

# Happy Easter

# Towns County Herald

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## County celebrates Easter with annual egg hunt

By Todd Forrest  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The rain showers moved away just in time for an egg-hunting extravaganza on Saturday, March 23, bringing in more than 150 kids and parents to Towns County Recreation Department's Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

After the weather forced last year's hunt indoors, the 2024 edition went off without a hitch due to some forward planning by the Recreation Department.

Originally slated for 10 a.m., the hunt was bumped back to 2 p.m., providing additional cushioning between Friday night's heavy rains and Saturday's festivities.

"I was keeping an eye

on the weather all week," said Rec Director Stuart Nichols. "On Friday, once we had a better idea when the rain would stop, we made the decision to move it back. We're just happy we were able to get back outside on the fields this year."

Three separate egg hunts took place at 2 p.m. on the fairgrounds' baseball fields, with each event divvied up by age. Under 4s made up the youngest group of egg seekers, while the middle pack was 5 to 8-year-olds, with 9 to 12-year-olds marking the oldest.

All the budding explorers were in pursuit of the day's top prize - a golden egg. Each age group featured two gold eggs hidden amongst the fields. While each egg was filled with candy, children who discovered the cherished eggs received a

special gift basket full of candy and other goodies.

After hiding his eggs, the Easter Bunny also made a special appearance Saturday to greet youngsters and pose for pictures.

Jeremy Parker of the Hiawassee Police Department was in attendance handing out stickers, and the Hiawassee Baptist Association, a long-time supporter of the event, played an integral role in the success, along with hosting Easter basket drawings for the event.

Nichols offered a special thank you to resident Mary Fox.

"She puts together over a thousand of the eggs," he said. "It comes out of her own time and her own finances."

See Happy Easter, Page 6



Towns County children had a blast hunting 3,000 Easter eggs during the annual Rec Department hunt on Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Council works to finalize Timberline booster project

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In their March 5 meeting, the Young Harris City Council finally arrived at a solution to the longstanding Timberline booster pump project, which has suffered numerous setbacks in recent years due to topographical and other difficulties related to water delivery up the mountain.

Lon Dillard of Byers Well Drilling has recommended a new - and final - blueprint for the project. Two alternating submersible pumps will be placed in underground cans made from very durable high-density polyethylene, with added protection from an insulated aluminum box.

"Pumps will alternate and perform lead-lag, meaning if one pump can't keep pressure up, the second pump will turn on to assist until pressure setting is satisfied," Dillard



Young Harris City Councilmen Donald Keys and Steve Clark in their March regular meeting. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

said. "In the event of low water pressure, a low-level cutoff switch will be installed to automatically shut the pump."

Each pump will feature a variable frequency drive that

"will only allow pumps to run as fast as needed to maintain set pressure." The system will help reduce energy consumption, and various sensors will

See Young Harris Council, Page 6

## Dr. Beach hired as new Elementary School principal

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Elementary School will have a new principal next school year following the Board of Education's called meeting on Tuesday, March 19.

Current Elementary School Principal Shannon Moss announced his retirement earlier this month, and he'll be leaving the system on Sept. 30 with three decades in education.

The schools wanted to go ahead and hire his replacement for 2024-25, effective July 1, and Moss will be on hand for three months of the new school year to assist with the transition and fulfill other duties, like getting the new Agriculture Facility up and running.

"Any time you're hiring a principal to lead one of our



Dr. Crystal Beach enjoyed speaking with Board of Education members last week after they hired her to fill the shoes of retiring Principal Shannon Moss. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

school systems, that is a very important hire," said Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong

before the big reveal last week. "They're going to be leading." See New Principal, Page 7

## North Carolina man arrested for meth in traffic stop

News Special

YOUNG HARRIS - On Tuesday, March 19, during concentrated patrols targeting the Gumlog Road area, a Towns County Sheriff's Deputy conducted a traffic stop near Barnard Road.

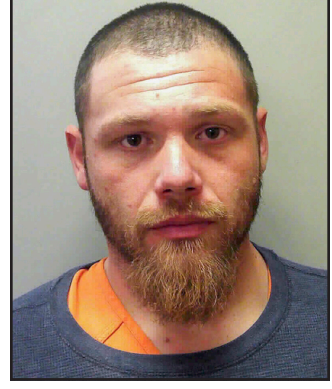
During the traffic stop, probable cause was developed to search the vehicle where an amount of methamphetamine, which field-tested positive, was seized.

Robert Curtis Parker, 31, of Brasstown, North Caro-

lina, was arrested and charged with felony possession of methamphetamine, driving while license suspended or revoked, and probation violation.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson commends the hard work of his patrol deputies and concentrating patrols in known drug areas "to keep our county and community safe."

All individuals are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.



Robert Curtis Parker

## Reminder: countywide sales tax going to 8% April 1



By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

As a final reminder before the new 1-cent Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax goes into

effect next month, the Towns County Board of Education Office wants local businesses to know that they must start collecting 8% sales tax beginning on April 1.

The 1% ESPLOST passed with 59% voter support in November 2023, and in January, the Georgia Department of Revenue confirmed to the Board Office that collections would start on Monday, April 1.

Currently, the sales tax in Towns County is 7% on eligible goods and services, which explains why, when the additional 1% ESPLOST

goes into effect next week, the new sales tax charged by local businesses will be 8%.

This ESPLOST has a \$15 million cap and a five-year window for collections such that ESPLOST will cease once the cap is met or the tax expires after five years, whichever comes first.

The School System arrived at this cap based on projections using the recent average of \$3 million a year for the equivalent 1% Education Local Option Sales Tax, the permanent penny tax that has been collected by the schools

See Sales Tax Increase, Page 6

## A Note to Our Readers on USPS Mail Delivery Issues:

The Towns County Herald and North Georgia News have become aware of multiple subscribers having not received their newspapers in the mail in recent weeks.

It has been widely reported in statewide media that the U.S. Postal Service has been experiencing

delivery issues since opening its new processing center in Palmetto, Georgia, last month.

Since then, we have heard from many readers that newspapers and other mailed items have gone undelivered, including absentee ballot applications and bill payments.

In an attempt to address the issue, the Towns County Herald and North Georgia News reached out to the U.S. Postal Service to ask about specifics regarding delivery problems and when people can expect them to be corrected for mail that is processed out of town.

A USPS spokesperson

responded:

"The Postal Service plays an important role in the community, and we are committed to providing the best service possible. While a vast majority of mail in the Atlanta area is being delivered in a timely manner, local management has been made aware of the concerns

of some local customers regarding their mail delivery and are working quickly to resolve any issues.

"We sincerely express our apologies to our customers who may have experienced a deviation from our normal dependable service and appreciate their patience. Customers are

reminded that, if they need assistance with mailing or shipping concerns, they have a variety of options for reaching us, including contacting a manager or supervisor at their local Post Office, calling 1-800-ASK-USPS (1-800-275-8777), or visiting our website at www.usps.com."

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BASEBALL

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# Happy Easter ...from Page 1



The Easter Bunny made a special appearance to the delight of children March 23. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Added Nichols, "We just want to thank everyone for all the community support. We want to thank the (Towns County) Commissioner's Office, the Hiawassee Police Department, Century

21 Black Bear Realty and the fairgrounds for always being so supportive of us." This year, Easter is set for Sunday, March 31, so Happy Easter to everyone from the Towns County Herald!



Several lucky children found the select few "golden eggs" scattered among the regular candy-filled eggs to win special prize baskets loaded with extra goodies Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community! As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America's military families, or take on any number of other roles

that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient.

Get started at <https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html> or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226.

# Enotah Garden Club hosts green groups for discussion



The Enotah Garden Club featured a notable slate of speakers in its March meeting last week. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Enotah Garden Club's March meeting was graced by guests from the community to talk about their organizations and local issues and events. The group met on March 21 at noon at Young Harris City Hall to hear what everyone had to say.

Gordy Jones represented the MBRA, otherwise known as the Mountain Beautification and Revitalization Association, Inc. While there is "insurance to cover," the MBRA does not charge for any of the work they do. As such, volunteers are the primary workforce.

As implied by the name, the MBRA helps enrich recreational outdoor spaces, whether that means tidying them up by trimming back briars and bushes, repairing weather and insect damage, installing durable furniture and more.

Jones handed out a sheet detailing current, near future, far future and completed projects while describing what some of them entailed. At present, the group is working on planting a water feature and enlisting the help of Young Harris College students on YHC Student Work Day, both in April.

Superintendent Ray Covington of the Georgia

Mountain Research & Education Center explained that the goal of the GMREC, aka the "Experiment Station," essentially boils down to agriculture.

Whether that means teaching the public about invasive species, decorative flowers or what turf grass best suits their yard, Covington assures there's nothing nefarious going on despite the experimental moniker.

Lately, more plants are becoming relevant to the discussion of what can and can't be planted in the mountains. Covington says the region is "warming up more and more over time," and as a result, the growth of crops like oranges in Georgia have become a real possibility. Unfortunately, this also means new insects and diseases that impact native species.

To kickstart the interest of local kids, the GMREC has a program that entails children coming to the Experiment Station to learn about orchards through Johnny Appleseed. For about 25 years, kindergartners have been learning where food comes from, and hopefully, learning to cultivate a respect for farming and botany.

Up next to the podium was Young Harris Main Street Program Director Rosemary Royston. In her own words, "the job is new to me, but the area is not," meaning that a love of her home drives a career focused on responsible growth.

There are four main pillars Main Street follows, including economic development; promotion of downtown as the central hub; designing a community's aesthetic identity; and organizing, or making connections to foster healthy partnerships that go on to define a local, individual Main Street Program.

To give folks an idea of the kind of outreach the program does, Royston handed out a calendar of events for 2024, which listed the Enchanted Spring Fling, GA Cities Week, Seafood Fest, Porchfest and more.

When it was Mountain-

True Western Region Program Coordinator Tony Ward's turn to speak, the Enotah Garden Club revealed that they had donated \$300 to the cause of fighting the invasive parrot-feather weed growing in the south end of Lake Chatuge.

Aqua Services, Inc., has been hired to begin treating the parrot-feather. Ward said that because the company is based out of Alabama, it has plenty of experience dealing with invasive aquatic plants. Local treatments are scheduled to begin in mid-April.

"Folks who live on the lake should see a dramatic reduction in parrot-feather this summer as compared to last summer," said Ward, who warned that the treatments are not an "end all, be all" response to the weed.

Rather, it's more likely that the parrot-feather will return for two or three years, but in lesser and lesser degrees. In short, Ward believes that while it's going to take a while to eradicate, it's completely possible to totally free up Lake Chatuge from the invasive species.

Ward added that in the meantime, it's safe to get in the water, and certainly safe to fish; in fact, he encouraged fishing.

Last but not least, Barbara Thomas Collins, a board member of the Old Union

Cemetery Association, had her turn to speak.

Collins first explained the paperwork she handed out to the audience; her "begging letter" called for donations to the organization, and an informative brochure told a bit of the history surrounding the Old Union Cemetery and its association.

For example, the property the cemetery sits on was listed in the deed books for Union County in 1844 by John Bryson, dating back to a time when part of Towns County belonged to Union.

The cemetery itself is at least 181 years old, making it a historic graveyard. Due to its status, the headstones, whether ornate or simple rock, cannot legally be moved lest the guilty party face a fine of \$5,000.

Finally, Collins left the audience on a good note by retelling witty, memorable stories about the cemetery, especially in regard to her childhood. She and other teenagers were once frightened by the appearance of foxfire near the graves, and again thought they were haunted when a rare instance of the Aurora Borealis danced across the sky above the mountains.

The next Enotah Garden Club meeting will be on April 18 at Young Harris City Hall, starting at noon.



Tony Ward of MountainTrue was happy to receive a donation from Enotah Garden Club members for the parrot-feather treatments that will soon be applied in Lake Chatuge. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## Young Harris Council...from Page 1

be put in place to prevent overheating and ensure proper operation.

To prevent freezing, the majority of the equipment will be installed beneath the frost line.

The same system is used at Rileigh Ridge, where there has "never been a problem." An initial quote came out to \$83,639.10, and City Attorney Marvin Harkins agreed to draw up a contract with Dillard. This price tag is considerably cheaper than other options presented in the past.

Clark is working on getting quotes for a SCADA System to make sure the pumps shut off if there is a problem, and Mayor Andrea Gibby thanked him for all of his hard work on the project.

In other business, to

follow up with residents' concerns regarding the safety of Mineral Springs, the road will be partially paved by about 915 feet, with the rest of the road to be paved following development of the old Kaiser-Dean property.

"We have around \$41,000 in the (LMIG) account for this," Mayor Gibby said, and the council approved a quote from Crisp Asphalt Paving to complete the partial paving for \$35,584.41.

Since February's meeting, all of the water data receivers have been delivered, meaning that the new meters and encoder receiver transmitters that enable automatic meter reading can be installed, potentially starting as soon as this month.

Main Street Director

Rosemary Royston said April 21-27 will mark Georgia Cities Week. To celebrate, a plant sale with live music will bloom in the square that Sunday, and further plans include holding a meet-and-greet with city officials at City Hall later that week.

Royston also hopes to reveal more of the recently completed Master Planning documents for the City of Young Harris and hold a reception for artists that week.

The Young Harris City Council meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. inside City Hall located at 50 Irene Berry Drive, barring delays or rescheduling for holidays. These meetings are open to the public, and the community is encouraged to attend.

## Sales Tax Increase...from Page 1

for years.

Towns is one of a few counties in the state with a second LOST - a permanent 1% sales and use tax that benefits the School System - so the schools will be collecting 2% of the total 8% of county sales taxes starting in April.

Effective April 1, the 8% sales tax in Towns will break down as follows: 4% to the State of Georgia, 1% LOST to Towns County Government, 1% SPLOST to Towns County Government, 1% LOST to Towns County Schools and 1% ESPLOST to Towns County Schools.

Both LOST and SPLOST assist local governments with keeping property taxes down by providing an additional source of revenue to provide the public facilities and services that residents use every day.

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# Lions Club hosts Breakfast Fundraiser and Zone Meeting on March 23



Lions Pancake Breakfast, A Big Success



Saturday, March 23 was a fabulous, fantastic, fine and fun first quarter blue ribbon highlight on the 2024 calendar as our Towns County Lions shone brighter than the clubs' golden vests by reliving the We Serve motto.

Club Service Chair Dianne Williams and her cleverly composed, competently crucial and consistently creative confident colleagues completed their 1st annual Hamilton Rhododendron Garden Benefit Pancake and Sausage breakfast held at the Georgia Mountain Fair Anderson Music Hall lobby from 8-10:30. Many thanks from the Lions to the awesome abundance of cooperative community customers who supported the effort to raise the funds to maintain and preserve the largest collection of Rhododendron and Azalea in the Southeast.

The local Lions also

want to thank the Towns County High School Leos Club member volunteers who helped immensely: Bella Rose Childs, Ansleigh Hardin, Laura Mauldin, Brannon Puckett, Miranda Ramirez, Jada Reynolds, Connor Williams, and Emberlynn Williams.

The Lions members who served above and beyond the call of duty were: David Barrett, Kathy Carlson, Sylvia Davis, Nancy Dearborn, Heidi Holmes, Kerry Jones, Betty and Chuck Luca, Danny and Martha Meeks, Frank Morgan, Jeff Myers, Teresa Newell, Julie Payne, Allen Saylor, Nancy Toman, Matt Turpin, Lynn and Ronnie Whelchel, Dianne Williams, Dale and Susan Willrich, Janie McConnell and Suzanne Wilson.

To finish the magnificent, marvelous morning, Towns County Lions Club President and Zone Chairman Danny Meeks led a District 18-I Zone Meeting at the Georgia Mountain Fair office board room in which reps from the different clubs in the zone met and mingled to discuss and detail ideas, information,

and issues.

Rita Harris, District 18-I Governor-Elect from the Madison Lions, and Dr. Angela Williams, of the Atlanta Caribbean Lions and the District 18-I Vice-Governor Elect were the guest speakers who led the healthy exchange of Lionism themes and topics with substantial subjects ranging from membership growth and retention to additional community service goals and projects.

Towns County Lions who attended the Zone Meeting were Kathy Carlson, Heidi Holmes, Betty and Chuck Luca, Janie McConnell, Danny and Martha Meeks, Frank Morgan, Dale and Susan Willrich, Suzanne Wilson, along with Union County Lion leader Paula Dansker and Towns County High School Leos Brannon Puckett, Jada Reynolds, and Connor Williams. Visiting Madison Lion Henry Harris and Atlanta Caribbean Lion Ken Rice completed the gathering.

The next Towns County Lions Board of Directors monthly meeting is April 2 at 6 PM. Happy Easter!

# Georgia Mountain Writers Club meeting



Front Row: Jennifer Trumbull, Nadine Justice, Idell Shook, Arlene Gray, Pat Miner. Back Row: Rev. Milton Marks, Jim Miner, Jackie Volk, James Davis, Catherine Lipnick-End, Fred Teagle, Jean Netherly, Jan Blaskay, Allan Cone, Mary Cone, Rick Sapp.

The cold, wet dreary weather didn't deter our spirits or our attendance. The stories ranged from embarrassing to entertaining and inspiring.

Fred Teagle's, "Spring Hope" was a metaphoric poem describing his journey from depression to spiritual awakening.

James Davis' "People Were Staring" told of taking his 5-year-old son to a park in the middle of Santiago, Chile and experiencing the ultimate humiliation with a humorous twist along with his son's reflections on a 75' statue of the Virgin Mary.

Jean Netherly read an essay entitled, "War Touches Us All" which she wrote in 1987 after visiting a quaint Lutheran church in Lubeck, Germany. The broken bell from the bell tower lay just inside the church next to undamaged pews from the war as well as newly-built pews, reminding us of the past and lives lost.

Arlene Gray's "An Unexpected Odyssey" told of a

trip she had taken to see a relative after a death in the family. The many unexpected turns certainly made it nerve-wracking but interesting.

In "Frances", Mary Cone describes an old boss who was exhausting, amusing and most of all memorable.

In Alan Cone's "Armistice" Larry seems like most any dog, but behind the lolling tongue, adoring eyes and wagging tail lurks someone very much to be reckoned with.

Nadine Justice's "A Buckhead Burglary" was about when her house was robbed.

In Jackie Volk's "Stare Your Way into Writing" she argues that staring at a computer screen can result in writing inspiration. This month she began to write and soon realized the words she was staring at reminded her of a Dr. Seuss story, "And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street". She gave a history of how the book came to be and offered writers this advice from its pages: "Keep your eyelids up and see what

you can see."

Jim Miner's "Rodeo" describes running errands and more with an older, old friend.

Pat Miner's "A Character that Enriched Our Lives" was an obituary for a dear canine friend who passed away recently.

We had a real treat with a song, "Leave It the Way You Found It", written, sung and accompanied on guitar by Rev. Milton Marks.

Next month's writing prompts are: "I Plead Guilty (or Not Guilty)", "The Promotion" and "Impulse Purchase". It's not necessary, however, to use the prompts. Bring anything you've written to share, or just enjoy listening to the readings of others.

Regular club meetings are always on the first Wednesday of the month, 10 to noon at North Georgia Technical College, Blairsville. Next month's meeting will be Wednesday, April 3. Any questions, contact connie.rosenberry3@gmail.com.

# Towns County Rotary Club welcomes students in March 19th meeting



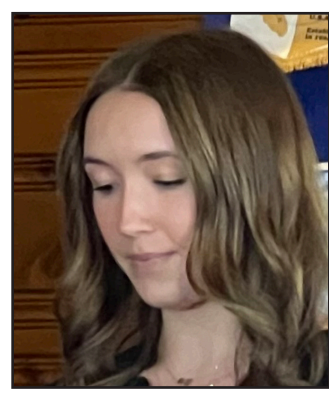
The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge held its weekly meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at noon at Brasstown Valley Resort.

The program for the meeting was two presentations from the most recent Students of the Month from Towns County High School, Josie Poston and Kade McConnell.

Josie will be graduating this Spring. She has been on the "A" Honor Roll for three years, is a member of the Beta Club, the National Honor Society, and the United Community Bank Board of Directors. When she is not in school, she works as a Gymnastic Coach, sharing the knowledge of Gymnastics she has acquired as a student herself, for the past several years.

Her personal philosophy is to "Live like the color yellow". Be happy, and cheerful, and spread joy, wisdom, enthusiasm, and hope, like a sunflower!

Josie comes from a fam-



Josie Poston

ily of a long line of teachers, and plans to attend Young Harris College where she will major in Elementary Education, with a goal of becoming a teacher herself.

Kade McConnell has also been chosen as Student of the Month. He has continually been on the Honor Roll, in the top 5% of students in his class. He participates in Dual Enrollment with Young Harris College, and upon graduation from Towns County High School, he will have already completed 12 college classes.

Kade is a member of Beta Club, the National Technical Honor Society, FBLA (where he has competed on the Regional,



Kade McConnell

State, and National levels.

Kade loves to play Baseball and Basketball, and he has worked as a stage hand and a legal clerk. He and some of his friends have formed a local band called River Bend, and Kade enjoys being a part of the band as the banjo player.

Kade intends to complete his college education, and then pursue a career as a small business owner, possibly focusing on Finance or Insurance.

As Students of the Month, both Josie and Kade will be awarded a scholarship from the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge, to help them complete their college educations.

# New Principal...from Page 1

and I don't take that job lightly."

Taking up the principal mantle will be Dr. Crystal Beach, who acquired her doctorate in Language and Literacy Education in 2017 from the University of Georgia.

Her current role is Academic Specialist and Multi-Tiered System of Supports Coordinator for Union County Schools, and she is an assistant professor at the University of Georgia and adjunct instructor at Young Harris College.

"I saw (the job opening) posted on the website and I prayed about it," Beach said. "I talked to some mentors and felt it was the right decision for me to see and learn more about the opportunity over here in Towns County."

Beach boasts an impressive resume. She is certified to teach in two states, Virginia and Georgia, with a Professional Leadership Certificate in the latter. She has training in a variety of topics, including artificial intelligence and data science, human resources and suicide prevention.

As an Academic Special-

ist, some of her duties have included examining curriculums; mentoring new educators; working with principals on attendance concerns, discipline and behavioral issues and overall culture and climate; creating a school newsletter; and writing grants for her district.

Beach has also served as Career, Technical and Agricultural Education Director for Union County Middle and as Site Coordinator for Union County's Homework/Enrichment Learning Program, studying patterns in student data to determine needs and ensure success.

She is trained to work with "gifted" students as well as students with special needs, along with those needing 504 or Individualized Education Programs.

From 2019 to 2021, Beach was an English teacher, branching out into topics like World Literature, British Literature and Advanced Composition. Before then, she taught similar subjects at Buford High School and Lakeview Academy.

In higher education,

Beach has focused on a variety of literature, education and related topics at the University of Georgia, Young Harris College and Virginia Tech.

Beach has even earned international renown by being invited to present practitioner and research work at the United Kingdom Literacy Association's International Conference four times. She received a similar opportunity in 2018, when she was invited to the International Federation for the Teaching of English in Birmingham, England.

Along with her academic accolades, Beach has a history in sports. As a head coach, her team has taken home two State Volleyball Championships, and as an assistant coach, they earned two State Basketball Championships. In a similar vein, Beach earned a bachelor's degree in human nutrition, food and exercise.

"I think, deep down all along, I was ready for a 'next challenge,'" said Beach of her new position, on which she will focus her full attention when she begins. "I am just so, so excited. I'm incredibly honored to be chosen and to become a part of the team here in Towns County."