

Towns County Herald

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Schools vaccinate staff as county continues vaccine efforts

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Many teachers and staff of Towns County Schools breathed a sigh of relief last week, as the Health Department arrived Thursday morning to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

The schools have worked hard all year to remain open five days a week while avoiding closures for mass exposures, a feat many other districts have been unable to accomplish. And the vaccine is another step toward ensuring children can get their best education on campus.

Helping with the school vaccination clinic were the

district's own nursing staff, which was happy to have another tool to ward off COVID-19. Taking place in the Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium at the High School, the clinic featured vaccinations of about half the system's employees.

The local School District joined the rest of the nation in closing to in-person instruction last March at the onset of the pandemic, but local officials formulated a plan to safely return students to the classroom this year, following public health guidance and monitoring internal data.

What that data showed is that students aren't a primary driver of spread or illness, and that faculty and staff were

the ones most likely to come down with the disease. That's why mitigations, including vaccinations, have been so important to the schools.

The district has implemented many measures this year to make the process as safe as possible for face-to-face instruction, including masks in hallways and with staff interactions, one-way hallway flows, increased sanitation measures, reduced lunchroom capacity and more.

School administrators have also implemented districtwide seating charts to aid in quarantining practices with known student exposures, including keeping seating



Towns County Nurse Manager Lisa Burks gave Band Director Allison Judd a J&J one-shot vaccine March 18.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Indians Basketball champions recognized in March county meeting



Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw honored the Towns County Indians in his meeting last week for winning the school district's first ever basketball state championship.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

When the Towns County Basketball Team won the Georgia High School Association Class A Public Safety Championship on March 13, Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw knew he wanted

to pull out all the celebratory stops.

Bradshaw attended the history-making game in Macon, and immediately following the victory, he contacted Sheriff Ken Henderson back home in a parade of help organize a parade to help safety employees for when the kids

returned home that evening.

The two had briefly discussed the possibility beforehand, so the sheriff was ready and waiting when the call came through. As the champions arrived at the top of Unicomb Mountain around 8 p.m. that Saturday, they were met by Fire Department, EMS and

Sheriff's Office vehicles.

Lights flashing and all lined up, the school bus and emergency vehicles made their way into town, where they were greeted by an incredibly proud public that had learned of the parade and lined Main Street in Hiawassee to cheer on the

See County Meeting, Page 6A

Jason Matheson indicted for attempted murder in shooting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Towns County Grand Jury handed up three charges March 15 against Jason Matheson, who stands accused of attempting to murder his estranged wife in January, per court documents.

Matheson, 41, of Hayesville, North Carolina, has been charged with criminal attempt to commit murder, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, which could result in a maximum prison sentence of up to 40 years.

Next steps in the case include an arraignment hearing scheduled for April 22 in the Towns County Courthouse, during which Matheson will enter a plea of guilty or not guilty.

He may decide to plead guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence agreed upon by the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, or he could plead not guilty, at which point Matheson would receive an expedited trial, as he remains in



Jason Matheson

custody without bond at Towns County Jail.

"We're working closely with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to finalize gathering all the evidence so that we'll be ready for trial as soon as possible," District Attorney Jeff Langley said.

Matheson's charges stem from a Jan. 26 incident in which he allegedly entered his wife's place of work at Chatuge Regional Hospital Rehabilitation & Wellness Center and fired upon her

See Matheson, Page 6A

GMF seeking parade applicants, preparing for major year



The Towns County Lions Club served as Grand Marshals for the 2016 Georgia Mountain Fair Parade, pictured here.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Residents of the North Georgia Mountains should get ready, because the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is looking to make up for lost time with a full slate of family-friendly attractions in 2021.

Returning this year after being canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19 is the Georgia Mountain Fair, and with it, the regionally renowned community parade.

The parade is set for Saturday, Aug. 14, though Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason is hoping float builders and other entrants will register early to help generate excitement for the event.

"We were supposed to have a big celebration last year with the 70th year," Thomason

said. "We had to postpone it this year. We aren't going to do a big celebration this year; we are going to wait until 75 years."

"We are still trying to move forward with the Georgia Mountain Fair. We want people in the community to participate and fill out the application and send it in. We have already got one application back, but we need people to get interested and have a good parade."

Parade applications can be filled out and returned all the way up until the day of the parade, and everyone at the Fairgrounds would like to see as many participants from the community as possible.

To sweeten the deal, once again, there's a chance to make some money with a prize-winning float thanks to a generous donation by local Bob Cloer, who gives each

year specifically in support of the parade.

And people should be aware that Thomason and the Fairgrounds are putting their all into the Georgia Mountain Fair, as they believe people will be ready to fully embrace community events after quarantining and social distancing for much of the past year.

"We feel like there will be more people than we have ever had," Thomason said. "People didn't get to go to any fairs in the last year, so I think they are really excited about getting out."

"We also have a new carnival that will be here with more rides than we have had in the past, and we will have plenty of arts and crafts here this time. We will have some great entertainment in the music hall

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Sheriff speaks to Towns GOP; Betty Phillips receives honor

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Members of the Towns County GOP welcomed Sheriff Ken Henderson to speak in

their regular monthly meeting at Daniel's Steak House on Thursday, March 18.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw introduced the new sheriff, speaking kind words for a man he's known "probably

for 30 years."

"In his capacity as sheriff, since he has been elected, he's working every day," Bradshaw said, commending him also for his office's support of the Boys

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(L-R) Betsy Young, Cliff Bradshaw, Betty Phillips and Ken Henderson share in recognizing Phillips on March 18 for her contributions to the GOP and her community.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

January Term 2021 Grand Jury Indictments continued

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2021 of the Towns County Grand Jury, which met for a second time last week:

Charles Jason Matheson, aggravated assault, Family Violence; aggravated stalking; criminal attempt to commit a felony (murder).
Joshua Clarke Nelson, exploitation and intimidation

of a disabled adult, elder person or resident; obstruction of an officer; hindering an emergency telephone call.

David Joseph Alverson, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Jamie Paul Burnette, four counts sexual exploitation of children.

Johnnie Harris Jones Jr., influencing a witness.
William Matthew

Lipscomb, driving without a license; taillight violation.

Joseph Tyler Patterson, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of synthetic cannabinoid, synthetic marijuana or K2 with intent to distribute; possession of a Schedule I controlled substance; possession of marijuana with intent to distribute; possession

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Blue Ridge 1,679.15
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Nottely 1,764.97

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