

Towns County Herald

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Hiawasse celebrates 24th Arbor Day with Boy Scouts at Mayor's Park

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The City of Hiawasse celebrated its 24th Arbor Day as a Tree City USA town on a windy but sunny Wednesday, Feb. 13, by planting a tree at Mayor's Park.

Georgia Forestry Arborists Seth Forestry and Jason Reed, along with Forestry Chief Ranger Anthony Harkins, Hiawasse Mayor Liz Ordiales, Hiawasse Mayor and Boy Scouts Troop 407 as led by Chad Sparks and Tim Barrett were present for the ceremony.

Troop 407 members were Brody Barrett, Gus Askea, Noah Earl, Christopher Houser and Cayden Hamilton, all of whom jumped in to help plant an October Glory Red Maple tree.

Hawkins said the tree would do well in Hiawasse and grow to be very large, and as he talked, Troop 407 and others gathered around to listen.

"So, they started doing Arbor Day back in the 1850s in Nebraska," said Hawkins. "This one guy lived out there - he moved from a place in the Northeast that had a lot of trees. And he moved to Nebraska."

"It was just so hot. He was just so hot all the time - there's not a lot of trees there naturally. So, he decided that he wanted to make a state holiday to plant trees."

"By the 1860s, they made it an official state holiday. On that first official holiday in Nebraska, they planted over a million trees - without any machinery, without cuts, they

planted a million trees in a day."

The man who started it all, who moved to Nebraska from the Northeast, was named J. Sterling Morton.

Hawkins said Arbor Day became a national holiday in the 1870s, and by about 1900, every state had its own state Arbor Day.

"So, we still carry on that tradition by planting trees," said Hawkins. "And Hiawasse is designated a Tree City USA town by the National Arbor Day Foundation."

The Tree City USA designation is bestowed on towns that "care more about trees than the average town," said Hawkins.

The most common mistake people make when planting a tree is that they plant



Local Boy Scouts helping to plant the Arbor Day tree at Mayor's Park in Hiawasse on Wednesday, Feb. 13. Photo by Mark Smith

Fire Corps delivers \$35,000 of radio equipment to Fire Department



The Towns County Fire Department recently accepted a donation of \$35,000 in new equipment that will upgrade the department's communication capabilities.

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Fire Department recently accepted delivery of about \$35,000 in upgraded radio communications equipment from the Towns

County Fire Corps.

Fire Chief Copeland said that they have been able to communicate between Persimmon in Rabun County and Young Harris in testing the new digital radios.

The old analog radios were not be able to do that.

"We got 45 handhelds and 11 mobiles," said Copeland. "You don't have the squelch tails (and radio noise). It's just clear and precise and crisp."

"The Fire Corps does yearly projects for us, and over the years, they've bought

See Fire Corps, Page 8A

TCHS hopes to pick a new football coach by next BOE meeting

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs updated the Board of Education on the school's search for a new football coach in the Monday, Feb. 11, regular school board meeting.

"The Football Coach Hiring Committee has interviewed five candidates to date, and we have two more interviews coming up," said Hobbs. "We hope to have a decision made on the right candidate for Towns County by your next board meeting for your approval."

With 13 players having shown interest in



Towns County BOE Chairwoman Laura Banister in the Feb. 11 regular board meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

playing next season, the High School team is struggling to find a way forward.

Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said after the meeting that the Towns County had contacted the other schools in the region, and they were able to come up with one potential compromise for next year.

"They have agreed to either not play their starters, or only for the first quarter," said Berrong. "Nothing official yet, though."

Hobbs spoke on the American Welding Society's recent donation of around \$3,000 worth of metal, melting rods, tips and wire to the school's Agriculture Department.

See BOE, Page 8A

Young Harris man arrested for alleged sexual abuse of 13-year-old

By News Special
Towns County Herald

On Friday, Feb. 15, Towns County Sheriff's Office Investigators served arrest warrants on Dalton Travis Denmark, 18, of Young Harris.

He was arrested and taken into custody without incident.

Upon completing an investigation into reported alleged incidents of sexual misconduct with a victim reported to be 13 years old at the time, investigators secured warrants on Denmark.

He was arrested and charged with one count of aggravated child molestation, two counts of statutory rape, and two counts of enticing a child for indecent purposes.

The investigated incidents were reported to have occurred at a location within Towns County last year, between July and September of 2018.

The investigation is active and ongoing at this time, and the case will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.



Dalton Travis Denmark

Senior Center raises money to give meals to homebound seniors

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

During the month of February, the Towns County Senior Center will have hearts to purchase for their Memory Heart Tree.

The purpose of the tree is to help the Senior Center raise money for their Meals on Wheels program, which transports food to homebound seniors who live alone.

Purchased hearts include the name of a loved one on them, so that community members can give this donation in remembrance of their loved ones while giving to the seniors.

"The purpose is not only remembering our loved ones, but also to provide a meal with a valentine heart to a

homebound senior," said Senior Center Director Vicki Stephens-Berrong. "At the end of the month, we take the hearts off of the tree and send them out with the hearts, providing them with a hearty meal in memory of a loved one. The hearts themselves represent a heart of love."

The Senior Center works as a nonprofit organization that needs to match their funding, which led them to put this fundraiser into practice starting last year, according to Stephens-Berrong.

"We got the thought from the hospital, but we didn't want to copy them with their idea, so we decided to use the hearts and to share the hearts with the love of a meal for a senior," said Stephens-Berrong. "Last year, we raised almost \$500, so

hopefully word will get out this time and we can work on beating that this year."

"We have also lost a lot of seniors since I've worked here, so about four years, and a lot of family members who had people here buy these hearts in memory of them."

Each heart for the program costs \$4, which is the estimated cost of each meal given to a senior, meaning that each heart goes to one of the seniors who participate in the program.

"I didn't realize how many homebound seniors live in our community until I started working here," said Stephens-Berrong. "It's been an eye-opener to see all the elderly homebound people here that live alone with no family."

See Seniors, Page 8A



The Memory Heart Tree at the Towns County Senior Center, pictured here with Gale Bradley-Parker, John Kenkesh and Vicki Stephens-Berrong. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Nelms talks fixed charge; EMC Board welcomes students in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

In the Feb. 11 regular meeting of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC General Board of Directors, EMC Board Manager Jeremy Nelms addressed an upcoming rate redesign that would result in increases to the residential customer charge over time.

The member shared his concerns with the North Georgia News via a letter to the editor published in the Feb. 6 edition of the newspaper.

Specifically, the member wanted EMC leadership to reconsider any plans moving forward that would include significantly raising the customer charge that appears on member bills.

As previously reported, Nelms told the board in the January meeting that the company's rate consultant had recently completed an updated cost of service study.

Currently, the fixed charge portion of each residential customer's bill, aka the customer charge, is right at \$21.37.

Based on the updated cost See EMC, Page 8A



Kara Dudley, Danny Reagan and Carson Chambers at the Iwo Jima Memorial near Washington D.C. last summer. This week marks the 74th anniversary of the start of the Battle of Iwo Jima. Photo by Byron McCombs

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