

City Council...from Page 1A

Howard is part of a board that heads up the nonprofit Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, which took over maintenance of the gardens from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds last year.

"All of you know that we've been up there for a year now," said Howard. "We've had a great time doing lots of good things. This year, we're doing something very different, we're going to have an opening day."

Added Howard: "We invite all of you to come to Hamilton Gardens this year and see what we've done up there, and be a part of our bloom season."

According to Howard, the grand opening for "A Blooming Affair" will take place on Saturday, April 15, with an opening day ceremony beginning at 10 a.m., and further festivities planned throughout the day.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw – who recently declared April 15, 2017, as Hamilton Gardens Opening Day – will cut the ribbon at the grand opening, and the garden board will dedicate the recently renovated bridge down in the Hamilton Gardens following the ribbon cutting.

There will be a plant sale between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., families can get their picture taken with the Easter Bunny between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., and garden "ambassadors" will be available from 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., all on April 15.

The gardens are located at the top of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, and residents can look forward to a whole host of activities in the coming month, with events scheduled for each weekend between April 15 and May 20.

Admission to the gardens is always free, though donations are certainly appreciated, and the gardens are open daily from 8 a.m. until dusk.

The following is a list of activities planned to take place during the bloom, following the April 15 Grand Opening:

Earth Day Expo, April 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; "Run



Hiwassee Councilwoman and Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales



Hiwassee Councilman Kris Berrong and Councilwoman Rayette Ross

for the Rhodies" 5K Run/Walk, April 29 at 8 a.m., \$25 in advance and \$30 day of race; an arts and crafts show on April 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on April 30 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Buck & Oz in concert on April 29 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., \$15 tickets in advance; a May Day Fest on May 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; a Mother's Day Tea and Fashion Show on May 13, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., \$15 tickets in advance; and a "Celebrate the Gardens" Benefit on May 20, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., \$25 tickets in advance.

For those who still wish to participate, the Hamilton Gardens limited edition print art contest is still accepting submissions, which are due by

Friday, April 14, to be turned in between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at ArtWorks in Hiwassee.

Also in the April 4 meeting, Hiwassee City Council approved a building inspector contract with Randy Day of Union County, saved a bunch of money moving forward by changing the city's telephone service provider and passed a motion to adopt the 2016 Comprehensive plan.

Furthermore, Councilwoman and Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales debuted a streamlined financials workup to the council, which will allow the council to quickly review the finances of the city in a one-page brief from here on out.

CASA...from Page 1A

Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington.

Smith has been lending her time and affections to help children in need with Enotah CASA since 1999, and says that she could not think of better way to give back to the community.

"I feel like our Department of Family and Children Services is good," said Smith. "They're good people working for the same thing we are, but I think that CASA helps by providing more eyes for the children."

"The department workers have a lot of cases. They have a lot of responsibilities. I think many people don't know how much work they have to do, so they don't have as much time as, say, a CASA would to spend time with a particular case."

"So, we really are able to provide additional oversight to hopefully make sure that things are okay for the children. We always need CASAs. I feel like every child should have a CASA."

Enotah CASA is one of the primary advocate groups for abused and neglected children in the area. The Enotah CASA is aligned with the Enotah Judicial Circuit, which covers Towns, Union, Lumpkin and White counties.

Through this system, each child is appointed a CASA volunteer who advocates for the child's best interests and provides a source of stability for the child.

While Smith has worked with children throughout the four-county circuit, most of her cases are from either Union County or Towns County.

Before moving to Union County in the late '90s, Smith worked as a special education

teacher in Florida. For Smith, advocating for children in need has been a lifelong passion, something that comes as naturally to her as breathing.

"I worked as a special education teacher for many years, so advocating for children is a natural thing for me," said Smith.

While each case is special, Smith spoke of an experience with a child that is an endless reminder of why she continues to donate her time to help the kids in the Enotah Judicial Circuit.

"I had a little boy that, for many reasons, couldn't hear until he was 4," said Smith. "When he had a surgery and was able to hear, he had receptive vocabulary but no expressive vocabulary."

"He started up here and they got him a LAMP (language acquisition through motor planning) program. It was like another language and it gave him a chance to actually communicate with the world."

"When he finally went to his adoptive home, the county didn't have that program. The adoptive mom was really concerned because she had no way of knowing what he wanted and she felt helpless."

"I can be stubborn, so I said, this isn't going to happen. I tried everything that I could do – insurance, transferring the program, anything I could think of. Finally, I called the state Department of Education to get help."

"So, after a lot of work, we finally got the program to the little boy. It was finally a means of communication for this child and his adoptive home. I get really happy when I think about that we were able to get (that program) for this little boy."

When becoming a CASA, each volunteer will work with up to four children at a time, depending on the availability and experience of the volunteer.

These children can range from infants up to 18 years of age, each with a special situation that requires various amounts of time.

According to Smith, a CASA can spend anywhere from 15 to 45 hours a month with a child, depending on the individual circumstances.

In her time working as a CASA, Smith has helped 47 children throughout the four-county circuit to find safe, permanent homes, either back with their families or through adoptive services.

Before being selected as the national child advocate of the year, Smith was awarded Georgia CASA's 2016 Volunteer of the Year award. According to the CASA website, Smith is "the volunteer every CASA program director dreams of," because of her consistent and constant determination and compassion.

While Smith is humbled and grateful for the awards, she said she does not see this as a personal accomplishment, but as recognition for the state and for all the steps being taken to provide help for neglected and abused children in Georgia.

"Every CASA is doing this every day, advocating for kids," said Smith. "What makes me happy is, I think of it as representing all of the CASAs. I'm happy for Georgia because Georgia has a really good CASA program."

"It's really kudos for Georgia. It's absolutely not about me. It's about CASA and all the wonderful things that CASAs do."

Lake Nottely Improvement Association spring cleanup

The annual Lake Nottely Improvement Association spring cleanup will be held on Earth Day – Saturday, April 22. This year LNIA is working in partnership with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition to expand the event so that even more litter cleanup can be removed from around Lake Nottely. Community members of all ages and from all parts of the watershed are invited to participate.

Volunteers should meet at the community room at Lakeside Village, 843 Lakeside Drive, Blairsville, at 8:30 a.m. for registration and breakfast snacks. At 9 a.m., teams of volunteers will board boats and travel to various locations around the lake to collect trash from the shoreline. While some boats will be provided, volunteers who have their own boats are encouraged to bring them! Gloves and bags will be provided. A complimentary lunch will also be served to volunteers afterwards.

Lake Nottely Improvement Association works to improve the Lake Nottely



Lake Nottely Improvement Association board member, Denver Gammons stops for a photo after unloading one boat run of trash during last year's spring shoreline cleanup.

community in Union County. More information is available at www.lakenottely.org. The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition works to sustain good water quality in rivers, lakes and streams in a 4-county area that includes Nottely River, Lake and tributaries in Union County and Cherokee County, NC. Learn more about HRWC at www.hrwc.net.

Because space in boats is limited and in case of cancellation due to inappropriate weather, please let us know in advance that you are planning to attend by calling 828-837-5414 or emailing HRWC outreach coordinator, Raleigh Keagan at admin@hrwc.net.

Enotah Garden Club annual Plant and Bake Sale

The Enotah Garden Club of Young Harris is sponsoring its annual Plant and Bake Sale on Thursday, April 20. The sale will be held at City Hall and Mayors Park in Young Harris between the hours of 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Funds generated from the sale will be used by the Garden Club throughout the year to enhance the beautification of Young Harris and surrounding areas.

Many varieties of plants including annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs, shrubs, hanging baskets, and flower bowls will be available for purchase. The selections will be plentiful and hardy, and

definitely ready for spring-time planting. By coming to the plant sale, shoppers will be able to get everything that is needed for their flower/vegetable gardens and/or the deck/patio areas of their home.

In addition to plants, there will also be a Bake Sale featuring many delicious homemade "goodies" such as cakes, pies, cookies, muffins, and other tasty treats. There will also be several other vendors who will have birdhouses, bird baths, garden themed "yard art", notecards, compost, etc. There will definitely be something available for purchase by any garden "lover".

The Enotah Garden Club was recently recognized by Tree Cities USA for its twenty-second year of participation in its program. Many varieties of trees have been provided by the Garden Club and planted all around the city of Young Harris. This is just one example of how funds generated from the plant and bake sale are utilized by the club.

Everyone is invited to come and shop at the Enotah Garden Club Plant and Bake Sale on Thursday, April 20 at City Hall and Mayors Park in Young Harris. Springtime has finally come to the Enchanted Valley! NT(Apr12,FJ)SH

The Literary Hour at John Campbell Folk School

Thursday, April 20, 2017 at 7 PM, John Campbell Folk School and NC Writers Network West are sponsoring The Literary Hour, an hour of poetry and prose reading held at Keith House on the JCFS campus. This event is normally held the third Thursday of the month unless otherwise notified. The reading is free of charge and open to the public. Poets and writers Janice Townley Moore and Marcia Hawley Barnes will be featured readers.

Janice Townley Moore, Professor Emeritus of English at Young Harris College, published a chapbook, *Teaching the Robins*, with Finishing Line Press in 2005. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines and in many anthologies. Her latest poem was published in *Coming Off the Line: The Car in American Culture*, published by Main Street Rag. An active member of the North



Marcia Hawley Barnes



Janice Townley Moore

Carolina Writers' Network, she is coordinator for the poetry critique group which meets at Tri-County Community College.

Marcia Hawley Barnes is a Georgia writer and poet. She is a member of the North Carolina Writers' Network, NetWest, and Ridgeline Literary Alliance. In 2008, she researched, illustrated, and published *The Little Book of Secret Family Recipes*. A heritage cookbook, the collection contains favorite recipes found in the archives of her family. In 2016, her first children's book, *Tobijah*, illustrated by Doreyl Ammons Cain, was published by Catch the Spirit of Appalachia. Nominated for the Georgia Author of the Year Award in 2017. Her poetry has been published in *Stone, River, Sky, An Anthology of Georgia Poems*. The author also writes a monthly book review for *Clay County Progress*. NT(Apr12,Z20)gg