

Primary...from Page 1A

Raffensperger said. The CDC recommends those, including seniors, who are at greater risk from COVID-19 limit their exposure to the virus by keeping space between themselves and others, avoiding crowds, and staying at home during outbreaks in their community.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious

Diseases, has likewise identified individuals 65 years old and older as facing increased risk from COVID-19. He explained that older Americans infected with COVID-19 stand a greater risk of serious difficulty and even death from the virus.

All individuals should practice social distancing and minimize contact with others to minimize the risk to them and others.

With this decision, Secretary Raffensperger looks to confront the public health threat to the state, and the health of Georgians, while also maintaining an avenue for the people of Georgia to exercise their fundamental democratic right to vote.

In the midst of a public health emergency like the one Georgia is facing, taking strong action to protect all Georgians, including its dedicated poll workers, is paramount.

GOP Forum...from Page 1A

Osborn, a lieutenant with the Union County Sheriff's Office; Lisa Joseph, a corporal with the Towns County Sheriff's Office; and Kenneth "Ode" Henderson, chief of Young Harris College Police.

All five candidates will square off in the May 19 General Primary Election. With no Democratic challengers, whoever wins in May will be running unopposed ahead of the Nov. 3 General Election.

citizen concerns.

"I will be willing to discuss your issues with you without judgment or prejudice," Joseph said, before going on to stress the importance of interagency communications with the Hiwassee and Young Harris College police departments.

Kenneth "Ode" Henderson: "First of all, you've got to get the department up and running, and you've got to get a feel for what's going on - make sure you get your command staff in place, and making sure that you're ready to get out here and rock 'n' roll."

K-9 dog," Joseph said. "These deputies work tirelessly to get the drugs off the streets, but it seems the same drug users keep getting arrested time after time."

To combat this "revolving door" of drug abuse, Joseph said she would work with the Enotah Judicial Circuit "to change how we support our drug users."

"We currently have Drug Court, it is working, but once that person graduates, there's no longer support out there for that person," Joseph said. "We need to help that person continue to be supported so that they can break the habit of doing drugs."

Collison...from Page 1A

competitive nature, and his love of sports led to him becoming a high school and college basketball official for several decades once his playing days were over.

Smith of Monroe; and a host of nieces and nephews, according to his obituary.

Banister-Cooper Funeral Home had charge of Smith's

arrangements, and services were held for the sports enthusiast at the funeral home on Monday, March 16, with Rev. Chris Rumpfelt and Danny Byers officiating.



Jimmy Smith, 78, passed away two days after his 2007 Ford Taurus collided with another car on Georgia 2 last week.

Arrests...from Page 1A

executed a search warrant at a residence located on Georgia 288 in Hiwassee.

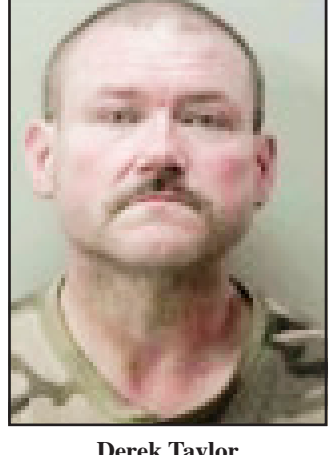
There, they arrested the following suspects, all of Hiwassee and all on a possession of methamphetamine charge:

James Michael Peterson, 60; David Lee Chastain II,

38; Thomas Wooten, 29; Levi Peterson, 37; Curtis Cooper, 58; Derek Taylor, 45; Lessie Eugene Montgomery, 20; Ramona Montgomery, 50; Roxanne Wodarski, 51.

All the cases are still active and ongoing, and

they will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution. All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Additional arrests will be forthcoming.



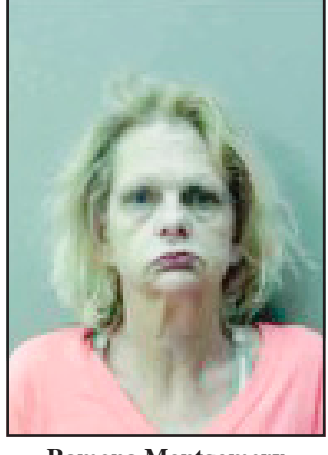
Derek Taylor



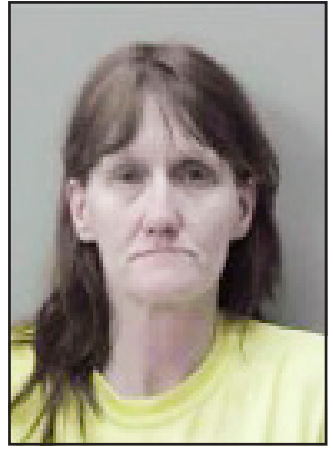
James Peterson



Levi Peterson



Ramona Montgomery



Roxanne Wodarski



Thomas Wooten

All Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites remain open



Officials with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources are reminding citizens that all state parks and historic sites are open and welcoming visitors. With many Georgians avoiding crowds and canceling travel plans, parks provide nearby places to enjoy nature and solitude. Amenities such as campsites, cabins, hiking trails, picnic areas and golf courses remain open.

A small, wooded section within Hard Labor Creek State Park in Rutledge was recently selected as a temporary location to house Coronavirus patients.

At 5,800 acres, Hard Labor Creek is Georgia's second largest state park. Less than one acre is being used, and security is in place to ensure there is no public access. The park's trails, campground, cabins and golf course are open.

"We want to do all we can to help health and emergency officials prevent the spread of COVID-19," said Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites Director Jeff Cown. "The safety of all citizens is of utmost importance to the Georgia State Parks team. With this being a fluid situation, we are monitoring it closely and making whatever decisions necessary to ensure the health and well-being of the public, our guests and employees."

For the latest updates related to Coronavirus, visit GaStateParks.org/Alerts.

Below are extensive answers to two of the questions from the candidate forum. The YouTube video link of the entire event was made available Sunday on the "Towns County Georgia GOP" Facebook page, which the Towns County Herald subsequently shared to its own Facebook page.

Question: What is the most important action you plan to take at the start of your term?

Linda J. Curtis: "Drugs, obviously, is a problem in Towns County, but it's a problem in a lot of counties. You know the old saying, if you keep doing what you've always done, you're going to keep getting what you've always gotten."

Curtis described the drug situation in Towns County as being "stuck in this hamster wheel," and that, instead of relying on a dedicated drug agent to fix the problem, "we have to build up three different divisions - that's patrol, investigations and community policing, specifically neighborhood watch."

Jim Couch: "The most important thing that I look at is increase the patrol size. We need to get more officers on the road, and I have a schedule, or a plan, to do that without increasing the budget... so we can put more people on the road so they can answer your calls for help."

Couch said he would also upgrade computer and records systems to allow deputies to complete reports from within their patrol zones instead of having to come back to the office, and he would institute a program to work with youths of the community.

Daren "Bear" Osborn: "The first thing I'm going to do is basically put a uniform on and go to work. We haven't had that in the Sheriff's Office in a long time. Then, I'm going to have a command staff that's going to help me in that aspect of getting the deputies, getting the morale built up in the Sheriff's Office."

Osborn pledged to put more deputies on the road and to keep them in their zones. He also said his office would work on the county's drug problem, to include the employment of an in-house drug agent and greater cooperation with the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office "to stop the drugs at the source to keep them from coming into Towns County."

Lisa Joseph: "The first action I'm going to take is the management. A collaborative management style is what I'm going to strive for. The Towns County Sheriff's Office is going to have its own website. We're going to have an administrative Facebook page that will factually give information about road closures, school closings, incidents that the public needs to know about right away."

Furthermore, Joseph envisions residents uploading videos and sending emails to the Sheriff's Office, anonymously or otherwise, with deputies offering emailed responses to

citizen concerns.

"I will be willing to discuss your issues with you without judgment or prejudice," Joseph said, before going on to stress the importance of interagency communications with the Hiwassee and Young Harris College police departments.

Kenneth "Ode" Henderson: "First of all, you've got to get the department up and running, and you've got to get a feel for what's going on - make sure you get your command staff in place, and making sure that you're ready to get out here and rock 'n' roll."

His first priority after getting the department up and running would be to "get some very professional, well-trained, qualified drug agents in place, because the most important thing we have in this county, in my opinion, are our kids. I want to make sure that there's an environment that's healthy and drug-free for our kids."

The sharing of information between local and regional law enforcement agencies would also play a key role in Henderson's vision of a drug-free Towns County.

Question: What specific actions would you take to reduce or eliminate illegal drugs in Towns County?

Jim Couch: "The Sheriff's Office of Towns County now has an internal drug agent, a narcotics agent. We started that in May of 2018, and it's been very successful. We're averaging about 14 to 16 arrests a month."

Couch said the Sheriff's Office is still in the Drug Task Force, and that, if it were to become feasible, as sheriff, he would revisit the possibility of assigning an in-house agent to the Regional Office.

He would also look at collaborating K-9 efforts with the Hiwassee PD, engaging in educational opportunities with the school system, pursuing in-house drug-recovery programs in the jail, and soliciting information from the community.

Daren "Bear" Osborn: He once again stressed the importance of having an in-house drug agent who both arrests individual drug users and investigates the sources of drugs.

"We've got to find out where (the drugs are) coming from," Osborn said. "That's why we're going to get back into the Drug Task Force actively. We don't have an agent assigned to the Drug Task Force. I've talked to the head of the Drug Task Force, and he says that they're waiting... and we're going to make it happen."

Furthermore, Osborn committed to greater cooperation with surrounding law enforcement agencies, "because if we don't do this, we cannot stop the drug problem from coming into Towns County from other counties and other states."

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