

Towns County Herald

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Mayor Mathis says goodbye to city hall after 21 years

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis served her last day in office on Thursday, April 20, after more than two decades of service to the city.

The final announcement of her retirement was made in a called meeting of the Hiwassee City Council on Tuesday, April 18.

The meeting was called to finalize the remaining paperwork regarding Mayor Mathis' retirement.

The city and Mayor Mathis signed a "Release of Claims Agreement," which was presented at the called meeting Tuesday. The agreement is aimed at heading off future legal matters between the city and Mayor Mathis as per the terms of her retirement.

Since Mayor Mathis is

retiring before the end of her term, which would have been Dec. 31, 2017, Hiwassee Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales will serve as acting mayor until a new mayor is elected this November.

"I've been working with Barbara for the last month to ensure that we have a smooth transition and that nothing falls through the cracks here at the city," said Ordiales. "We are positioning ourselves to be successful and to make sure that our citizens are well maintained with safety and utilities."

"We look forward to continuing to do what we've been doing for the betterment of the city."

The city also hosted a retirement reception in honor of Mayor Mathis' more than 20 years in office, on Thursday, April 20, the same day as her effective retirement.

Dozens of city officials, residents, family and friends of Mayor Mathis gathered together for food, fellowship and to celebrate her years of hard work and dedication to the city.

Mayor Mathis has been working with the city since the early 1990s, first as a councilwoman then as mayor. She first took office as Hiwassee mayor in March of 1996 and has since devoted her life to working toward the betterment of Hiwassee and the safety of the residents.

When asked about Mayor Mathis and her retirement, many expressed gratitude for her commitment, time and her love for Hiwassee and the citizens.

Hiwassee City Councilwoman Anne Mitchell said that, before she became a council member, she has been

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Retired Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, center, with her granddaughter Hannah Gladfelter and her husband, Drew. Mathis is expecting her first great-grandchild from the couple in July.

Beloved Police Chief Jimmy Wright remembered with dedication

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiwassee Square saw dozens of visitors last Saturday for the dedication of the city's Christmas tree, in honor and memory of beloved Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright.

A beautiful blue spruce tree, no other tribute would be quite as fitting for the dearly departed police chief, since Christmas was a special time for Wright, especially in regards to helping the children of Towns County with the annual event known as Shop with a Cop.

"We're honoring our great police chief, Jimmy Wright," said Liz Ordiales, Hiwassee Mayor Pro Tem. "Unfortunately for me, I did not have a lot of time to work

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Frances Owenby Owens, mother of the late Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, hangs an ornament on the tree to honor the memory of her son. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Multiple indictments handed up in prescription fraud cases

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Dr. Virginia Lou Harkins and Jamie Lee Harkins have all been indicted, according to Etowah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley.

The indictments came after more than two hours of testimony last week, during which time a Union County Grand Jury heard evidence regarding the cases of the aforementioned individuals, according to Langley.

Dr. Gowder was indicted on more than 60 counts "involving fraud in obtaining a controlled substance and unauthorized dispensing of narcotic medication," said Langley.

"In addition, he was

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Dr. David Gowder



Gail Gowder



Virginia Lou Harkins



Jamie Lee Harkins

Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales takes over as acting mayor

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis served her last day on Thursday, April 20, before officially retiring, leaving Council Member Liz Ordiales Mayor Pro Tem until the city's November elections.

"I've been working with Barbara over the last month to make sure that it's a smooth transition and that nothing falls through the cracks," said Ordiales. "We're positioning ourselves to be successful and to make sure our citizens are well taken care of. We're looking forward to keep doing what we've been doing."

In a typical situation of a



Acting Mayor Liz Ordiales

city official retiring, a special election would be held shortly after the retirement to appoint a new official. However, since

Mayor Mathis retired in such close proximity to the election, the city will not be hosting

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National Day of Prayer organizers invite residents to May 4 event

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson confirmed Monday that he will be speaking at the annual National Day of Prayer observances in Towns County the morning of Thursday, May 4.

This is an especially exciting turn of events for John and Kay Yandell, who view the National Day of Prayer as an opportunity to highlight the crucial role of prayer in communities throughout the United States.

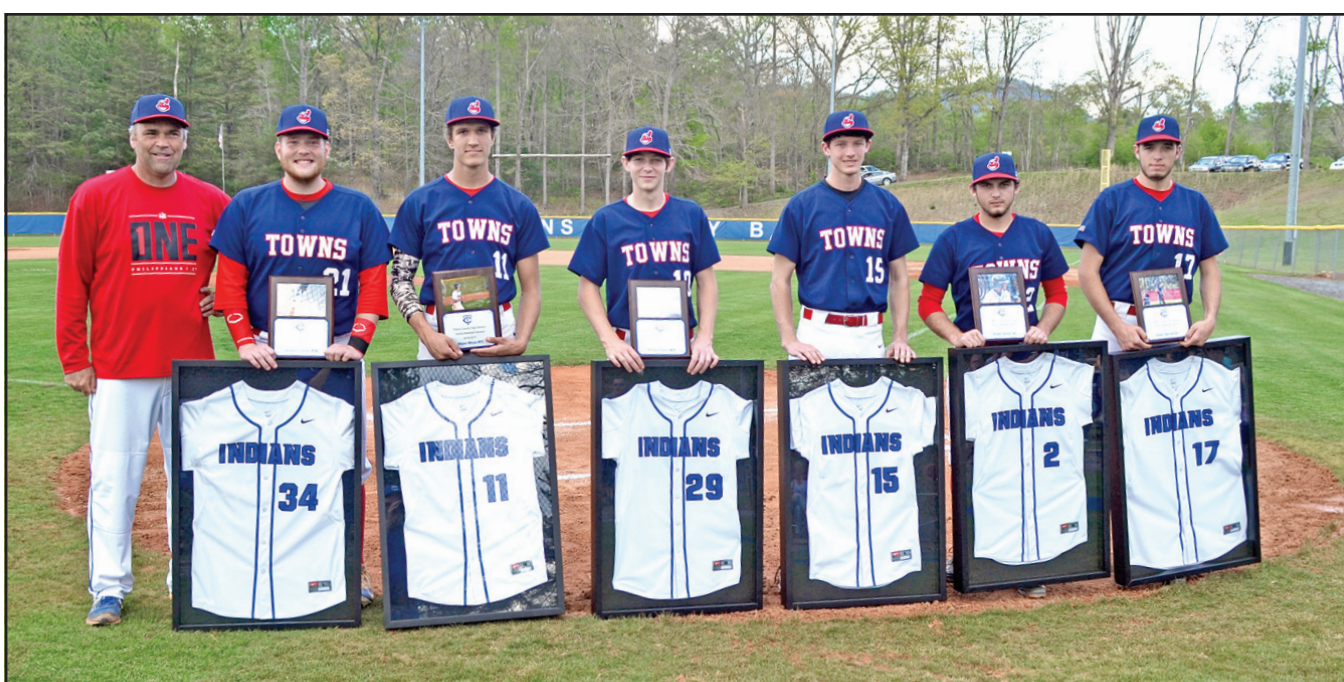
The National Day of Prayer has been around for quite some time, since President Harry S. Truman

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The North Georgia Honor Guard presenting the colors during the National Day of Prayer in 2015, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Indians Baseball headed to state for first time in a decade



Indians Baseball Senior Night on Thursday, April 20

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The 21st ranked Towns County Indians are in the Georgia State Playoffs, though placement was unofficial as of press time Monday.

Towns County (11-17) entered last week in 23rd place in the Georgia High School Association's (GHS) Power Rankings, where the Top 24 teams earn a postseason bid.

Facing a busy week last week, the Indians had four opportunities to make their case for one of the coveted Top 24 spots, and when the dust settled, they had split their four games with two wins over Class A private schools coupled with two losses to Class AA's Oglethorpe County.

After the GHS

computers clicked, whirled and smoked, they spit out the final results of the season, and Towns County found itself two spots better than when it entered, from 23rd to 21st place.

According to Towns County Baseball Head Coach Shannon Floyd, the Indians wouldn't know for certain if they were in until Tuesday, April 25, but he said he couldn't foresee a scenario where they would drop four places.

"The GHS is hearing appeals from teams that didn't get in, but that shouldn't have any impact on our placement," he said. "If anything, I could see us possibly moving up to 20th, but I think it's pretty safe to say that we're going finish as the 20th or 21st place team."

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Baseball STATE TOURNAMENT TBA Soccer Tues Apr 25 State Tournament @ Holy Innocents 5 PM