

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 92 Number 23

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Easter Egg Hunt a huge hit with local families

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On the bright morning of Saturday, April 3, Towns County's Annual Easter Egg Hunt returned in fine fashion, bringing hundreds of kids out to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Ballfields.

Even the Easter Bunny made a special appearance to pose for pictures with excited children.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw was pleased to see so many people participating in the traditional family event, especially since the 2020 outing had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

"It is a beautiful day, and the turnout is great, and I am definitely happy to have it," Bradshaw said. "I am very

happy to see events coming back to the county, and it makes me feel good to see the people have a good time and smiling and interacting. It just makes me feel so good."

Local churches including Macedonia Baptist Church, McConnell Baptist Church, Enotah Baptist Church, Lower Hightower Baptist Church, and Woods Grove Baptist Church contributed to the event, which was sponsored by the Towns County Recreation Department.

McConnell Baptist Church Associate Pastor Danny Byers has helped with the event for years and was thrilled to be back supporting the community for Easter on behalf of the church.

"It is good to watch kids and see them have fun," Byers

said. "Our biggest thing as we plug into the community is to help whatever events we can. That is why we talked with (Rec Director Matthew Youngblood).

"I was glad when I saw him at the vaccine clinic, and he said they were doing this again. We brought some baskets and did what we could to make their event more successful. We still have a few limitations as far as COVID goes. We just love seeing kids have a good time."

Linda Gwent enjoyed the morning also, as she got to see her kids having fun outside with others for the first time since the pandemic began. For Gwent, it's important to consider the health of children and having more events for them to participate in while

they are still young.

"It is so wonderful to have this again," Gwent said. "The kids have been asking us all week about the Easter Bunny was going to come, and it made their days when we got to come out and do this.

"They didn't get a lot of eggs, but they were still happy to participate. I am so thankful that they put this on. It really means a lot to parents and especially kids. It feels good to watch them have so much fun."

Attendee Tony Bishop felt the same way, and seeing the children have a great time reminded him of the carefree world before COVID-19.

"These kids are out having a blast," Bishop said. "They were just sprinting across



The young'uns of Towns County sure were excited to see the Easter Bunny return alongside the annual Rec Department Egg Hunt in 2021.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Stroke survivor shares story, thanks first responders



Northeast Georgia Medical Center Neurointerventional Technologist Kyle Powers, second from left, visited with Towns County EMS last week, including Advanced EMT Brett Denton, EMS Director Ken Nicholson and Paramedic Jay Chastain Jr.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

If not for the rapid response to get Diane Cannon suffered on a massive stroke she suffered on Nov. 9, 2020, she might be living in a nursing home today, unable to speak or move half of her body.

Instead, the 73-year-old grandmother from Naples, Florida, now feels better than she did before the stroke, due entirely to the fateful chain of

events that led to her being one of the first patients of the brand new Neurointerventional Lab at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville.

She was visiting the area with family at Riverbend Campground in Hiawassee last fall and had just taken her dog for a walk when the stroke happened; out of the blue, Cannon fell to the ground and discovered she couldn't move.

A neighboring camper

spotted her and came to her aid, dialing 911, and Towns County EMS arrived on the scene within minutes, including Paramedic Jay Chastain Jr., a 34-year career EMS worker and training officer.

He examined Cannon and took stock of the signs – facial drooping, inability to move her right side or speak – and called Air Life Georgia 14, the medical helicopter stationed at Union General Hospital in Blairsville.

See Stroke Survivor, Page 3A

CASA continues children advocacy, plans safe events amid COVID

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Much has changed over the last year due to COVID-19, but what hasn't changed is the purview of Enotah CASA for Children.

Standing for "Court Appointed Special Advocates," Enotah CASA is a community-based nonprofit that recruits, trains and supports citizen-volunteers who in turn advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children making their way through the North Georgia Judicial Circuit.

And Della Lago, executive director of Enotah CASA, wants people to know the organization



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales stopped in to say hello to the Enotah CASA representatives who were selling Boston butts for a fundraiser on the Town Square Saturday.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

See CASA, Page 8A

Local inmate work detail returns after 14 years

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Sheriff Ken Henderson have teamed up to provide a taxpayer-saving detainee work detail in the county, active since mid-March.

The detail performs litter pickup and county property maintenance, like courthouse cleaning and lawn care, and is made possible by a supervised crew of eligible Towns County Detention Center inmates who volunteer two to four men at a time Monday through Friday, weather permitting.

It's the first time in over 14 years that a local detail has been used to do such work, which has become necessary due to COVID-19 that resulted in



Towns County Sheriff's Office Detention Center inmates working at the Towns County Recreational Beach and Playground in recent weeks.
Photo/Facebook

the suspension of all crews operating out of Colwell Probation Detention Center in 2020.

In recent years, Colwell has provided three crews a year at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per crew.
See Work Detail, Page 8A

Officials advise caution amid slight COVID uptick



People ages 18 and up can register at ngvax.com to receive the Moderna vaccine through Synergy Health of Hiawassee, pictured here at the Towns County Rec Center during a recent vaccination clinic.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

A year ago on April 1, 2020, residents learned of the first confirmed positive case of COVID-19 here in Towns County, followed by the county's first reported COVID death on April 28.

Speaking to the extreme infectiousness of the disease, the first known positive case

anywhere was traced to China on Nov. 17, 2019, meaning it took less than five months to spread halfway around the world to the mountains of North Georgia.

Since then, the South has experienced two main "waves" of SARS-CoV-2, one last summer shortly following the onset of the pandemic in America, and another over the winter, which seemed to

totally supplant the annual flu season.
To date, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of 42 Towns Countians and resulted in about 1,060 local cases since the April 1, 2020, initial reporting on the state's COVID-19 Daily Status Report.
In addition to lives being lost and diminishing health, businesses were impacted,
See COVID Uptick, Page 3A

Hiawassee to resume open meetings, consider townhomes

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's been over a year since the Hiawassee City Council and Mayor Liz Ordiales held a meeting that was open to the public, but that's about to change with the April 26 work session.

Due to improved COVID metrics, the city will be welcoming the public back for in-person meetings, though safety measures will be taken, as discussed in the March

29 work session at City Hall that was livestreamed for the public.

For starters, the meetings will continue to be broadcast via Facebook Live, so folks uncomfortable with gathering in person can watch from home. Because the public will be allowed back in, the livestream will no longer be monitored for comments in meetings.

And to allow for more distancing, the meetings will be moving into the larger Hiawassee Civic Center near

City Hall, and people will be required to wear masks during attendance.

"In Towns County, we have had 11 cases in the last two weeks, which is great," Ordiales said, giving a local COVID update. "Positivity rate is 2%, which is awesome. We are heading in the right direction."

Councilman Jay Chastain Jr embraced the idea of opening the public back for meetings but said seating should remain limited to allow for social

distancing due to continued concerns over COVID-19. Chastain had to be hospitalized for COVID earlier this year.

"The more people you get together, the worse probability you got to get sick, so opening a meeting up and doing it like we used to and packing this thing out is unacceptable," Chastain said.

For the time being, the meetings will not feature a seating limit, though that is subject to change depending on attendance levels moving



forward.

Also in the meeting, the council welcomed Aaron Lawson with Celtic Services Inc and Celtic Realty Group LLC, who attended to give a proposal for new townhomes in Hiawassee.

The proposed location for the new buildings is in a lot near Georgia Vision Center, across Main Street from Taco Bell.
Lawson showed the council the layout of the units
See Open Meetings, Page 3A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,683.92
Chatuge 1,925.44
Nottely 1,773.68



Inside

Arrests 2A
Church 4B
Classifieds 6B
Opinion 4A
Legals 7B
Obits 5B
Sports 2B

SPORTS
BASEBALL

4/9 vs. Lake Oconee
Double Header
5 & 7 PM
4/12 @ Union 5:30 PM



TCES
Mates of the
Month
See page 2A

A message
from
Towns Co.
Coroner

See page 2A

INKA
Art Sale
For Kids
April 10
See page 5A