

Towns County Herald

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Perren, Hobbs and Chastain to rotate positions at Towns County Schools

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Towns County School District will be making several leadership changes effective July 1, 2019.

Roy Perren will transition from his current position as joint Federal Programs/Facilities director to principal at the high school.

Current Towns County High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs will be moving to the middle school to serve as principal there.

And Middle School Principal Erica Chastain will be filling the joint Federal Programs/Facilities director position vacated by Perren.

The administrative staff changes were approved at the April meeting of the Towns County Board of Education, and Superintendent Dr. Darren

Berrong said that he believes rotating the leadership like this will help the schools to incorporate new ideas.

"We've now been almost five years with no changes in administration, which was one of our goals, to have that stability and not have any turnover," said Berrong. "I feel confident that we've been able to do that, but I think, after a while, it's time for everybody to do something a little bit different, get the juices flowing again, and keep the passion for what they're doing."

Continued Berrong, "We're not bringing in anybody new, and nobody's leaving, so we're all just going to be able to help each other. And that's the great thing about a small school system—we can just make each other better."

Other key staff changes coming July 1 include current

middle school counselor Dionne Berrong moving to the high school, while high school counselor Lana Parker will be moving to the middle school.

And joint middle/high school assistant principal Jim Melton will be assistant principal at the high school only starting the 2019-2020 school year.

Hobbs and Chastain informed their respective staffs of the coming transitions on Friday, April 26.

"I think we've made great gains in the past four years at the high school and have put together a fantastic staff," said Hobbs. "I'm sad to leave them—they are part of my family."

"My eight years of teaching in Towns County were all in the middle school, and a lot of the teachers I worked with there are still on staff. I've



Roy Perren



Dr. Connie Hobbs



Erica Chastain

been in administration at the elementary school and the high school, and now I'll have that chance in the middle school as well. I appreciate the Board of Education's confidence and support."

For her part, Chastain

expressed confidence that she'll be leaving the middle school in Hobbs' very capable hands.

"She is a dedicated educator with 28 years of experience in the field of education," said Chastain. "I am sure the middle school will

continue to excel under her leadership."

Furthermore, Chastain welcomes the upcoming change as an opportunity to increase her administrative experiences in administration starting with

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Hayesville, NC, man charged in hit-and-run death of Randall 'Shorty' Penland

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

A Hayesville, North Carolina, man was taken into custody last week and charged in the pedestrian hit-and-run death of Randall "Shorty" Penland of Hiwassee.

Penland was killed more than five months ago after being struck by a vehicle in the early morning hours of Nov. 16, 2018, on U.S. 64 in Clay County, North Carolina.

Raymond Leo Hohmann III, 36, of Hayesville, was arrested on Friday, April 26, and charged with Involuntary Manslaughter, Felony Hit and Run, and Felony Obstruction, according to the North Carolina State Highway Patrol.

Involuntary Manslaughter and Felony Hit and Run are considered Class F felonies in North Carolina, each being punishable by up to 59 months, or four years and 11 months, in prison.

The Felony Obstruction charge is in reference to North Carolina General Statute 14-221.1 regarding "altering, destroying, or stealing evidence of criminal conduct." This

crime is considered a Class I felony and carries with it a maximum sentence of 24 months in prison.

Hohmann bonded out of the Clay County Jail the day of his arrest on a \$100,000 secured bond.

In recounting the start of the investigation, the North Carolina State Highway Patrol said in an April 26 press release that on Nov. 16, 2018, Trooper K. D. Hyde responded to the location where Penland's body had been found east of Hayesville on U.S. 64.

"Upon Trooper Hyde's arrival, he determined that Mr. Penland had been involved in a collision with a motor vehicle, which had left the scene," the Highway Patrol said. "Deputies and investigators with the Clay County Sheriff's Office, as well as additional Highway Patrol personnel, responded to assist and began what would be a five-month long investigation into the circumstances of Mr. Penland's death."

"Together, the Highway Patrol and Clay County Sheriff's Office conducted an extensive investigation which spanned multiple jurisdictions



Raymond Leo Hohmann III

in two states. The charges brought forward today were the culmination of this investigation and were brought under the advisement of local District Attorney's Office."

To this point, the months-long investigation has consisted of multiple interviews with individuals in Georgia and North Carolina, as well as evidence being tested by the North Carolina State Crime Lab, including a vehicle of interest and items taken from

See Penland, Page 6A

Students celebrate Prom as Sewell and Burch make King and Queen

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School hosted the 2019 Junior/Senior Prom at the Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park on Saturday, April 27.

The theme for this year's prom was from the classic children's book "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

As students entered the gym, they were greeted with a sign reading "Down the Rabbit Hole" that featured an arrow pointing toward a dark hole with roots, leaves, and spiderwebs leading them to the main dance floor.

Lady Cornett's soccer coach John Daniels got some help from his family to serve as DJ for the night, and they played a variety of music that the students loved.

The coach even put together a 90s hip-hop mix and, much to everyone's surprise, everyone knew the words and enjoyed Cornett's DJ skills.

Everyone was having the time of their lives that evening, but Cornett wasn't done—he had another surprise to add something new this year.



TCHS seniors Lance Sewell and Laura Burch as 2019 Prom King and Queen on Saturday, April 27. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

The gym went pitch black with the music playing, and from above the dance floor on the track, chaperones tossed hundreds of glow sticks on the dance floor, making the place go wild.

"DJing prom was a great opportunity to spend one last night with these students who I love," said Cornett. "It was

also a fun family activity for the Cornetts, and we love music and dancing."

The overall goal was to give the students a great night, and that's exactly what (prom organizers) Christa Houser and Sara Vardo do. This group of seniors is special to me, and one of the reasons is that my

See Prom, Page 8A

Carter denied bond after arriving at Union County Jail from North Carolina

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE—Crystal Carter was denied extradition from Clay County, North Carolina, into the custody of the Union County Sheriff's Office, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

Carter, of Hiwassee, is being held on an aggravated assault charge taken out by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation in reference to the September 2018 shooting of William Craig Henderson of Young Harris.

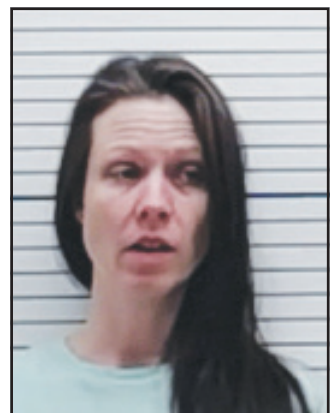
Following the shooting, Carter eluded authorities for more than seven months until her April 16, 2019, arrest at the Hayesville, North Carolina, residence of a man named Joseph Anderson Tiger.



Joe Tiger

Tiger was arrested on April 18 and charged with a felony for assisting Carter when she was a fugitive from justice.

"Clay County Deputies took Tiger into custody Thursday morning without



Crystal Carter

incident as investigators executed a search warrant at his residence," said the Clay County Sheriff's Office. "Evidence of Crystal Carter's crime was located and seized from inside Tiger's home, See Carter, Page 6A

Sons of Confederate Veterans remember those who fought in the Civil War



David Junghans and Mike Pettus of the Sons of Confederate Veterans David W. Payne Camp 1633 folding the Confederate flag on April 27, 2019. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE—Members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans David W. Payne Camp 1633 hosted their annual observance of

Confederate Memorial Day on Saturday, April 27, at the Union County War Memorial Park.

The ceremony opened with a pledge to the American and Georgia flags, and a salute to the Confederate flag.

Compatriot Greg White

read the Charge of Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee before the United Daughters of the Confederacy Smith's Legion Chapter 2699 placed a memorial wreath at the park's Confederate Monument, and Camp Cmdr. Mike Pettus.

See Confederate, Page 6A

January Term 2019 Towns County Grand Jury Indictments continued

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2019 of the Towns County Grand Jury, which met for a second time in April:

Dalton Travis Denmark, two counts aggravated child molestation; two counts enticing a child for indecent purposes; two counts statutory rape.

Daniel Caden Smith, statutory rape; child molestation.

Karlee Dale Payne, criminal damage to property in the second degree; criminal trespass; obstruction of an

officer. Andrew Chase Hogsed, sale of methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Emily Ann Silknitter, two counts possession of methamphetamine; two counts possession of drug-related objects; failure to maintain brake lights in good working condition; driving without a license; giving false information to a law enforcement officer.

Michael Thomas Patrick, criminal attempt to commit a felony; theft by taking; dangerous drugs – sale,

distribution, possession of dangerous drugs; drugs not in original container.

Michael Henry Beeman, driving while license suspended.

Christopher Wayne Best, theft by receiving stolen property.

Tony Dockery, two counts conversion of payments for real property improvements; theft by conversion (felony); theft by conversion (misdemeanor); four counts theft by taking (felony); two counts theft by taking (misdemeanor).

Amanda Auberry Dyer, See Grand Jury, Page 6A

Deputies execute search warrants, arrest three suspects on drug charges

News Special
Towns County Herald

Investigators and deputies with the Towns County Sheriff's Office recently obtained and executed two search warrants on separate investigations in the area.

The first search warrant was served at a residence

located on Hillcrest Spur in Hiwassee on Wednesday, April 17. Investigators had previously served a search warrant at this same residence on Dec. 11, 2018.

Seizure paperwork was filed on the residence as a result of the investigation last year, and both William and Bonnie

Fitzgibbons were arrested and charged with numerous drug offenses at that time and released on bond.

William and Bonnie Fitzgibbons were arrested a second time as a result of the search warrant executed at their residence on April 17.

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