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Annual Easter Egg Hunt returns April 3 after 2020 cancellation

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Children rejoice, for on Saturday, April 3, the annual Towns County Recreation Department Easter Egg Hunt will return after missing 2020 for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The festivities will begin at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds at 10:30 a.m. in the baseball fields, where the hunt has traditionally taken place.

Last year's hunt was canceled because of the pandemic, which had shut things down pretty much everywhere by early April. Fortunately, the situation with COVID has dramatically improved in 2021, so the hunt returns.

Rec Director Mathew Youngblood is excited to be sponsoring the family-friendly

event once again.

"It will be spread out, but not that much different," Youngblood said of the hunt. "I have got the newborns through age 4. I haven't really set exact age groups, but we will have three different groups, and we will have three different locations, so they will be spread out."

"We have 2,500 eggs and 27 Easter baskets. They are pretty packaged Easter Baskets, and we probably have around \$1,000 in this event this year."

Parents and hunters can expect eggs to be loaded with candy, making every egg a prize all its own. On top of the many eggs and baskets, children will get a chance to win a grand prize basket that includes different types of balls for sports and other goodies to

bring home.

For Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, the return of the egg hunt highlights the progress toward recovery and perhaps a return to business as usual for Towns County.

"We have had this event for so many years, and last year because of COVID, we had to cancel it," Bradshaw said. "This year is so exciting and important because we are showing that we are starting to get back to some type of normalcy, and COVID is getting better."

"The main thing is that this is for the kids. We want them to get out and enjoy it, and for it to be a beautiful day for the Easter Egg Hunt. It is all about the children."

Community safety amid the coronavirus has been the top
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Towns County youngsters lining up before the start of the 2017 edition of the annual Recreation Department Easter Egg Hunt. Canceled in 2020, the hunt returns Saturday.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Kolby Moss breaks basketball records, signs with YHC



Kolby Moss, center, was joined by Indian teammates for his college signing ceremony in the Media Center Friday.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Senior Kolby Moss ended his basketball career on the highest of notes when he and his fellow Indians won the Georgia High School Association Class A Public State Championship March 13.

And following graduation in May, Moss will attend Young Harris College as a Mountain Lion on a basketball scholarship, taking his love of the game to the next level.

"I have always loved basketball," Moss said in a signing ceremony held Friday, March 26, in the school Media Center. "One of the first times I played it, I knew I was going to

be good at it. I knew that I could work at it and put in the work to be where I wanted to be. Being able to play a little college ball is pretty exciting."

In addition to a state championship, Moss has also made many stellar individual achievements as a high school player, though the consummate team player is quick to give his
See Moss, Page 8A

Kabe Ellis to play basketball at West Virginia Wesleyan

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's official – after helping his team reach the top with a win at the Class A State Championship earlier this month, Towns County High School Senior Kabe Ellis will be advancing his basketball

career by signing with West Virginia Wesleyan College for the next four years.

In celebration of his achievement, Towns County High hosted a signing ceremony on Friday, March 26, congratulating Kabe Ellis on the beginning of his next chapter in life as a Bobcat.

Ellis has been involved in basketball for as long as he can remember, with his passion for the game only growing over the years.

"I started playing basketball really early," Ellis said. "I would go out and play with my dad, and it kind of
See Ellis, Page 8A



TCHS Senior Kabe Ellis has been recruited to play basketball for West Virginia Wesleyan, pictured here with proud supporters – his parents, coaches and principals.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

COVID-19 vaccine eligibility expands to all Georgians 16 & up

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Gov. Brian Kemp more than made good on his goal of expanding COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all Georgians by April, announcing last week that the state had enough supply to begin providing vaccines to everyone 16 and up starting Thursday, March 25.

By now, there are multiple avenues for residents to schedule appointments, including the Office of the Governor's own partnership with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency at <https://myvaccinegeorgia.com>.

People may also visit <http://phdistrict2.org> and click on "REGISTER HERE" at the top of the page to schedule an appointment at the local Health Department, or by reaching out to the Call Center at 1-888-

426-5073.

Public Health's vaccine appointment scheduler requires a questionnaire requiring people to provide a variety of information, including demographic details, medical history, COVID-19 history and contact details.

Local pharmacies like Walgreens, Ingles and Walmart are also carrying the vaccine, appointments for which can be scheduled via each company's website.

Kemp announced in a March 23 press conference that 74% of Georgia seniors had received at least one dose of the vaccine as of last week, which is an important number to keep an eye on, as people aged 65 and up have accounted for four in five U.S. COVID deaths.

"As far as vaccine eligibility, Dr. (Kathleen) Toomey and I have been clear



Dr. Kathleen Toomey
Georgia DPH Commissioner

from the beginning that when supply was limited, we would prioritize the most vulnerable, and that's exactly what we have done," Kemp said. "Today, three quarters of our seniors have significant protection against COVID-19."

"We were also consistent
See Vaccine Eligibility, Page 6A

Bradshaw welcomes Hayden, Historical Society for presentation



Historical Society President Sandra Green and artist Marty Hayden unveiled his painting for guests of the March 16 county meeting, which he donated last year to the Historical Society.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed members of the Towns County Historical Society to his regular meeting earlier this month, including local artist Marty Hayden.

Hayden retired recently, allowing him to dedicate more time to his love of history and art. This culminated in "Vanishing Heritage with Fear of the Future," a 60-by-48-inch acrylic on board painting highlighting the complicated history surrounding the manmade Lake Chatuge.

Bradshaw is a big fan of the painting, as it poignantly speaks to the history of the lake in Towns County, which sprang forth from construction of the

Chatuge Dam between 1941 and 1942.

The county has benefited greatly from the creation of Lake Chatuge, both in terms of local quality of life and recreation, as well as economically from the attraction of new businesses, residents and tourists helping to raise the standard of living in the area.

Still, many sacrifices went into the building of the dam, such as those made by people exactly like the woman featured in Hayden's artwork, which he researched using historical and other sources contemporary to the day, including old copies of the Towns County Herald.

The painting depicts an elderly woman – undoubtedly a grandmother – watching from a window in her home as the

Tennessee Valley Authority builds the dam. In her lap sits a copy of the local newspaper reporting on the progress that is coming to claim the only home she has ever known.

It is a history that spoke to Hayden, the story of people having to relocate because of the lake, and he wanted to share his understanding and depiction of those sacrifices with the Historical Society – which is why he donated the painting to the nonprofit organization for display.

Specifically, Hayden dedicated the painting to "the pioneering mountain folks of the Appalachian Mountains" in hopes that their "spirit and sacrifice never be forgotten."

Joining Bradshaw,
See County Meeting, Page 6A

RidgeRunner Takeout celebrates year of success during pandemic

Local food delivery service RidgeRunner Takeout opened for business April 2, 2020, right at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when people were stuck at home and restaurants were closed to dine-in services.

Serving Blairsville, Hiwassee and other North Georgia areas, RidgeRunner delivers food from restaurants that don't have their own delivery service straight to a customer's door or workplace. And all people need to do is visit RidgeRunnerTakeout.



com or download the handy mobile app.

For everyone's favorite area restaurants, RidgeRunner was heaven-sent after getting off the ground, connecting local businesses struggling from shutdown

with their lifeblood – hungry customers either quarantined or afraid to get out during the pandemic.

"We were really looking at three groups of people that were suffering at the time," RidgeRunner Owner Brian Kirkland said. "Restaurants, of course, were a big one. Some of them were closing down, and all of them were closed for indoor dining."

"It was really sad to even walk into those restaurants,
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From the staff of the Towns County Herald and West Printing Company