

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, March 23, 2022

Hannah Wecer signs to wrestle as Montreat Cavalier

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Friday, March 18, Towns High School Senior Hannah Wecer officially signed with Montreat College of North Carolina on a women's wrestling scholarship.

The signing featured a ceremony in the school Media Center, where Wecer joined friends, coaches and family, including her mother Rebecca and grandmother Barbara Caruthers, who beamed with pride for their soon-to-be high school graduate.

Wecer wasn't always into wrestling, but she was into sports. One day at soft-

ball practice, Wrestling Coach Brandon Rowland convinced her to try something new. "You'll love it," Rowland told her, and not only did she enjoy wrestling, but Wecer found she was good at it.

And the rest is history. At Montreat, Wecer plans to major in exercise science, which can lead to any number of careers and specializations. Other than that, Wecer advised her peers to "go wrestle - it's fun!"

Montreat Wrestling Coach Rich Manning was also present at the signing, and he said the women's wrestling program at Montreat College is brand new, to begin its first year in the fall of 2022.

So, Wecer is the first

student, male or female, from Towns County High to get a Wrestling Scholarship and will be one of the first lady wrestlers on Montreat College's first-year Women's Wrestling Team.

Women's wrestling is a relatively new sport and is just beginning to spread among American colleges. So, Wecer is getting in on the ground floor of women's wrestling in several ways.

"Hannah is a pretty good wrestler, but Coach Manning is also getting a fine young lady. So, we're proud of you (Hannah)," TCHS Athletic Director Jim Melton said.

For his part, Coach Rowland said Hannah is "a phenomenal kid, someone who

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Hannah Wecer with Montreat Women's Wrestling Coach Rich Manning and Towns County Indians Wrestling Coach Brandon Rowland in her historic signing ceremony last week.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

County awards courthouse construction, honors Crothers

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

At Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw's heist on March 15 county meeting, CPL Architects Senior Vice President Kevin McOmber announced that the

Towns County Courthouse renovation/addition project was being awarded to Reeves & Young Construction Co.

"We've been working with Towns County for almost two years on developing a program of needs for this courthouse," McOmber said. "The program identified a need for

not only renovating this building, but there will be additions on the back side of this building and a smaller addition on the front side."

The Towns County Courthouse was originally built back in 1964, before the age of computers and modern

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Commissioner Bradshaw with Joann Crothers and family members Amy Barrett, Linda Barrett, Tim Barrett and Brooke Barrett in the March 15 county meeting.

Photo by Mark Smith

TCSO seizes fentanyl-laced meth in 'Operation Sting'



Sheriff Ken Henderson posing with drugs confiscated during the latest round of "Operation Sting."

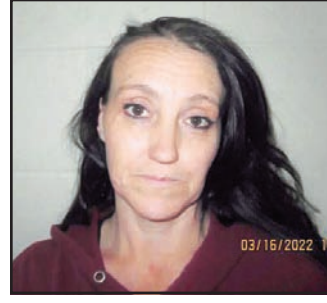
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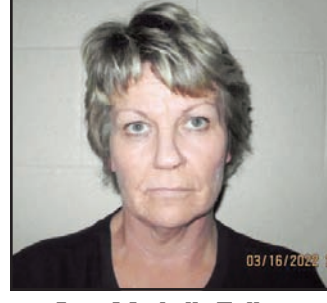
A weeklong investigation resulted in a search warrant executed at a residence in Hiawassee, where over 1 ounce of methamphetamine was confiscated, with subsequent field testing indicating the meth was laced with fentanyl.

Scales and drug paraphernalia were also seized, and the drugs have been turned over to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab for further testing.

Bobbie Jo Waddell, 43, of Cleveland, was arrested on March 16 in connection with the case and charged with traf-



Bobbie Jo Waddell



Leta Mechelle Fuller

ficking methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute, possession of marijuana less than 1 ounce and possession of drug-related objects.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated he was proud of the Drug Investigation Unit for the arrest and confiscation of this harmful drug that can have a deadly effect on the user or anyone who comes in direct contact with it.

In an unrelated incident, Leta Mechelle Fuller, 51, of Hiawassee, was arrested on March 16 for felony sale of methamphetamine, a Schedule II controlled substance.

Getting these drugs off the streets and out of the community are top priorities for the Towns County Sheriff's Office, Henderson said, noting that "Operation Sting" will continue, with more arrests to follow.

Towns, Union students speak confidently at Top of Georgia



2022 Top of Georgia Speech Contest Middle School participants Katelyn Walls, Madilyn Walls, Sophia Gobin, Jolie Schmitt and Noah Lynch.

Photo by Jeremy Foster

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - After a challenging eight-week course preparing for the annual Top of Georgia Speaking Contest, area middle and high school students celebrated

the culmination of their hard work on Tuesday, March 15, in the Hatcher Dining Room at Young Harris College.

During training, students learned how to effectively communicate ideas in a public fashion to assist them throughout their lives by developing skills that will benefit everything from building personal

confidence and good relationships to advancing career opportunities.

The 2022 Top of Georgia Student Development Inc. team put on the training and contest, which included Dr. Jennifer Hallett of the YHC Communication Studies Department; Enotah Judicial

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Hospital looking to sell acreage to support expansion



Above is the 576.1-acre parcel, outlined in light blue, that Union General is offering to sell off River Bend Farm Road in Blairsville, excluding the smaller outlined piece in the middle owned by Union County Government.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE - Union General Health System is hunting for a buyer for the 576.1-acre River Bend Farm Road parcel the hospital purchased in 2014 under former CEO Mike Gowder.

Any sale would primarily benefit the ongoing construction efforts of the Health System, to include a planned four-story addition at Union General Hospital to accommodate expanded services for a growing region.

At the time of the 2014 purchase, Gowder convinced Hospital Board members to buy the acreage with a vision of turning the property into a retirement village of sorts, according to testimony in the

federal trial that resulted in Gowder's conviction for prescription drug fraud in 2019.

The 2014 purchase cost the hospital \$2.6 million, so selling the property now at its current valuation would net a revalued, as the land was revalued last year to \$6.6 million.

Importantly, the recently advertised request for proposals is for a "potential purchase" of the property only, meaning the hospital is committing its options without committing to a sale.

Should the hospital decide not to sell after considering all proposals, it does not have any other plans for the property, which would remain "just an asset we own," Union General CEO Kevin Bierschenk said.

"We currently own 78 acres here on campus, so we have some property here that

we are using for our future growth," Bierschenk said.

According to the proposal, the hospital "reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive any informalities in the proposals received, and to accept any proposal which in their sole opinion may be in the best interests of the citizens and communities served by UGH."

"UGH does not obligate itself to accept a proposal solely on the basis of highest financial value or any other criteria."

Proposals are being accepted by Atlanta-based law firm Morris, Manning and Martin LLP, with a submission deadline of April 25. The approval process for any potential sale would include a recommendation by a specially designated committee to the Hospital Board.

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Interested parties are being asked to describe, among other things, “plans for the property” and “how your proposed use of the property will support the Union County Community,” such that the Health System may evaluate proposals depending on what each brings to the community. As to why the Health System has decided to investigate selling the acreage, Bierschenk said the timing just seems right, both from a market and construction timeline standpoint.

Real estate is a particularly hot commodity of late, Bierschenk said, and the hospital is presently building a large new facility on its main campus and planning a four-story tower expansion of Union General Hospital to be built over the next couple years.

“We’ve got a lot of construction going on,” Bierschenk said. “We’re building a medical office building that started out to be about a \$10 million investment, and with cost increases due to COVID, short supply of product and steel and everything, our costs have skyrocketed, and we added some

more square footage.

“And then, we got approval (from the state) to start looking at adding onto the hospital. So, those two large construction projects alone – we need to figure out how to pay for it.”

Union General will be expanding its main hospital “because we’re running out of beds,” a need that, though talks have been ongoing since before the pandemic, came to the forefront during the recent COVID-19 patient surges stretching the local facility to well beyond its max capacity.

Speaking of the proposed hospital expansion, Bierschenk said, “Where the helicopter sits today, we would add a four-story tower,” to include additional observation beds for the emergency room, operating room, labor and delivery unit and intensive care unit.

“We’ve been (seriously) talking about this for the last year,” Bierschenk said. “We got drawings together, we got pricing together, submitted to the state, and our Certificate of Need was approved in January.”

So far, preliminary plans

have been drawn up, and now, the hospital is further pricing out the expansion, examining financing options, and looking to get official plans drawn up to bid construction, which could begin as early as first quarter of 2023 and take two years to complete.

As for the medical office building currently being built, Bierschenk said the hospital anticipates construction will conclude at the end of October, and that everyone should be moved into the building by January ‘23.

The new three-story building will feature 42,000 square feet to house existing and new medical offerings, serving as both an expansion and a way to free up space for growth within the main hospital building and elsewhere.

Any potential sale of the hospital’s acreage on River Bend Farm Road would not include a 3.382-acre parcel located in the middle of the hospital property that is owned by Union County Government, which the county purchased in 2020 to protect the hospital’s larger investment.

On behalf of the county,

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris decided to purchase the smaller parcel, consisting of a life estate for one of its previous owners, saying it was his intent to keep the property unified with the hospital’s land so as not to diminish Union General’s holding.

The county purchase was controversial at the time because of its proximity to Gowder, who purchased it himself in 2014 and sold it to another individual about half a

year before the county bought it, and because of the life estate.

Keeping with its original intent, the county said last week it plans to recover its \$750,000 investment by offering to sell the 3.382 acres in the middle to whichever party the hospital decides to sell its much larger parcel, if such a sale takes place.

The Health System’s three-page request for proposals on the 576.1 acres

may be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3vCEwQ3>.

“We’re just looking at future growth of our community,” Bierschenk said. “I truly do believe we have a great community, and I believe our local elected officials are doing a great job; that’s why the growth is here.

“And you have to have health care. Two things people are moving for is health care and education, and we have both.”

International Association of Fire Chiefs - WUI Conference

This week Anthony English and I are attending the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Conference in Reno, Nevada. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) represents the leadership of firefighters and emergency responders worldwide; whose members are the world’s leading experts in firefighting, emergency medical services, terrorism response, hazardous materials spills, natural disasters, search and rescue, and public safety policy. With more fire in the WUI, greater all-hazard challenges taxing our resources and no expectation of change soon, it’s critical to come together to discuss the issues impacting our industry.

The WUI Conference brings together firefighters, researchers and leadership at the local, state, federal and tribal levels to collaborate on emerging issues and educate wildland-fire management. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is where homes are built in or near forests and the risk of wildfire is increased because the homes are now sitting inside the natural fuel and everything in a house is fuel. This increased risk not only is due to the fuel that is around the homes, but also because of the limited access for First Responders and Emergency personnel to get into our neighborhoods with their wildfire equipment using the narrow, one lane roads that many of us use to get into and out of our neighborhoods.

This limited access can be critical during a wildfire when citizens are trying to get

out and fire fighters are trying to get in. If citizens wait too long to leave and meet a fire truck on a narrow road, not only are they in personal danger sitting in the smoke because the fire truck can’t back up and this impasse creates a traffic jam and a delay getting equipment and personnel to the fire.

Firewise, Ready-Set-Go and Fire Adapted Communities offers solutions for citizens to use to reduce their risk and develop evacuation plans so everybody can survive a wildfire.

Anthony English is the Wildland Urban Interface mitigation specialist for the Georgia Forestry Commission. Anthony works out of the Habersham office with communities and groups to setup wildfire risk reduction programs all across north Georgia. Part of his job is (along with the local GFC rangers) is to perform (free) home risk assessments to help citizens realize the things they can do to make their homes safer from a wildfire. These wildfire awareness programs have helped keep north Georgia citizens aware of the risk of wildfires in and around their communities and this awareness had resulted in fewer wildfire calls for our Fire Rescue departments. This not only keeps property losses low but saves the county tax dollars by keeping the fire apparatus and fire fighters in the station where they are not burning diesel fuel and using up supplies.

These programs work as shown by the 3-year total of number of wildfires in Towns, Union, and Fannin counties



Frank Riley
Executive Director of RC&D

which shows a definite drop in calls since we started the Firewise, FAC, and Ready Set Go programs a few years ago.

This is my 7th year attending the WUI Conference and I have presented our work to the Wildfire professionals in 5 of the past 7 years. Wildland Fire professionals from Washington DC to rural California know about the success we have achieved in Towns County of reducing the risk of losing our property or lives from an errant wildfire.

This conference is like a reunion of wildfire professionals from all over the world. You know you are doing something right when the Deputy Chief of the US Forest Service and the Undersecretary of Agriculture tells us that they hear about “our great work down here in the Appalachians”. That is the main reason we go to these conferences is to learn from others, share what we have learned, visit old friends, and be seen by the folks from DC who control the dollars that fuel our programs. It benefits all the citizens down here in the Appalachians to be recognized for doing things that help these government agencies protect the public forests and citizen’s homes.

For more information on IAFC or WUI contact us at www.info.ccrd@gmail.com or www.gatrees.com.

Spring 2022 ICL Courses at Young Harris College

The Institute for Continuing Learning (ICL) at Young Harris College has announced 18 courses for the Spring term. We have seven new course leaders this term. Most of these classes will be offered in the ICL Classroom on campus. Please be advised that several of the courses have limited seating so register early.

Information Security is one of the new courses this term: Information Security by Jim Dollens - 8 Sessions, Wednesdays, April 6 – May 25, 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM.

The information security course material covers the following general topics: identity theft; online shopping, banking, and finance; personal computer and cell phone security and management; and encryption and steganography. The on-campus and online sessions will introduce the topics with off-line readings and posts to discussion threads for questions between sessions.

Jim worked in the IT field for over thirty years having held positions ranging from programmer/analyst to systems manager in industry and government. He holds a BS in mathematics, an MS in computer science, and a doctorate in information systems. Since earning his doctorate he has been an adjunct instructor for St. Leo University, Liberty University, and the University of Maryland Global Campus teaching online courses in Web and Java programming, and cyber security.

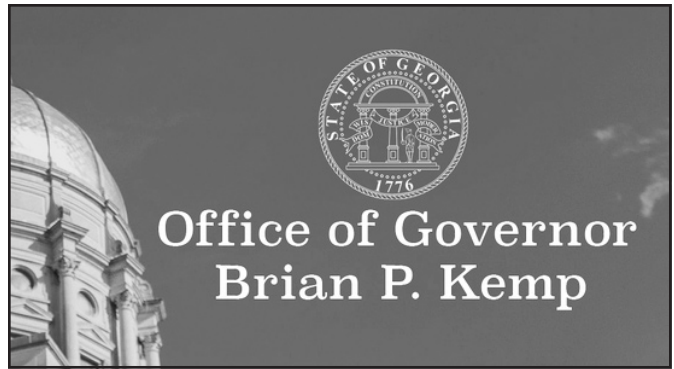
Here’s a list of courses that are still available: Mah-Jongg – Supervised Play by Ann Powell, Class Limit 12; Oh! The Places You Will Go – Part II (Simulcast) by Susan Crooks; My Family - My Self by Scotty Hargrove; Turn Your Memories Into A Legacy

For Your Family (Zoom Only) by Glenda Beall; The Game Of Euchre by Jill Long and Shelly Boggs, Class Limit 12; Spanish Made Easy by Cary Derflinger; Photographing Spring’s Wildflowers by Stephan Banakas, Class Limit 10; Learning The Mountain Dulcimer by Monique Moore, Class Limit 15; Solving The Puzzle Of Your Past by Marty Dellinger; Beginning Hand Quilting by Shirley Deasy, Class Limit 6; Cryptocurrency: The Basics (Simulcast) by Laura Morrissey; Elder Law & Estate Planning (Simulcast) by Eddy Corn; and Local Organ Crawl by Jerry Taylor.

The Institute’s curriculum committee continually reviews members’ interests and expands the curriculum

accordingly. Individual course registration fees normally range from \$15 to \$30 each. ICL offers a new series of subjects every quarter, commencing in January, April, June and September.

For more information please visit www.iclyhc.org for registration and detailed course information or send an email to icl@yhc.edu. You can also find us on Facebook as “ICL at YHC”. The Institute’s curriculum committee continually reviews members’ interests and expands the curriculum accordingly. Individual course registration fees normally range from \$15 to \$30 each. ICL offers a new series of subjects every quarter, commencing in January, April, June and September.



Gov. Kemp Signs HB 304, Temporarily Halts State Gas Tax Through End of May

Governor Brian P. Kemp today signed HB 304 to temporarily suspend the state’s excise tax on motor fuel sales. The law is now in effect and will remain in effect through May 31, 2022.

Governor Kemp, in addition to Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan, Speaker David Ralston, and the many members of the House and Senate who voted in favor of this important measure, would like to thank the following bill spon-

sors of HB 304: Floor Leader Jodi Lott, Chairman Chuck Hufstetter.

The Georgia Department of Revenue created a FAQ and Motor Fuel Policy Bulletin with additional information. Both documents are posted on their website. For more information, contact Taxpayer Services at motorfuel@dor.ga.gov or at 1-877-423-6711 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Price gouging laws are currently in effect.

Top of Georgia...from Page 1A

Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley; Betsy Young of the Towns County GOP; Charlotte Sleczkowski of the Towns County Democrats; YHC Assistant Professor of Communication Studies and Psychology Dr. Ambyre Ponivas; Betty Phillips; and Dr. Gerald "Jerry" Chotiner, MD.

Judging the student speeches that evening were Young Harris College Professor of Business and Public Policy Dr. John Van Vliet, Assistant Professor of Communication Studies Dr. Joshua Guitier and Assistant Professor of Communication Studies Dr. Anne Major.

"When judging, we look for delivery, organization, how they grab the attention of the audience, and eye contact," Major said. "Pacing of the speech and confidence are also key factors, as well as stage presence and body gesturing."

Chotiner welcomed everyone to the event, relating how proud he was "of all these students for making it through this contest and coming up here tonight with the courage to show their presentations in front of us all."

He then introduced the night's keynote speaker, District Attorney Jeff Langley.

"I really believe public speaking is important for our students to learn," Langley said, "because it will help them develop for scholarship interviews, job interviews, college entrance interviews and way more."

"We all have a deep fear of public speaking, and if this program taught these kids to be a little more comfortable with themselves and overcome their fear, which we should all admire, then that is a victory."

Hallett introduced each participant in the contest, announcing their division and topic, with the Middle School up first.

Sixth-grader Madilyn Walls from Towns County Middle spoke on the advantages of a gluten-free baking diet.

Seventh-grader Katelyn Walls, sister to Madilyn and also a student of Towns County Middle, discussed Anne Frank.

Noah Lynch, a seventh grader with the Georgia Cyber Academy, talked about 3D animation, graphic imaging and software.



2022 Top of Georgia Speech Contest High School participants A.J. Edwards and Taylor Carroll. Photo by Jeremy Foster

Union County Middle seventh-grader Sophia Gobin touched on typhoid fever and how people contract the disease.

And Union County eighth-grader Jolie Schmitt spoke about World War II British Army hero "Mad Jack Churchill."

The results for the middle school division featured a Fourth Place tie between Madilyn Walls and Noah Lynch for a \$100 dollar cash prize apiece; Katelyn Walls earning Third Place and \$200; Second Place and \$300 going to Schmitt; and Gobin as the First Place winner of \$400.

"This was the first time I have tried a contest like this, and it was so exciting if I won or not that I want to do another one," Schmitt said. "My ultimate goal is to be a veterinarian, but a lot of my motivation comes from becoming a better public speaker and pushing myself to become the best that I can possibly be."

Speaking in the High School Division of the competition were junior A.J. Edwards from Towns County High on social media influences and their impact on youth and society, Union County High senior Taylor Carroll with a topic of service animals and their benefits.

Carroll earned Second Place and a \$300 cash prize, while the overall winner in First Place was Edwards, who was awarded \$400 and will be

eligible for a \$5,000 renewable scholarship should he decide to attend Young Harris College after graduating high school next year.

"My motivation for this project was, everyone can look at something, and it can be a positive or negative thing depending on how you look at it," Edwards said. "So, I think that was something everyone can relate to, and it helped challenge the audience rather than inform them, so that kept them attentive and engaged."

Edwards said he plans to pursue a career in law, "like Mr. Langley," so he wanted to get some firsthand experience with public speaking.

"I want to say I am so proud for all of these kids that participated here and worked so hard to achieve something that they wanted to do," Hallett said. "How they came out feeling more confident may just be the ultimate prize here."

Contest sponsors included Young Harris College; Jacky Jones Automotive; Boundary Waters Resort & Marina; Rick Andrews of Century 21 Realty; Mountain Graphics; Diana and Gerry Gutenstein; Mike and Jennie Priven; Dr. Samuel Le Church; Precision Docks with Jeff Stamey; Harvey Cohen, CPA; Attorney Stephanie W. McConnell; and WJRB.

"Without them, none of this would have been possible," Chotiner said of the event sponsors.

County Meeting...from Page 1A



Recognized in the March county meeting were members of the Towns County Junior Board of Government Officials: Rylie Livingston, Abby Pate, Sarah Shook, Jacey Wood and Kayla Peacock, with Commissioner Bradshaw. Not pictured: Junior Board Member Kade McConnell. Photo by Mark Smith

heating and air technologies available today, and there is a dire need for more space.

"About a month and a half ago," McOmber said, "we put out (a request for proposal) to bring on a 'Construction Manager at Risk' that will work with us as a team member to assist with some pre-construction services, which will help us ensure that we've got all the right products specified that are available on the market that will work within the budget that we have."

"Once that's complete, we will work with them to give us a guaranteed maximum price for the project. And once we've got that in place, we'll be able to proceed with (the project)."

McOmber said that, of the three firms that were selected for further consideration, Reeves & Young of Suwanee was awarded the job. Reeves & Young will be working with Blake Rainwater Associates General Contractors on the project.

"Tonight, we are not going to hire Reeves & Young, but we are going to award (the job) to them," Bradshaw clarified. "In the next few days, we're going to be negotiating the terms of the contract."

Once the terms of the contract are ironed out, then Reeves & Young will be hired to complete the SPLOST-backed project, with considerations for the use of as much local labor as possible.

As McOmber said, the next step is to develop a contractual guaranteed maximum price for specified labor and materials that all parties can agree to. In a Construction Manager at Risk relationship, the manager cannot exceed that maximum price and must, by contract, use the agreed upon materials.

"We think (construction time will be) between 12 and 14 months once they get started," McOmber said. "We'll probably have in the neighborhood of three to four months of

pre-construction work to do to prepare for construction, and that would start probably sometime in April. So, we think mid to late summer we'll start to see some construction."

Given the 12 to 14-month time frame, that would suggest project completion by late summer or early fall of 2023.

Of course, pre-construction can't begin until the courthouse is vacated, which hinges on completion of the Old Rec Gym renovation, where courthouse operations will be temporarily relocated during renovation/construction.

In his Commissioner's Report, Bradshaw reported that the HVAC contractor upgrading the Old Rec Gym, who had told him that the air handler was delayed for months, said the unit had arrived. So, the Old Rec Gym is moving forward, though other supply issues can't be ruled out.

Moving along in the meeting, longtime Hiawassee/Towns County resident Joan Crothers was awarded the 2021 Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award for her unsurpassed record of service to the community since moving here in 1977.

The award letter stated that Crothers "is a Top 100 National Winner" out of nearly 700 nominees from 49 states. Crothers was nominated by the commissioner about three years ago.

Over 45 years in the community, Crothers has been involved with the Towns County Parent Teacher Student Organization, the Chamber of Commerce, Girl Scouts, 4-H, Animal Rescue, Fire Corps, Garden Club, Tree Board, League of Women Voters, AARP, Hamilton Gardens, Hospital Board, Civic Association, Historical Society, Sheriff's Auxiliary, Library Board, Recycling Center, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

And people say there's nothing to do around here, joked Crothers.

"When I asked why she

spent so many hours performing volunteer service with no pay and with very little recognition, (Crothers') reply was: 'I love this place. I love the people in it,'" Bradshaw said.

Among her many other accomplishments, Crothers was also a Hiawassee City Councilwoman for eight years and a staff writer, photographer and, eventually, the editor of the Towns Sentinel newspaper over a 14-year span.

In other business, the commissioner recognized the Towns County Junior Board of Government Officials.

Bradshaw said one of the things he wanted to do when he took office five years ago was to educate the youth of Towns County on local government. So, with the help of Towns County Schools, he was able to find some interested students, and the Junior Board was formed.

The current members of the Towns County Junior Board of Government were recognized at the monthly meeting and were each given certificates of appreciation to commemorate the occasion.

Also in the meeting, Republican member of the Towns County Board of Elections Scott Ledford resigned after 12 years on the board, and Republican Jeffrey Poirot was appointed to fill the remainder of Ledford's term, which ends on Dec. 31, 2022.

Towns County Board of Elections and Registration Chair Janet Oliva was reappointed for another term.

Finally, Bradshaw signed a resolution amending and restating the Association County Commissioners of Georgia 401(a) Defined Contribution Plan for Towns County employees. Finance Director Andrea Anderson said the amendment was purely administrative.

The monthly commission meeting takes place the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the Towns County Courthouse.

Hannah Wecer...from Page 1A



Wrestling senior Hannah Wecer with her mother Rebecca and grandmother Barbara Caruthers in a March 18 signing ceremony celebrating her addition to the Montreat Women's Wrestling Team. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

does her best in everything."

"Not just on the mat, but in the classroom," Rowland said. "She's always willing to help others - the kind of kid you wish you had 20 of in your classroom. So, I wish you the best in college."

"I know you're going to go far in both academics and with wrestling. Thanks for the time you put in here. Thanks for trusting when I told you on the softball field, 'Hey, come

try wrestling.'"

Coach Manning said he sees a lot of potential in Wecer as a wrestler and recognizes that she is "a fine young lady that's going to be very crucial to the development of (Montreat's new wrestling) program."

To date, the new wrestling team has nine lady wrestlers committed right now, including Wecer, and Manning said he is looking to add another 10.

Though Wecer will be living away from home while attending school at Montreat College, she won't be that far away, as the North Carolina-based campus is only about two hours away.

Montreat College is "an independent, Christ-centered, liberal arts" college, located about 20 minutes' drive due east of Asheville, North Carolina, and just north of Black Rock, North Carolina.

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