

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 94 Number 24

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

Easter tradition triumphs over rainy weather

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Rain didn't stop local families from heading to the Towns County Recreation and Convention Center Saturday, April 8, for the Rec Department's annual Easter Egg Hunt, with a venue change from the usual Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds outdoor hunting spot due to inclement weather.

While the day may have been an unconventional way of celebrating the county's Easter tradition, the unbridled joy of the hunt was palpable just as much indoors as outdoors.

"We're very fortunate to have a facility like we have to be able to come inside where the kids can still get to participate and have fun," Rec

Director Stuart Nichols said. "It's a community event with the churches and some local businesses joining in. For the weather, I think (attendance) was fantastic."

Nichols said it's hard to say just when the countywide tradition started; the best he and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw can figure, it's been around for "easily" 30 or 40 years.

"I think it's absolutely awesome," Bradshaw said. "It's so much fun to see all the children having a great time."

Although egg hunting began at 11 a.m., several folks showed up a bit earlier or stayed after to enjoy some of the other activities like face painting courtesy of Heather Nichols and other volunteers at

the Century 21 Black Bear Realty table.

"It's the first time we've (painted faces)," said Heather Nichols, wife of Director Nichols. "Next year, we can be better prepared as to what's popular and (make sure to have the right supplies and tools)."

When it came time to begin the egg hunt, Director Nichols counted down over a microphone so that all three age groups could hear him. The gym was cordoned off into two main areas, with the conference room set aside solely for the youngest children.

In total, there were 3,000 eggs to find, and it was estimated that at least 250 children attended.

As always, there was an
See *Easter Tradition*, Page 8A



Children enjoyed an indoor egg hunt the day before Easter courtesy the Towns County Recreation Department.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

CASA raises awareness for child abuse prevention

News Special
Towns County Herald

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this time, it is important to continue working hard for local children while also celebrating the good things our communities have done in promoting healthy child development and preventing and reducing child abuse and neglect.

Preventing child abuse and neglect cannot be achieved by one group alone or a single strategy. In order to successfully work to pre-

vent child abuse, programs need to develop collaborative and comprehensive strategies at many different levels and with multiple sectors working together.

This month and throughout the year, Enotah CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), S.A.F.E. Services, Towns County DFCS, and Towns County Family Connection encourage all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Towns a better place for children and families.

By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help prevent child abuse and neglect by creating strong and thriving children, youth, and families in our communities. Research shows that protective factors are present in healthy families.

As you drive around the Hiawassee Town Square, remember that each of the 206 blue pinwheels represents an abused and neglected child we
See *Enotah CASA*, Page 8A



Keep an eye out for the blue pinwheels set out by Enotah CASA on the Hiawassee Town Square this month, signifying abused and/or neglected children assisted in the circuit.

January Term 2023 Grand Jury Indictments, continued

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2023 of the Towns County Grand Jury, which met again last week:

Karen Cheryl Bryant, possession of methamphetamine; possession of a Schedule II controlled substance; possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony; three counts driving under the influence; possession of drug-related objects; failure to maintain lane.

Timothy Lee Duffie, terroristic threats; aggravated assault; exploitation and intimidation of a disabled adult, elder person or resident; three counts obstruction of an officer.

Garrod Gagnon-Watts, aka Garrod Gagnon-Wagts, aggravated assault; entering an automobile; criminal damage to property in the second degree; theft by taking.

John Walker Bryant, four counts entering an auto-

mobile; two counts theft by taking.

Ronny Lynn Sanders, possession of a Schedule I controlled substance; three counts possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony; three counts possession of a firearm by a first offender probationer; possession of drug-related objects; driving too fast for conditions; speeding.

Jesse Oliver Maier, cruelty to children in the first degree; two counts possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance.

Chanda Dawn McGowan, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine; four counts driving under the influence; speeding; driving with expired license.

Travis Lonzie Foskey, theft by taking.

Tracy Joy Shook, possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

Nathan Allen Lemay, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine.

Chad Lefate Patterson, theft by taking.

Joseph William Campbell, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of a Schedule I controlled substance; possession of methamphetamine.

Misty Dawn Ekeberg, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Michael Edward Babcock, two counts driving under the influence; failure to maintain lane.

Dexter Neldon Adams, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine.

Corry Beth Purcell, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Hiawassee Pro Rodeo to return with more seating



The Hiawassee Pro Rodeo will be getting a welcome boost this year with additional electronic bleachers.
Photo/Submitted

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

When the Third Annual Hiawassee Pro Rodeo rides back into town Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-28, spectators will be pleased to know that the uniquely American pastime will feature an upgrade – more seating at the outdoor venue inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

For the past two years, the event has proven so popular that available seating has

been sold out every rodeo, requiring a considerable number of fans to enjoy the traditional Western spectacle while standing.

Rodeo-goers have not been deterred, however, as each time they learned that the event had reached seating capacity, they bought tickets anyway.

But this year, the Southern Pro Rodeo Company is providing 500 additional bleacher seats, which Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason believes will be able to accommodate all comers in 2023.

"Seating has been a real problem for us because the rodeo has grown so much in such a short time," Thomason said, noting also the expansion of the event to twice yearly in 2022. "We're really excited and trying to get the word out to let everyone know we'll have seating for everyone this year."

People won't want to miss the rodeo this year, which has received three awards over the previous two seasons, to include an IPRA award as one of
See *Hiawassee Pro Rodeo*, Page 6A

TCSO arrests two more North Carolina drug suspects

News Special
Towns County Herald

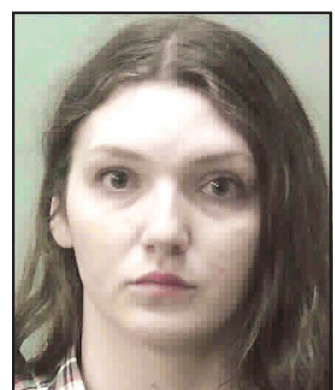
On Wednesday, March 29, Towns County Sheriff's Office Drug Investigators set up a drug buy bust at the Hiawassee Budget Inn along with Hiawassee Police Department.

Methamphetamine, heroin and fentanyl, which field-tested positive, were confiscated, along with cash and a bag of counterfeit fentanyl.

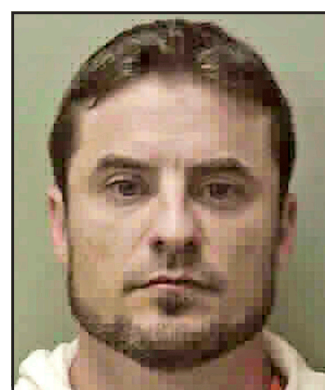
Kaitlyn Brianna Kincaid, 27, of Marble, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with felony possession of fentanyl; felony possession of heroin; felony possession of methamphetamine; and possession of a counterfeit controlled substance with intent to distribute.

Sheriff Ken Henderson said he was proud of his deputies and investigators "for their continued vigilance against illegal drugs being brought into, and distributed, in our community."

In a separate incident on Saturday, April 1, a Towns County Sheriff's Office depu-



Kaitlyn Brianna Kincaid



Evan Dean Vilardo

ty conducted a traffic stop on State Highway 339 in front of the Towns County Detention Center.

Prior to the stop, drugs were thrown out of the vehicle's window. A probable cause search of the vehicle resulted in an amount of cocaine from inside the vehicle field-tested positive. The drugs thrown from the vehicle also field-tested positive for cocaine.

Evan Dean Vilardo, 35, of Franklin, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with

felony possession of cocaine; felony possession of cocaine with intent to distribute; failure to yield to an emergency vehicle; no registration; and littering.

Sheriff Ken Henderson commended his deputies for their drug and crime suppression efforts: "Based on continuing drug complaints, these efforts will continue."

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

See *Drug Arrests*, Page 8A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Vol. 94 No. 24

Lake Levels

BASEBALL

Coroner @ Movers & Shakers See page 8B

Arrests - 2A Opinion - 4A
Chamber - 6A Legals - 6B
Church - 4B Obituaries - 5B
Classifieds - 6B Sports - 2B

Blue Ridge 1,681.86
Chatuge 1,921.73
Nottely 1,769.83

vs. Aquinas
Apr. 15 (DH) 11 AM

Plant Affair on the Square See page 2A

Traffic Safety Law See page 5A



United Community Bank
The support you need for your next big dream.
Talk to us today about your loan and line of credit options.

Tina Denton
706-435-1104
HIAWASSEE MAIN OFFICE
NMLS# 744611



©2023 United Community Bank | NMLS# 421841 | ucbi.com/borrowing
This is not a commitment to lend. Normal credit criteria apply.

Matt Miller
706-435-1106
HIAWASSEE MAIN OFFICE
NMLS# 744609





Chamber Chronicles

The official source of Towns County Chamber News

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

Welcome to our Newest Members!!

Veteran Contracting, LLC-**New Platinum Member** Manny Spear- Hiawassee, GA- Our goal is satisfying our customers by extending affordable, high quality and professional services for your next project. We know how good it feels to watch your dream transform into reality. (678) 360-2093 manny.goveteran@gmail.com Facebook: Veteran Contracting LLC www.veterancontractingga.com

Hiawassee Homemaker-Brittany Spear- Hiawassee, GA- specializing in interior design, décor, themed parties, short term rental management/cleaning and professional organization. (404) 604-5819 hiawasseehomemaker@yahoo.com Facebook: The Hiawassee Homemaker

King Tax & Accounting Services, LLC- Alex King- Hiawassee, GA—their goal is to fulfill any tax or accounting needs at an affordable rate. Whether it be individuals, married couples, or businesses, we are here for you. Offering services to the surrounding areas of the North Georgia Mountains and Western North Carolina. (706) 897-0795 alex@kingtaxandaccounting.com Facebook: King Tax & Accounting Services, LLC www.kingtaxandaccounting.com

Wonderfully Maid, LLC- Bridget Hill – Hiawassee, GA- They offer cleaning for residential homes, offices, real-estate, Airbnb’s, commercial spaces, post-construction, and more. (423) 920-8205 Facebook: Wonderfully Maid

ZenBusiness- Software that allows individuals to easily start and run their own LLC www.zenbusiness.com

Veteran Site Development, LLC – Manny Spear- Hiawassee, GA (678) 360-2093 manny.goveteran@gmail.com

Chamber Events & Programs

2023 Second Quarter Business After Hours- Cass Clinical Med Spa & Fitness – April 20-

United Community Bank provides generous donation to Young Harris College Clay Dotson Open

On Tuesday, April 4, Mark Dotson, Young Harris College Vice President for Advancement, met with Adam Born, President of the United Community Bank of Blairsville, to graciously accept the bank’s generous donation to the 2023 Young Harris College Clay Dotson Open Golf Tournament.

The 19th Annual Clay Dotson Open will be held Monday, May 22, at the beautiful Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris, Georgia. Every year, this tournament benefits student scholarships at Young Harris College. Nearly 100 percent of YHC students receive some form of financial assistance, and all proceeds from the tournament are used toward student scholarships. Support for this event allows YHC students the opportunity to achieve their goals and become part of the College’s legacy.

Young Harris College thanks the United Community Bank of Blairsville for being a Diamond Sponsor for the Clay Dotson Open and for helping



Young Harris College receives United Community Bank of Blairsville’s generous donation to this year’s Clay Dotson Open.

Mountain Lions to reach their academic goals.

Want to play in the 2023 Clay Dotson Open and contribute to YHC students’ education? Register by Monday, May 2, at <https://www.yhc.edu/giving/opportunities/cdo>. There will be morning and

afternoon flights, and refreshments will be served throughout the day. A complimentary breakfast, lunch, and team photo will also be available. Award ceremonies with prizes will follow each flight. There is a discounted rate for teams made up of all YHC alumni.

Young Harris College announces First Exchange Students to Konkuk University in Seoul, South Korea

Montana Owens, class of 2025, was the first Young Harris College student to study abroad in South Korea. As an exchange student with our partner institution, Konkuk University, Montana studied for the entirety of Fall 2022 in Seoul, South Korea.

After being nominated for this study abroad opportunity by Coordinator of International Studies, Dr. Jennifer Schroeder, Montana was accepted at Konkuk University. She was very grateful to receive funding through the Young Harris College Honors Program to help cover dormitory costs. Dr. Schroeder was impressed with Montana’s willingness to forge a new path: “to be the first student from Young Harris to attend Konkuk took courage and confidence, both of which I noticed in Montana. By sharing knowledge of her experiences and struggles, we are able to make the process even smoother for future students wanting to spend part of their college experience in South Korea.”

Montana is on the leadership and worship teams for Young Harris College’s student-led religious organization, Underground. She is majoring in Biology and minoring in Psychology, with plans to attend medical school after



Young Harris College student Montana Owens at Konkuk University in Seoul, South Korea.

graduation. Montana’s goal is to one day have her own neurology clinic and positively impact the mind in a holistic way.

While Montana was the first exchange student from Young Harris College to attend Konkuk University, she certainly is not the last. Tracy Dumakor, class of 2024, and Jonathan Everett, class of 2023, are currently studying at Konkuk University for the Spring 2023 semester. “I am very proud of all the students who have been and currently are representatives of Young Harris to Konkuk! Each exhibits a strong desire to learn, in and out of the classroom, wanting to absorb as much Ko-

rean culture as they can along the way,” stated Dr. Schroeder.

Young Harris College is pleased to offer a strong international component to students’ educational experiences. The mission of the YHC Study Abroad and International Programs is to engage the College community in meaningful experiences that foster appreciation of diverse cultures. Through our partnership with Konkuk University, as well as various other International Programs and Scholarships, students gain a deeper understanding of other languages, peoples, and cultures, contributing to personal and community growth.

Hiawassee Pro Rodeo...from Page 1A

the best five outdoor rodeos in the entire U.S. The award will be presented to the fairgrounds in the arena Memorial Day Weekend.

Several vendors have already lined up to be there at the end of May, including multiple popular food options, with activities for children returning as usual.

Of course, the International Pro Rodeo Association-sanctioned event will feature all the bronc-bucking and bull-riding action fans have come to expect and will include several highly patriotic displays, including country music artist Destin Bennett opening with the National Anthem.

“You can’t get much more American than the rodeo, that’s for sure,” Thomason said. “We want everybody to come out and have a great time. Come early; the gates open at 6 p.m. and the rodeo starts each night at 8 o’clock. “So, come visit the ven-

dors, get you something to eat, let the kids enjoy all the activities prior to it starting, and just have a wonderful Memorial Day Weekend on beautiful Lake Chatuge in Towns County.”

Tickets are available for purchase now at <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/> and in person at 1311 Music Hall Road in Hiawassee.

Additionally, any business that wants to be a sponsor of the rodeo may call Thomason at 706-896-4191.

“The deadline is April 21 to be a sponsor, which includes a sign around the arena, and the announcer talks about your business throughout the night over the intercom,” Thomason said.

As always, members of the community are invited to volunteer for the rodeo and all the other events throughout the year at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, which remains grateful for the help.

Speaking of other events, back by popular demand is the Acoustic Sunsets at Hamilton Gardens concert series, running every Thursday at 6 p.m. between April 13 and May 11. On top of live music, concerts will have food trucks and art vendors at 96 Pavilion Way inside the fairgrounds.

Also starting this Friday will be the monthlong Rhododendron Festival “celebrating North Georgia’s beautiful native flowers.” The hours will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 12-4 p.m. on Sundays throughout the festival.

And at the end of the month will be the return of the Memory Lane Classic Car Show Friday, April 28, and Saturday, April 29, featuring music, food trucks, arts & crafts, a swap meet and plenty of “really cool cars!”

For more information on these and other exciting events, visit the website listed above.

More details to follow.

Save the Date: Made in Georgia Festival – June 23 & 24, 2023 at the TC Recreation & Conference Center- Foster Park, Young Harris, GA. Contact: (706)896-4966 for more information.

Follow us: Facebook & Instagram: Visit Lake Chatuge and check out our website at www.golakechatuge.com for updates on the events in the area.

Thanks to all our members for their continued support!

Additionally, we’d like to thank these Platinum and Gold Members:

PLATINUM MEMBERS: Blue Ridge Mountain EMC; Century 21 Black Bear Realty; Lake Chatuge Lodge; Majestic Mountain Getaways, Inc.; Mountain Realty; The Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge; United Community Bank; Veteran Contracting LLC; Windstream Communications.

GOLD MEMBERS: Blairsville Printing; Brasstown Manor; Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa; Brother’s Restaurant at Willow Ranch; Chatuge Regional Hospital; Chick-fil-A of Blairsville; Dharam Auto Sales; Erlanger Western Carolina Hospital; Hiawassee Package Store; Homestead Hospice; Hughes Accounting; K. Boyer Photography; Little Bear Rentals & Property Management; Men on The Move; Mahan Family Chiropractic; NeuroSport Physical Therapy LLC; Northeast GA Health System; Paradise Bar and Grill LLC; Peach State Federal Credit Union; Regency SouthernCare Hospice; Sanre Organic Skinfood; South State Bank; Stone Wall 66 LLC; Tri-County Office Supply, and, Young Harris College.

For information on becoming a member of the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce, visit www.golakechatuge.com or call Mary Ann at (706) 896-4966 or email her at LCChamber2021@gmail.com.

Council for Collaborative Impact Features WNC Nonprofit Pathways Speaker Butterworth

Area residents interested in learning more about how our community can become a more thriving one for all are invited to the Thursday, April 13, breakfast meeting of the Council for Collaborative Impact, from 8:30 AM to 10 AM in the Lodge at Hinton Rural Life Center, 2330 Hinton Center Road, Hayesville.

Guest speaker will be Jeannette Butterworth, Senior Consultant for WNC Nonprofit Pathways, a collaboration of the following funding organizations: Cherokee Preservation Foundation. The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina. United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County, WNC Bridge Foundation. She will speak to the services provided by Pathways and answer questions. Butterworth has served in current position since July of 2015 and has spent the past 20 years in Hendersonville, NC. Butterworth has worked in the nonprofit sector since her career began with service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, South America, in 1998. Over the years, she has continued working for social justice, as a grassroots organizer, in management and administration,



Jeannette Butterworth

resource development, grant writing, program coordination, board service, and strategic consulting. Butterworth has served as staff and on boards of large and small organizations and for established and fledgling nonprofits.

WNC Nonprofit Pathways was formed in 2006 out of concern about the increasing demands on nonprofits. The funders recognized that nonprofits must operate from a place of organizational strength in order to carry out their missions effectively. Each year, these same funders contribute dollars to provide Pathways’ services, making high quality, capacity building support available at low or no

cost to nonprofits across the mountain region.

Those wanting to attend the April 13 breakfast meeting should RSVP by April 11 by emailing shelley@hintoncenter.org or calling Shelley at 828-389-8336.

The Council for Collaborative Impact (CCI), hosted by Hinton Rural Life Center, is comprised of individuals from Clay, Cherokee, and Towns counties who wish to keep abreast of services available for neighbors in our community that specifically address the areas of education, transportation, economic development, children’s issues, substance misuse, housing, and technology. They serve on CCI task forces that represent each of these areas and work collaboratively to better meet community needs in impactful and transformative ways. Any interested individuals are welcome to attend CCI meetings and potentially serve on a task force. Each meeting will feature a guest speaker who will address a topic that has regional impact and who can be a resource for our community. There are four meetings a year. The next CCI meeting will be August 10.

Easter Tradition...from Page 1A



New this year, face painting was a popular attraction at the county's Easter Egg Hunt, with plans to return the activity bigger and better in 2024.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

enthusiastic hunt for the coveted golden eggs to earn special prizes, and though the main floors had been picked clean by the end, some determined gatherers were still combing through the bleachers to look for more carefully hidden eggs.

Outside in the hall were the Easter egg basket raffles, and beside that table was a makeshift concession stand with hundreds of cookies and other spring-themed treats courtesy of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Young Harris.

Blairsville resident Amber Qualtieri won one of the raffle baskets after deciding to take her son and daughter to the Towns County event, saying, "We saw that (the egg hunt) was inside, and thought, 'Oh, that's perfect.'"

Irma Flanagan, mother of Pastor Todd Flanagan of Cornerstone, brought her 4-year-old granddaughter Lillie, and the two had great fun together.

"I thought it was wonderful," Flanagan said of the egg hunt, with Lillie agreeing – although her favorite parts were getting her face painted and seeing the Easter Bunny.

"She won't let me put any (eggs) in my pockets. She wants to keep them and hold them," Flanagan laughed. "(Lillie) said, 'I got to talk to the real Easter Bunny.'"

Despite being one of the smallest egg hunters, 13-month-old Willow Wilson approached the event with gusto, squealing with delight at the social aspect and excitement as much as the eggs.

"Oh, she's had a blast. She loves picking up all the different colored eggs," her mom, Kaelyn Smith, said as Willow kept busy trying to dunk her egg into dad Levi's coffee cup. The family was looking forward to celebrating Easter at Sunrise Service the next morning at Cornerstone.

"It is finished," Smith added, talking about the true meaning of Easter, officially observed on Sunday, April 9. "The work's done; the battle's already won."

The Smiths weren't alone in that sentiment, either.

"As fun as the egg hunt is, this is a very religious Christian holiday, and we don't want to lose in the fun what it's all



The Easter Bunny himself made a splash at the indoor egg hunt on Saturday, delighting area children of all ages.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

about," Nichols agreed.

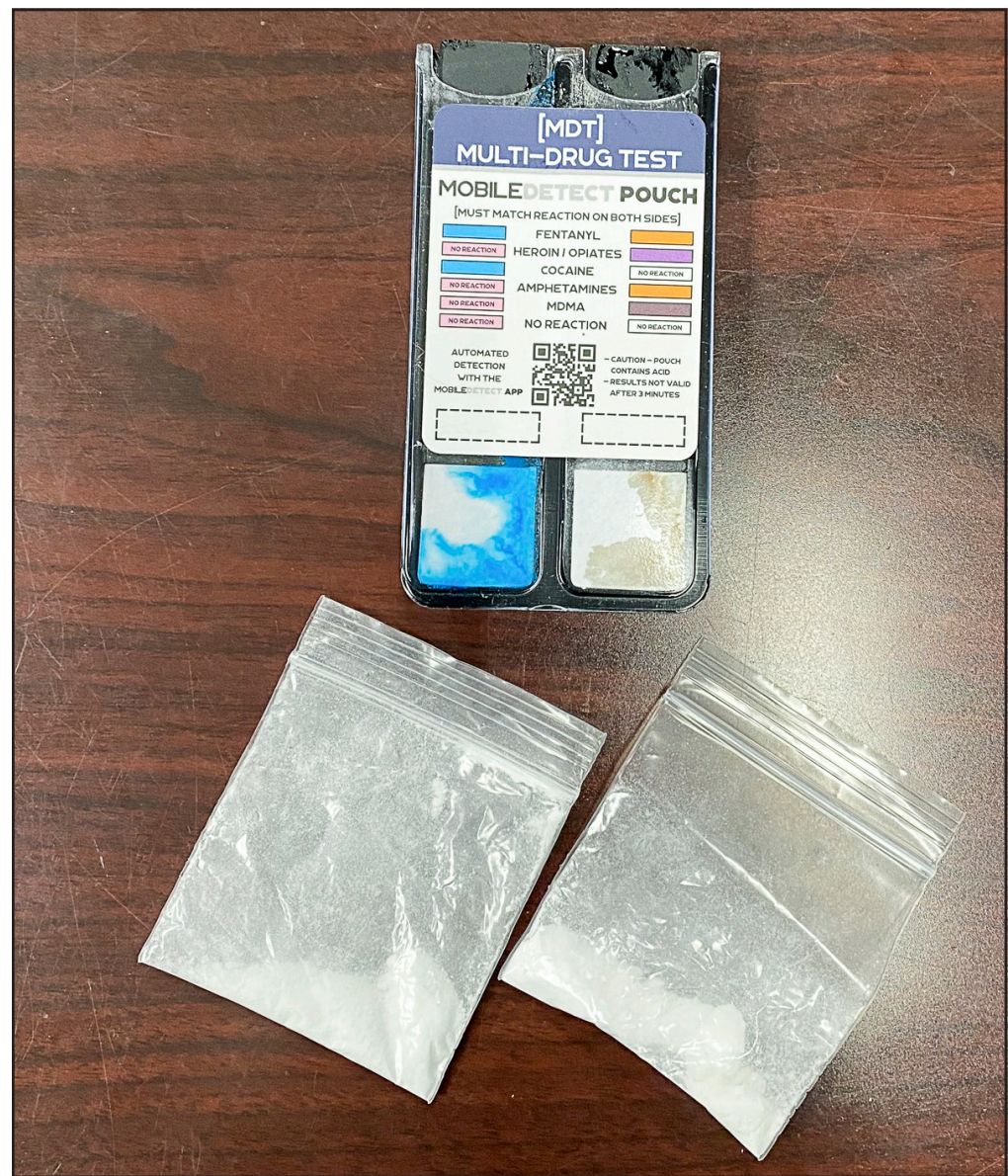
"Easter is one of the two great Christian holidays, and I think that it's absolutely necessary that we maintain that because, after all, without the Resurrection, we would be most miserable," said Cornerstone Deacon Tommy Flanagan as he bagged up extra cookies.

"Jesus is the only hope man has," said Pastor Ricky Rogers of Old Union Baptist Church in Young Harris. "And you know, it doesn't matter if it's a hot dog or a hamburger or an Easter egg; as long as we get together and celebrate Christ and His Resurrection, I'm all for it."

Drug Arrests...from Page 1A



Drugs and cash confiscated during a March 29 drug bust conducted by the Towns County Sheriff's Office.
Photo/Facebook



A field test used in an April 1 arrest showing the presence of cocaine in suspected drugs confiscated by TCSO.
Photo/Facebook

Enotah CASA...from Page 1A

served. You have the opportunity to participate in Towns County.

People may get involved by attending the "I Am for the CHILD Conference" from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on April 20. Attendance is free.

For more information, visit www.enotahcasa.org.

Later on April 20, Enotah CASA will be hosting Church Volunteer Child Safety Training at 6 p.m., also free to attend, with additional information available at the

website.

Enotah CASA, S.A.F.E. Services, Towns County Family Connection, and Towns County DFCS encourage everyone to help us ensure every child has a voice in this community.

Free GED Classes

Are you ready to earn your high school equivalency diploma? North GA Technical College's Adult Education program is offering free day and evening courses. Classes are held in Blairsville at the Shirley Miller Building (behind the public library). Call 706-439-6342 to schedule your registration appointment. Our next enrollment date is April 10th & 24nd.