and other information in order for the Family Selection Committee to consider the application for the home.

If the applicant is selected, they must complete their sweat equity hours along with some homeowner financing and training classes before they eventually get to

move into their new homes.

Applicants are selected on a need-based system, and the houses are given to those that need it the most and meet all other requirements listed on the application.

“If you have a perfectly good apartment and you just don’t like it, then you may not qualify,” said Seymour. “If you have a home that doesn’t meet your need, like you have three or four children that share a

bedroom or it’s just a bad place, then you need this.”

“You also have to be able to afford and pay for it and have decent credit, and you have to be willing to work, because there’s a lot of criteria that you have to fill out and complete before even being considered for the home.”

The remainder of the orientation was dedicated to describing the homes and how they are built according to

where the lots are, and that the applicants must be able to afford the bills at the residence.

Following the presentation, the attendees had an opportunity to ask members of the organization questions concerning their eligibility and specific needs that they may need to address while filling out the application.

For more information on the local Habitat for Humanity, visit [TownsUnionHabitat.org](http://TownsUnionHabitat.org).

## STAR Student...from Page 1A

he was managing the football team, and the second time he took the SAT, he was managing the basketball team.

“I didn’t really study a lot, five to 10 math problems, or a reading passage a day, just taking 10 or 15 minutes a day here and there,” said Floyd. “Studying a short amount of time every day kept me from getting burnt out.”

Floyd is also the captain of the Academic team, and this year they went on to win First Place in their division.

This past school year, Floyd applied and was accepted to the prestigious Governor’s Honors Program in social studies, and he spent the summer before his senior year doing independent studying surrounded by other bright, likeminded individuals.

He plans to attend the University of Georgia in the Fall and major in history. After earning his degree, Floyd wants to weigh his options, either to

attend law school or earn a master’s degree in education.

After college, Floyd wants to teach history or practice law, following in his parent’s footsteps. Floyd’s mother, Pamela Kendall Floyd, is an attorney here in Hiwassee, and his father, Shannon Floyd, is a history teacher and head baseball coach at Towns County High.

Taylor has been teaching in Towns County for 19 years. After teaching math at the Elementary School for 15 years, she decided to teach a business class in the high school.

“Math was not his subject, but he learned in the course that, ‘Hey, I can do this,’” said Taylor. “I cannot say enough good things about his dedication and how hard he works. He is your ideal all-around student.”

To Taylor’s point, Floyd is definitely a hard-working student who goes above and beyond what is required of

him.

“If Kendall is faced with a challenge, he’s going to rise to the occasion,” said Taylor. “He will do whatever he has to do, if it’s extra work, or extra study. He is the type of student that does better when he is challenged.”

Furthermore, Floyd earned the highest SAT score in his graduating class is exactly what Taylor expected of him.

“He is always going to work his hardest, and I truly am so proud of him,” said Taylor. “He has worked hard at this even from the beginning. To watch our students grow is the reason why we all teach.”

As usual, the Towns County Lions Club will honor Floyd and Taylor both during an upcoming meeting.

After a STAR Student has been selected, the STAR Student and Teacher will compete in a regional competition, which STAR Teachers going on with their students every step of the way.

## Football...from Page 1A

Joining Sparks in the meeting were several of his classmates and his parents.

“As most everyone knows, we play in one of the hardest regions in the state of Georgia, because every school in our region is a private school except for Commerce,” said School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong. “A lot of these private schools, especially in the Athens area, they recruit a lot of players ... We play a lot of big schools with a lot of big players.”

With only 13 players that they know of coming back next year, there is a lot of concern about the team going up against the much bigger teams and much bigger players, said Berrong.

And the big concern isn’t about winning or losing, it’s about the players’ health.

“I know firsthand how brutal and physically taxing playing our schedule is,” said Sparks, adding that he fears players sustaining life-changing injuries.

The other concern is that high schools in Georgia, in football, contract with each other to play a certain schedule of games. If a school breaks a contract by exiting the region, for whatever reason, fines can be levied by each school in the region.

The general consensus is that most schools would not levy fines if Towns County were to exit the region, but even one or two fines could add up to thousands of dollars.

Secondary to that concern is what funds football fines can be paid out of – probably not out of tax dollars the school runs on.

Sparks’ suggestion was that the school system work out an agreement with the other schools to play their second and third string squads and forfeit the games at the beginning of next season before the games are played.

Further complicating things, the football team is currently without a head coach, as Coach John Cornett officially



**Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong in the Feb. 7 BOE work session.**  
Photo by Mark Smith

resigned from the position in the January meeting.

Berrong congratulated Sparks and his teammates on their initiative in coming to the meeting, and for showing concern for their fellow players and for the TCHS football program in general.

Sparks’ suggestions, which are backed by his teammates, will be taken into consideration, as discussions within school leadership progress, said Berrong.

Announcements from the Superintendent’s Office will be forthcoming as solutions are found.

In other school news, Finance Director Myra Underwood said the annual audit has been completed and that there was nothing negative to report. The audit report will now be submitted to the state.

“We are actually above budget \$224,000 on our sales tax,” said Underwood. “It’s coming in very good. We’re up \$69,000 from this time last year. The SPLOST, we’re are \$218,000 above budget, and that’s up \$65,000 from last year.”

As far as property tax revenues, the school system expects \$2.5 million dollars “just any day now, and so, it will bring us to \$5.1 million for the year,” said Underwood.

“Our budget was \$5.7 (million), so we’re within \$620,000 of meeting budget. I don’t think that will be a problem

“On the General Fund summary, our revenue is starting to come in. We’ve completed 50 percent of the year. We have unused expenditures of 53 percent, so we are coming in under budget.”

Moving along, Berrong reported an 80 percent approval rating on Online Learning Day. He said the biggest complaint was that they had sent out too much work, which he found surprising.

“It turned out pretty good,” he said. “Regarding the Modernization Project, we should be opening bids for all the projects on March 5. So, we’ll know more of what kind of costs this is going to be to us, what projects we may have to take out or if we can actually do them all.

“We are looking at taking the seats out of the big gym and replacing those seats. And we went in and looked at the football stadium seats and ... it looks like we can pretty much fill the entire home side with the bleachers from the basketball gym.”

The new 2019-2020 school calendar was approved and should be published very soon.

## City Council...from Page 1A

grants. The council approved the Strategic Plan unanimously.

In a 3-2 decision, the council voted against a first reading of the ordinance to allow for unanimous consent. The ordinance would have allowed the council to expedite matters that had already been discussed in public and that might cause undue hardship by waiting.

This would have been accomplished by condensing two readings of ordinances, resolutions, etc., into one meeting instead of having to wait between first and second readings.

The ordinance would have required specific invocation by a councilmember for each relevant matter before the council. Furthermore, such measures would have required unanimous support by the full



**Hiwassee City Councilmembers Kris Berrong and Anne Mitchell on Feb. 5.**  
Photo by Mark Smith

council, with no absences or abstentions, in order to be exercised.

Patsy Owens and Anne Mitchell voted for the proposed ordinance, while Amy Barrett, Kris Berrong and Nancy Noblet

voted against it.

The next Hiwassee City Council meeting will be the work session meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 26.

## MMS...from Page 1A

us and wants a package of information on the county, thinking about coming up here, we’ve sent out 1,549 packets of information.

“We gave out 187 relocation packages, meaning 187 people actually came in the office and asked for a relocation packet. And then, we mailed out an additional 667 visitor packets just in the month of December.

“We got the figures for 2017, and Towns County went from \$48.78 million in direct tourist spending in 2016 to \$51.71 million in direct tourist spending. So, that says a lot about our county. Out of the 17 counties in northeast Georgia, we are eighth highest.

“That means that we are saving each homeowner in the county \$840 per year in taxes by bringing in that many tourists every year. So, you guys are a big part of it. You support us when we have all our events, and we really do appreciate

you.”

Bradshaw once more took the floor and said that Towns County is not only ranked the No. 1 retirement community in Georgia, but is ranked 10th highest in the USA, and he thanked Lee and Thomason for their efforts to make that happen.

Thomason began her presentation with a brief history of the Georgia Mountain Fair, the Fairgrounds and Anderson Music Hall, adding that she is a graduate of the old Towns County High School, which is where the Georgia Mountain Fair started back in 1950.

“When we first started the Fair, we had a three-day event and had 2,000 people there,” said Thomason.

Needless to say, the Georgia Mountain Fair has grown considerably since then.

“There are 189 campsites there on the Fairgrounds,” said Thomason. “We take

reservations for the campground spring, summer and fall. And of course, Area 2 is open year-around.”

Thomason briefed the audience with a list of some of the events scheduled to take place in 2019.

The Battle of the Bands will take place on Saturday, March 30, the winner of which will open for Hank Williams Jr. on April 6.

The official Georgia State Championship Clogging Contest and Festival will happen on Oct. 15.

The Appalachian Brew, Que and Stew Festival will take place on Oct. 26 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thomason said this is a craft beer event and that she is looking for 40 volunteers to serve beer. There will be two shifts, she said, and asked that interested parties please call the Fairgrounds.

For more detailed information, including on many more events, contact the Fairgrounds office at 706-896-4191 or visit the website at [GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com](http://GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com).

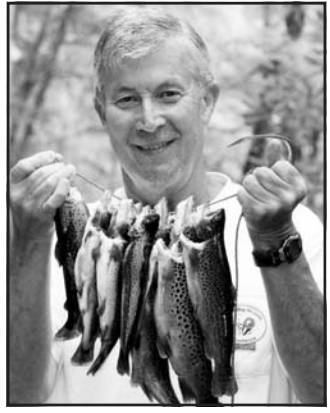
## 11th Annual Watershed Gala to celebrate clean water

The public is invited to attend the 11th Annual Watershed Gala and Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award presentation hosted by the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition on Thursday evening, February 28 in the Charles Suber Banquet Hall at Young Harris College.

The Watershed Gala is held annually to celebrate good water quality still being measured in many rivers, lakes and streams across the upper Hiwassee River watershed and to honor the efforts of those who work to sustain it! The event is also the Coalition’s largest fundraiser.

This year’s Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award recipient is Dave Hering of Towns County, GA. Dave is one of HRWC’s first Adopt-A-Stream water quality monitoring volunteers, receiving his first certification more than six years ago in August 2012. Each month, Dave samples the Lower Hiwassee River site in Towns County and a smaller stream named Scataway Creek. Dave is also a former HRWC board member and dedicated volunteer fundraiser for the cause of clean water.

“I am most definitely honored and pleased,” Her-



**Dave Hering**

ing said, upon learning that he was selected as the 2019 Holman Award recipient. “Robin (Dave’s wife) and I spend many days traveling now and miss many of the activities and fundraisers that we never missed in the past, so again I feel especially honored to be recognized for the work we still do, along with our past involvement.”

There were four other nominees for this year’s Holman Award, including runners-up, former Young Harris College biology professor, Brenda (BK) Hull and the Chattahoochee-Nantahala (692) Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The Holman Award, created by David Goldhagen of

Goldhagen Art Glass on the shores of Lake Chatuge, is presented annually by the Watershed Coalition to the person or group who has done the most to sustain good water quality in rivers, lakes, and streams in the upper Hiwassee River watershed.

The Watershed Gala will begin at 5:30 with a silent auction, raffle and cash bar. The plated meal will be served starting at 6:30. After the Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award is presented, several select items will be auctioned live by local auctioneer and entertainer, Tim Ryan.

Reservations are \$45/each or \$320 for a reserved table for eight and must be made by Wednesday, February 20th. Reservations may be secured by mailing a check to HRWC, P.O. Box 889, Murphy, NC 28906 or by reserving your place online at: <https://hrwc.net/events/watershed-gala/>.

HRWC is also accepting donations of original art and craft items or gift certificates for the auctions at this time. Please contact Administrative & Outreach Coordinator, Raleigh Keagan to donate auction items or to volunteer at the event: 828-837-5414 or [admin@hrwc.net](mailto:admin@hrwc.net).

## UGH...from Page 1A

according to the DOJ.

“We want to move forward, and we want our community to be proud of what we do,” said Kelley. “All of our employees are proud of what they do, and I’ve asked them to hold their heads high through all of this.”

“They have not done anything wrong, and I want the public to know our employees and physicians are here to do a good job, and that’s the most important thing.”

Kelley is set to retire as CEO on March 1, and his replacement, Kevin Bierschenk, will start on Feb. 25.

Bierschenk knew all about the internal investigation and impending DOJ action prior to his acceptance of the job, said Kelley, who considers this fact a testament to Bierschenk’s confidence in the hospital he’s about to be helming.

The many physicians of Union General have also expressed complete confidence

in their local hospital, sharing with the North Georgia News a group photo and collective letter of support penned by Dr. Thomas Gary to the public.

“We believe in the board and the current administration,” said Gary. “We believe in our colleagues, the thousand-plus people who work tirelessly to provide top-level care. And

we believe in our community’s ability to move forward, together.”

“We take pride in our hospital and reassure you that we, the medical staff, are committed to doing what we do best – taking care of our extended family in North Georgia.”

## S.A.F.E. needs volunteers

S.A.F.E. (Support in Abusive Family Emergencies): we are in need of volunteers for our Thrift stores and our Shelter! We need help in every area. Thrift store, mentoring, newsletters, childcare, life coaching, transporting, crafting, shelter repair, computer lessons, whatever skills you may have!

(All volunteers must submit to a criminal background check and depending upon your area of interest, may be required to obtain fingerprinting at our cost.)

You can make a difference in your community. Our purpose is to help those who

have been affected by abuse. Any time, any skill can help us achieve our goals. If you can help in any way please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Robin O’Neill at 706-379-1901.

S.A.F.E. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides services to domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse in Towns, and Union counties. For information on available workshops or to volunteer for S.A.F.E. please contact (706) 379-1901. If you are a victim of Domestic Violence or sexual Assault or know someone who is, call S.A.F.E. for confidential assistance 24 hours a day, (706) 379-1901.