

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, May 10, 2023

School Board votes to put ESPLOST on ballot

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In their May 1 meeting, Towns County School Board members approved a new 1-cent Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum for the purpose of raising money for needed capital improvement projects at the schools, like floor replacements, HVAC and more.

If voters approve the referendum this November, the local sales tax rate would increase in April 2024 by one penny on the dollar to 8%, replacing the longstanding 7% sales tax on eligible goods and

services.

The last ESPLOST passed in May 2016, and the schools pledged then to let it expire early in hopes of alternating SPLOST collections with the county every three years, on an ongoing basis, to keep the tax rate at 7% in the long run, and ESPLOST collections ceased in October 2020.

A county SPLOST passed on the June 2020 ballot to fund the major courthouse renovation and expansion project that is under construction now. At the time, the office of Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw estimated the project would require a full collec-

tion term of six years to build.

The county's SPLOST is set to expire in October 2026, but the schools have determined they'll need more money before then, especially in light of upcoming funding challenges.

School board members have lowered the property tax rate for years in Towns County, and to avoid the need to raise the rate, at least any time soon, the current slate of elected school officials is hoping that voters will support the ESPLOST in November.

Should the ESPLOST referendum pass electoral muster, the local sales tax rate

See ESPLOST, Page 6A



Towns County Board of Education members in their May 1 regular meeting.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Rhododendrons, Wine Fest at Fairgrounds this weekend

News Special
Towns County Herald

Come one, come all to the final weekend of the annual Rhododendron Festival, in full bloom through May 14 at the beautiful Hamilton Gardens inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

The festival will continue this Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday from 12-4 p.m.

Admission to the festival is free, with tours of the gardens available for \$6 per person. Enjoy crafters, live music, food, drinks, a plant sale, daily seminars and more.

"Spend a day in the most beautiful part of North Georgia - Hiawassee and the stunning Hamilton Gardens," per georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.



Every year, the Rhododendron Festival highlights the majestic beauty of the Hamilton Gardens, justifiably known as the Jewel of the Mountains inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

"This magical botanical garden is filled with native wildflowers like trilliums, shooting stars, and trout lilies, and more than 1,500 rhododendrons and native azaleas making it the largest collection in the Southeast!"

On Saturday, May 13, Troy Underwood, a seasoned musician and songwriter from Murphy, North Carolina, "will sing his heart out for you with his soulful Americana tunes!"

And new in 2023, also on See Festivals, Page 2A

The Beach Boys to have 'Fun, Fun, Fun' in Hiawassee

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will be giving off plenty of "Good Vibrations" next week when The Beach Boys return to Anderson Music Hall on Friday, May 19.

It will be the band's first local appearance since their 2017 show, and co-founder Mike Love promises fans all the harmony-filled hits they know and love in the format that he prefers - live in concert.

"We're going to have a great time," Love said. "We love it when people turn out and enjoy our music. If you're not a big fan of The Beach Boys, come along, and we're going to do our best to make you a fan."

"For those people who have been around a little while like we have, we'll take you down memory lane, that's for

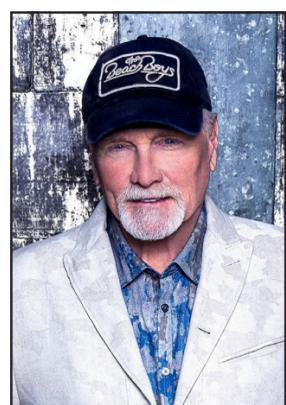
sure, and relive those memories of our younger days, and that's always fun."

Indisputably, The Beach Boys are one of the most iconic musical acts ever recorded, both in terms of commercial success and influence.

With a career that spans decades and dozens of instantly recognizable songs, the quintessential American rock band that started a genre is sure to put on a can't-miss performance when they land in Hiawassee.

The Beach Boys have enjoyed more than 80 songs charted worldwide, 36 as U.S. Top 40 Hits, and four reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

They have sold more than 100 million records worldwide, making them one of the world's bestselling bands of all time, and to this day, their songs appear every-



Mike Love
The Beach Boys

where in popular culture, from movies to commercials and the radio.

Fan favorite hits include "I Get Around," "Fun, Fun, Fun," "Kokomo," "Barbara Ann," "California Girls,"

See Beach Boys, Page 6A

TCSO K-9 Zeus assists arrest of 'known drug supplier'

News Special
Towns County Herald

Towns County Sheriff's Office Investigators have been investigating a known drug supplier for the area of Towns, Clay and Cherokee County, North Carolina.

The investigation came to an end on Monday, May 1, during a traffic stop at US 76 East/Georgia 288 when TCSO K-9 Zeus conducted a free-air search that resulted in an alert on the vehicle.

The Sheriff's Office confiscated from the suspect's person a large amount of methamphetamine laced with fentanyl and raw fentanyl, which field-tested positive. These drugs were headed to known drug dealers in the area, according to the Sheriff's

Office.

Alphonso Terrell Cloud, 39, of Lawrenceville, was arrested and charged with felony trafficking in meth; felony possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; felony possession of meth; felony possession of a controlled substance; felony crossing the guard lines with weapon/drugs/intoxicants; and obstruction of an officer.

Cloud was booked into the Towns County Detention Center, where he remains without bond. Investigation in the case remains active and ongoing.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated that he was pleased to have a supplier of deadly drugs out of the community. He would like to thank the



Alphonso Terrell Cloud

Cherokee County, North Carolina, Sheriff's Office and all involved for their assistance.

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

Chatuge Regional generates \$70 mill. for local, state economy

News Special
Towns County Herald

In 2021, Chatuge Regional Hospital generated \$69,656,000 in revenue for the local and state economy, according to a recently released report by the Georgia Hospital Association, the state's largest hospital trade association.

Chatuge Regional had direct expenditures of more than \$30,531,000 in 2021. The total economic impact of those expenditures was \$69,656,000 when combined with an economic multiplier developed by the United States Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

This output multiplier

considers the "ripple" effect of direct hospital expenditures on other sectors of the economy, such as medical supplies, durable medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.

Economic multipliers are used to model the resulting impact of a change in one industry on the "circular flow" of spending within an economy as a whole.

During the same time period, Chatuge Regional Hospital provided approximately \$2,078,000 in uncompensated care while sustaining more than 230 full-time jobs throughout Towns County and the region.

When a U.S. Department

of Commerce multiplier is applied to the jobs number, it is revealed that an additional 417 jobs are supported across the region due to the economic activity of Chatuge Regional Hospital.

The hospital spent \$17,488,000 in salaries and benefits, resulting in total household earnings in the community of \$34,888,000.

"Chatuge Regional Hospital is dedicated to providing timely, quality care to our patients and community," said Union General Health System CEO Kevin Bierschenk. "We are open 24 hours a day, seven

See Chatuge Impact, Page 6A

S.A.F.E. raises nearly \$8,700 with 2023 Fashion Show Fundraiser

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE - Support in Abusive Family Emergencies Inc., aka S.A.F.E., alongside Community Connections 101, held its annual Fashion Show and Silent Auction Fundraiser on April 29, raising in the process nearly \$8,700 for the family resource organization.

The event was about much more than clothing, of course, with an underlying meaning that has always been about finding confidence in oneself and turning love inward in a way that may just save a life.

That was where the speakers came in at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center

that Saturday. A survivor by the name of Cassandra introduced herself and her children, revealing that she had come to S.A.F.E. at the end of 2021 from Gwinnett County.

"I was scared, I was lost, I was confused, I didn't know what to expect," Cassandra said. "They made us feel comfortable. They made us feel at home. They made sure we had everything we needed, wanted. And if they couldn't find it around here, they took the time out of their busy schedules to make sure we had it."

"Words can't express how I feel. Thank you guys for everything. You are not just our advocates - you're our family. Because of y'all, we found our safe place, our home."

One familiar face was Keisha Tillery, who spoke at the organization's most recent Remember My Name Memorial Program to honor victims of domestic abuse. Despite the difficulty that came with reliving such trauma, Tillery relayed the story of the night she found help.

When she stepped up onto the stage, Tillery had to remind herself that she could tell her story. In October of 2020, she thought she was going to die. After being beaten, having a gun pointed at her head, and being dragged through the woods, she was rescued by local law enforcement.

Now, walking off the stage in April of 2023, she and her husband Rusty are expecting a baby girl this fall. She

surrounds herself in the love of her family and her faith in the Lord, living her best life despite her former abuser's attempts at snuffing it out too soon.

There were also two different auctions. The silent auction included gift cards to local businesses, gift baskets, artwork, home supplies and a range of other goodies that guests could check in on during intermissions.

Among other items, the live auction showcased a 43-inch flat-screen television, concert tickets and pre-paid trips for a day out with family on the lake or romantic getaways in Blue Ridge and Cleveland. Perhaps the most popular, however, was one of

See S.A.F.E. Fashion, Page 6A



S.A.F.E. and Community Connections 101 hosted a fun, family-friendly Fashion Show last month to benefit area survivors of domestic and sexual abuse.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

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

Lake Levels

Blue Ridge 1,685.93
Chatuge 1,924.85
Nottely 1,774.73

BASEBALL

ELITE EIGHT
5/10 @ ECI 3 PM

Reece Annual Meeting May 13 See page 3B

School Board Tentative Budget See page 6B

Plein Air Festival May 12-13 See page 2A



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Mountain Movers and Shakers Meeting Friday, May 12 at 8 AM

Our beautiful mountains and lakes draw visitors from all over the world. And the centerpiece of our region is the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. And to guide those visitors to all the many hidden splendors of our region, we have our Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce.

So, this Friday, May 12 we welcome to the Sundance Grill, the venerable GM Hilda Thomason of GMF, and Chamber President Julie Payne.

Miss Hilda may share some of the upcoming events, whether it be in the Anderson Music Hall, the Paris Pavilion, or the Old Fairgrounds and booths.

Lifelong Hiawassee resident Julie Payne stepped up as President of the Chamber of Commerce in October of 2022. She will speak of her plans for the continued growth of the Chamber, and of upcoming events throughout the area.

Get there early to get a good seat and hear about the many upcoming events for yourself and learn how you might get involved.



Hilda Thomason



Julie Payne

Towns County Libraries Book Sale



Please place the following dates on your calendars for the FOLTC book sale at

Mountain Regional Library, Young Harris, and Towns County Public Library, Hiawassee.

All items in the FOLTC bookstore at Mountain Regional Library will be on sale during regular library hours from May 15th through May 26th. Mountain Regional Library, 698 Miller St, Young Harris, is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 AM – 5 PM.

All items in the FOLTC bookstore at Towns County Public Library will be on sale during regular library hours from May 16th through May 26th. Towns County Public Library, 99 S. Berrong St., Hiawassee, is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 AM – 6 PM.

This will be an “honor system” book sale. Exact change or checks written to FOLTC must be placed in the bookstores’ red money box. Adult hardback books will cost \$1 each. Paperbacks and all children’s and young adult books will be \$.25 each or 5/\$1 . CDs, DVDs, and jigsaw puzzles will be \$.25 each. These are great deals, so shop early and often! All proceeds from the sale will benefit our Towns County libraries.

Visit the FOLTC website at www.foltc.com or follow on Facebook at Friends Of The Libraries Of Towns County.

Food Pantry Food Distribution

The Food Pantry hours are Monday – Thursday 9 AM– 12 PM with the exception of distribution day. The Distribution is every other Wednesday 11 AM – 2 PM.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Richard Thomas at towns.pantry@ndocsbg.org or (706) 896-4783.

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 May 8th & 22nd.

Plein Air Festival

The Top of Georgia Plein Air Festival is happening this week, May 12 and 13, in the beautiful Hamilton Gardens at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds!

Artists from New York to Florida are participating in the painting event and vying for \$2000 in prize money! Artists will set their easels up among the rhododendrons and azaleas, visitors can watch the artists’ canvases come to life with color and beauty.

The paintings will be judged on Saturday, May 13, from 1 - 2 PM. The artworks will then be available for purchase at the Wet Paint Sale from 2 - 5 PM, at the Hamilton Gardens Pavilion.

Come and experience this art happening sponsored by Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Hamilton Gardens, The Azalea Farm in Blairsville, Mountain Art Association, Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild.

For more information: togpaf@gmail.com.

Arrest and Fire Reports

Local law enforcement provides the following information for publication. Names are spelled as they were when received from the law enforcement agencies. It is important to remember that the following individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until such time as they are found guilty by a court or enter a guilty plea. Addresses of persons under arrest are no longer available from Sheriff’s Office.



ARREST REPORT

Towns County Jail
Sheriff Ken Henderson

- 05/01/23 Alphonso Terrell Cloud, age 39
Crossing state/county guard lines with weapons, intoxicants, drugs, without consent, possession of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute, trafficking in cocaine, illegal drugs, marijuana, or methamphetamine, willful obstruction of law enforcement officer-misdemeanor, possession, manufacture, distribute, etc, vcgs possession of fentanyl
- 05/04/23 Jeremy Ashley Jemlich, age 36
Housed for court
- 05/03/23 Barry Desha Murrell, age 46
Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-misdemeanor
- 05/04/23 Jody Richard Anderson, age 42
Overnight stay court sentenced
- 05/07/23 Jody Richard Anderson, age 42
Weekender-serving sentence
- 05/05/23 Gregory Thomas Breitenbach, age 43
DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol, drivers to exercise due care, driving while license suspended or revoked (misdemeanor), unlawful use of central lane

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE REPORT

From: Fire Chief Harold Copeland



- 04/29/23 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)
CO detector activation due to malfunction
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries
Assist police or other governmental agency
- 04/30/23 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)
- 05/01/23 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries
Alarm system sounded due to malfunction
Medical assist, assist EMS crew
Dispatched and cancelled en route
Removal of victim(s) from stalled elevator
- 05/03/23 Construction or demolition landfill fire
Medical assist, assist EMS crew (5)
Dispatched and cancelled en route
- 05/04/23 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.
Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional
Carbon monoxide detector activation, no CO
- 05/05/23 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)

Festivals...from Page 1A

Saturday, the Hamilton Gardens will be hosting its first annual Top of Georgia Plein Air Festival featuring outdoor painting.

“Come watch the artists in the largest Plein Air event in the southeast while they paint in the gardens,” according to the website. “Final judging and showing will begin at 3 p.m. in the Paris Pavilion. Many of the artists will be offering their completed work for sale – don’t miss out!”

But wait, there’s more – Saturday will also see the annual Hiawassee Highlands

Wine Festival running from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fairgrounds. Tickets will be \$60 in advance and \$65 at the gate, and guests will be able to purchase wine by the bottle to take home.

Hiawassee Highlands will be bringing more than 30 wineries, live music, plenty of photo opportunities, food vendors, arts & crafts, and tours of the Hamilton Gardens.

There’s plenty to do at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds this weekend, so head on down and enjoy it all while you’re there.

Towns County Democrats May meeting

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales will address the Towns County Democrats at their monthly meeting on Thursday, May 11.

The meeting will begin at 5:30 PM at the Towns County Civic Center, 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee.

Ordiales has been mayor of Hiawassee since the spring of 2017 when she moved from the Hiawassee City Council, where she had served for three years, into the position of mayor pro tem to complete an unexpired term. She was elected outright to the position in November 2018 and re-elected without opposition in November 2022.

With a professional

background in sales and management with AT&T, during her time in office Mayor Ordiales has stressed downtown development, business expansion, and technology enhancement for the city. The mayor will provide an update on downtown redevelopment plans and other current programs when she speaks to the Democrats on Thursday.

Ordiales has lived in Towns County for more than 20 years and has been active in the Towns County Fire Corps, Meals on Wheels, and Habitat for Humanity, and her church.

Towns County Democrats meet the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 PM at the Civic Center.

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Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month: School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday: Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
First Tuesday of each month: Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
Second Tuesday of each month: Conventions & Visitors Board... Civic Center	8 am
Second Wednesday of each month: Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month: Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month: Commissioner’s Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall Water Board... Water Office	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

ESPLOST ...from Page 1A

would remain 8% for at least two and a half years starting next April, and the Commissioner's Office would have to decide in 2026 whether to seek renewal of the county SPLOST.

Many counties benefit from concurrently running SPLOST and ESPLOST collections, but since Towns has a permanent Education LOST that most counties do not – helping to lower property taxes – local leaders have been hesitant to do both at the same time, to avoid an 8% sales tax.

But most counties have a sales tax above 7%, and Towns is one of only two Georgia counties that does not have an active ESPLOST, though school officials are hoping to change that this year.

As pointed out last week, grant monies and the 1-cent maintenance and operation Local Option Sales Tax help the system “keep up” with many projects, but it’s hard to go “above and beyond” like the system would be able to with ESPLOST in play.

The School Board realizes that additional taxes aren’t always popular with the public, but in addition to maintaining lower property taxes, the ESPLOST would be a sales tax that everyone would pay, visitors included, to be used for improvements deemed necessary to continue providing quality education to local children.

“It shouldn’t be about politics,” Board Chair Stephanie McConnell said. “It should only be about the needs of the school.”

The board has generated a list of prospective ESPLOST projects. McConnell identified the facilities at the ball fields, for example, and Berrong added that the waterline beneath the parking lots needs to be relocated and the parking lots themselves require repaving.

And it was noted that the HVAC system at the Elementary School should be reworked, with AC needing to be installed at the basketball gym, too, and the flooring in the three schools is due for replacement along with the football field bleachers.

Among other considerations, Berrong discussed the potential for ESPLOST-enabled enhancements of the new grant-funded Agriculture Facility that is expected to start construction next year.

“Obviously, we’re getting a grant (to build our new) ag facility, but if the SPLOST passes, then I don’t have to be restricted,” Berrong said. “Right now, we’re building an ag facility, but I’m being very careful on what we’re doing because we’re only getting about \$1.7 million.”

“Everyone I’ve talked to has said, ‘It’s going to cost you \$2.5 (million),’” added Berrong, who went on to explain that, should the ESPLOST come into effect, another \$500,000 could be used to augment the facility with a full cannery and commercial kitchen.

As described by Berrong, the E-SPLOST “runs in quarters,” so the board also had to decide when to start collecting it. In order to take advantage of the spring and summer tourism boost to sales tax collections, McConnell suggested that the tax be dropped in April if passed.

“I think we’d be giving up a lot if we waited,” McConnell said. “It’s one penny. It’s not groceries. It’s tax money on anybody who comes into the county, and it’s the best way to keep our real estate taxes low (in the next couple years).”

Behind-the-scenes ESPLOST deliberations have been ongoing for about a year, with officials examining the system’s finances and studying funding options leading up to the May 1 decision to go ahead with another ESPLOST vote.

In addition to rising costs due to inflation, the schools’ future revenue projections have become complicated for multiple reasons, starting with big increases in locally borne health care costs for non-certified staff like custodians, bus drivers, etc.

And state funding for student education is going down here, spurred by greater “local fair share” costs from pandemic-era increases to the property tax digest as people relocated to the county in recent years.

Further, the system is having to contend with homestead exemption refunds and, going forward, fewer property tax proceeds than anticipated due to the recent correction of a longstanding homestead exemption collection error.

Towns County still claims the lowest millage rate in the state, Finance Director Myra Underwood said in the

meeting, but at some point, “with the loss of revenue we’re getting this year and definitely after next year, that revenue’s going to have to be made up somehow.”

Essentially, the school system will be having to do more with less, especially if it hopes to keep from raising property taxes to fill the gap, hence school officials perceiving the need to attempt another ESPLOST.

Berrong said attorneys for the school “are already working on the RFP” concerning the ESPLOST, and once referendum language is ironed out, it will be sent to the Board of Elections to be added to this year’s municipal ballots to expand the November elections countywide.

The School Board decided on a \$15 million collections cap over the next five years because the system has been averaging about \$3 million a year in equivalent LOST collections, and the ESPLOST would cease upon reaching this cap, regardless of time left before the tax expired.

Moving on to talks about the new ag facility, Berrong suggested that Robertson Loia Roof, PC, handle the architecture of the building. The Alpharetta-based company has completed other projects for the schools, and the board agreed.

“They will help us with the (requests for proposals), get the construction manager, so they’re great to work with,” Berrong said.

In other discussions, Towns County Schools pays its employees monthly, and Berrong believes it has cost the system some potential hires.

“That’s an issue that we may need to start looking at as far as maintenance and custodial (positions) go,” Berrong said, noting that a low frequency pay schedule can be “hard for people” who have to wait so long to get their first paycheck. No official action was taken that evening.

Towns County High School Graduation will take place on Friday, May 19, at 8 p.m. on the football field in Frank McClure Memorial Stadium. If it rains, the event will be moved inside the Bill P. Kendall Basketball Gymnasium.

The School Board meets on the first Monday of every month in the Towns County Middle and High School Media Center starting at 6 p.m.

S.A.F.E. Fashion...from Page 1A

two handmade quilts.

The yellow floral quilt had a story attached to it. A longtime S.A.F.E. volunteer sewed it herself. That volunteer passed away months before the fashion show, but her daughter donated the quilt for the sake of the auction, and it ended up fetching \$330.

All that said, the main event was a must-see affair. A handful of models of all ages strutted, spun and skipped across the stage, showcasing different outfits and carrying themselves with astounding grace no matter the themes.

Every outfit – some including accessories like sunhats, shoes and jewelry – was available for purchase after being featured in the show. The same models were used for each category, given chances to change while the live auctions were called.

Beachwear started off the lineup, with models sporting tank tops, shorts, and sundresses. Moving into casual fashion and business, some ladies wore pantsuits or smart pencil skirts and blazers. Dress fashion was a bit more showy, with flowing dresses perfect for a “Mother of the Bride” look or a night out on the town.

Even a few bridal dresses wowed the audience, one featuring a train that trailed the floor behind the model. Bridesmaid dresses were also featured under the bridal category, with one peachy, pale



The proceeds from this handsewn quilt, made by a S.A.F.E. volunteer, helped the organization to raise a tremendous amount of funds for its cause on April 29.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

orange gown gathering particular attention.

By the end of the afternoon, S.A.F.E. had raised an astounding \$8,692 between concessions, silent and live auctions, and the outfits themselves. There’s definitely plans for the event to return next year, but in the meantime, folks should remember the overarching meaning.

The mission of S.A.F.E. is “to provide support, advocacy, and emergency shelter for victims of Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, and Sexual Abuse, regardless of gender

and to heighten community awareness of such abuse in Towns and Union counties.”

If you or someone you love is in harm’s way, call 706-379-1901 to reach the S.A.F.E. organization. Volunteers help with transportation, childcare, and provide general support for victims.

And as always, people may support S.A.F.E. by visiting its thrift stores at 27 Pinbrook Drive in Blairsville and 4134 Bonny Hill Drive in Young Harris. For more information, check out <https://www.safeservices.org/>.

Master Gardeners to Host Spring Plant Sale May 27th

Spring is here and for many it’s the time for tending gardens and sprucing up the yard. Gardening enthusiasts can stock up on flowers, shrubs, trees and native plants at the upcoming Towns-Union Master Gardeners Spring Plant Sale, Saturday, May 27. All proceeds help to build and maintain public gardens in Towns and Union Counties.

The plant sale will be open from 8 a.m. to noon at the Union County Farmers Market, located at 290 Farmers Market Way in Blairsville. All sales are cash or check only.

The many plants and seedlings available will include native, deer resistant, edible, and pollinator-friendly plants for sun and shade that thrive in Union and Towns counties, including many easy-to-grow plants for beginner gardeners.

All plants are grown lo-

caly, and the Master Gardeners will be on hand to help with your selection as well as to offer advice on planting, care, and maintenance.

Attendees can also tour the adjacent Gold Medal Garden, a demonstration garden that includes native and pollinator plants appropriate to our North Georgia region.

Admission and parking are free. Attendees are encour-

aged to bring their own bags, boxes, or tubs to carry plants. Pets are not permitted at the plant sale and the Union County Farmers Market will not be open that day.

To learn more about the UGA Master Gardener Extension Volunteer certification program, visit tinyurl.com/ugamg. Find free local gardening tips on the Towns-Union Master Gardeners website at perennialpals.com.

Beach Boys...from Page 1A

“Help Me Rhonda,” “God Only Knows,” “Little Deuce Coupe,” “Wouldn’t It Be Nice,” “Caroline, No,” “409” and so many more.

Regarding their iconic sound, The Beach Boys sparked a truly global phenomenon with their carefree, youthful style on “Surfin,” released in the fall of 1961 as the first original song the group performed together.

In a time of increased geopolitical tensions following the end of World War II and the ongoing Cold War, their innocent, fun-loving music was exactly what the world needed.

Capitalizing on their newfound success, The Beach Boys signed with Capitol Records in 1962 and debuted their next single, “Surfin’ Safari,” followed in ‘63 with “Surfin’ USA,” by which point their beach-soaked sounds from sunny Southern California had spread far and wide.

And the hits just kept on coming, leading up to one of the most critically acclaimed albums ever released, the revolutionary “Pet Sounds” album of 1966 that would even go on to influence the work of The Beatles.

The original Beach Boys consisted of brothers Brian, Carl and Dennis Wilson, their cousin Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine, and Love said their

legendary sound can be traced to childhood performances when they would all sing in church and at get-togethers at each other’s houses.

“We’re just ordinary people who were lucky enough to have a lot of music in the family,” Love said. “My mom had a grand piano, an organ and a harp in our living room when I was growing up, and we would have the Wilsons come over.”

“My cousins Brian, Dennis and Carl would come over all the time for special occasions – Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays – and there would always be music. It was all about music growing up in my household.”

As far as the music that influenced The Beach Boys – back when they were, in fact, boys – Love said they listened to “Chuck Berry and Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and all the doo-wop stuff, and the blues and R&B.”

“That was the kind of music my cousin Brian and I were attracted to,” Love said, “in addition to which, The Four Freshmen had this tremendous four-part ‘modern harmony’ (as) they called it back in the ‘50s and the ‘60s.”

“We took the Chuck Berry beat and put some nice harmonies on top inspired by The Everly Brothers with their blend, and we were very con-

scious about creating a sound that distinguishes The Beach Boys from so many other rock groups.

“So, it’s just been a lifetime of music, an amazing, miraculous, wonderful thing, because, for a bunch of guys who didn’t get together because of the money or the fame – there was none of that involved as a family, but we loved singing those harmonies.

“And for those harmonies to be so highly regarded by so many people for so many years, it’s a total blessing.”

The May 19 concert will feature two full hours of music with a brief intermission at the halfway point. Tickets cost just \$60 plus handling and can be purchased at <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/> or in person at 1311 Music Hall Road.

In addition to attending their live show next week, Love recommends people check out the CBS special titled “A Grammy Salute to the Beach Boys,” which premiered April 9 this year and can be streamed at <https://www.cbs.com/shows/a-grammy-salute-to-the-beach-boys/>.

The two-hour tribute was introduced by actor Tom Hanks and features a star-studded lineup of performers playing Beach Boys classics, including LeAnn Rimes, John Legend, Beck, Brandi Carlile, Fall Out Boy, Hanson, Lady A, Weezer and others.

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days a week and treat anyone who comes through our doors.

“We are proud to partner with Towns County to offer this care and ensure our communities thrive in terms of wellness as well as economically. We are dedicated to ensuring our residents

receive state-of-the-art health care services.

“We provide quality care to every patient, regardless of ability to pay. This environment often puts financial stress on our state’s hospitals.”

Hospitals can cope with negative operating margins in

the short term, but hospitals that are unable to realize and maintain positive operating margins will likely face closure sooner or later, which can be detrimental to the health and wellness of their communities.

According to Bierschenk, every community needs nearby access to a strong, vibrant health care system that will not only meet the health care needs of its residents, but also attract other industries and businesses to the area.

“Preserving access to health care is extremely important and we are the primary guardian of health in our community,” Bierschenk said. “A healthy community depends on the strength of its hospital, both financially and in treating patients.”