

Golf...from Page 1A

in love with it. I love every part of it, from putting to driving."

Travis remembers being new to the game in the eighth grade, and looking up to the older kids with more experience, which leads into yet another reason Travis so enjoys the game of golf.

Now that he's in the position to be one of those older kids he used to look up to, he likes teaching the younger kids how to play.

"That's really what's special to me about it, is teaching others, because I was there at one point, struggling through it," said Travis.

Travis finds the game of golf peaceful, and appreciates the calm he's able to derive from the sport. After all, golf has taught him how to better keep his cool in competition, especially when facing a few bad swings.

Looking forward to the upcoming state tournament, Travis said that he feels ready to embrace the challenges ahead of him.

"Last year, I got some experience under my belt playing at state," said Travis. "I'm seeing a new course, so I'm more curious, if anything, just to get down there and try out the new course."

"Obviously, I'm nervous, but I'm going to be prepared



Area Low Medalists Will Travis and Kenzie Jenkins of Towns County High School.

and ready in every aspect of my game, so I'm not as nervous as I was for area, because I'm going to have a lot more time to prepare."

The upcoming state tournament is particularly exciting for Towns County Golf Coach Brett Keller, as it will be a two-day tournament for the first time in GHSA history.

"It used to be a one-day, 18-hole tournament," said Coach Keller. "Now, it's a two-day, 36-hole tournament. You're going to get a truer champion with a golfer."

"At one-time, 18 holes, somebody can get lucky and make some shots. Two days in

a row? Golfers don't get lucky two days in a row. So, you're going to get a truer test of what kind of golfer you are in a team aspect."

Jenkins, the Girls 2017 Area Low Medalist, is a senior this year, and will attend Truett McConnell University in the fall on an athletic scholarship for golf.

The Towns County Golf Teams are:

For the girls, senior Kenzie Jenkins and sophomore Summer Swanson.

For the boys, senior John Watson, junior Chase Williams, sophomores Will Travis, Caleb Ledford, Danny Reagan, Kyler Garrett and Connor Kelley.

Gardeners...from Page 1A

festivities, welcoming all to the celebration of the next class of Master Gardeners Extension Volunteers and the future of horticulture in the three counties.

"This would not be possible without so many people," said Ayers. "I can't begin to name who all helped from the different counties to make this possible."

"This is one of several classes that I've been involved with and I'm excited to be here to join in this celebration with all of you for this big accomplishment."

Fannin County volunteers were recognized first, followed by Union and Towns County volunteers, rounding out to a total of 26 new Master Gardeners to join the program.

During the ceremony, graduates were announced and recognized by their respective county extension agent, with Master Gardener mentors proudly presenting each graduate with a certificate, a well-earned badge and sometimes a hug to go along with it.

"I've been so impressed with the enthusiasm and the passion presented by all of the trainees this year," said Melissa Mattee, Union and Towns County Extension Agent. "They have been amazing and they have renewed this program because it's been a long time since the program has had so many people willing to help."

"It's been a real pleasure and honor to grow with all of these volunteers and see what the future of the program is



UGA Extension Agent Melissa Mattee. Photo/Lily Avery

going to look like."

Along with the graduating volunteers, special awards and brightly colored, spring-blooming flowers were given out to Master Gardeners from all three counties who have gone above and beyond to further the reach of the extension office and help the community.

To become a Master Gardener, each volunteer must complete 40 hours of coursework, learning the ins and outs of horticulture, preservation and conservation to best serve the county and the community.

After the 40 hours of coursework has been completed, volunteers are then required to complete 50 hours of community service to reach the Master Gardener status. Every year following, each volunteer is required to complete 25 hours of

community service to maintain Master Gardener status.

"This year our trainees alone, in Union and Towns County, have contributed over 1,500 hours of the state's 6,000 hour total," said Mattee. "They have contributed a lot over this past year and they have really gone above and beyond, taking on projects of their own even."

"These volunteers are so important in keeping the extension offices running efficiently. I'm proud of all of these volunteers and look forward to their contributions to the community as Master Gardeners."

The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer horticultural educational training program sponsored by the Cooperative Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Georgia. Through this program, enthusiastic gardeners are provided with comprehensive education in research-based pest control practices and horticultural principals to use toward the betterment of their community.

Union County Master Gardener graduates included Charles Claypool, Elizabeth Claypool, Marty Dellinger, Donni Folenford, Christine Issa, Cindy Knickerbocker, Stella Krussell, Gail Mulford, Sheila Noiles, Jackie Smith and Debi Weaver.

Towns County Master Gardener graduates included Linda Jones, Doug Koke, Montana Stickeler and Carol Townsend.

For more information on the Towns - Union Master Gardener Association, visit the group's website at www.perennialpals.com.

Coins...from Page 1A

turnout gear, with an American flag background.

"This coin pays tribute to America's firefighters for their outstanding skill and devotion to duty in the service of our nation's towns and cities from coast to coast," read the coins' insert.

Not only did Winnie deliver enough coins for all the firefighters in Towns County, she also had previously given challenge coins to law enforcement officers within the Towns County Sheriff's Office and the Hiwassee Police Department, and she has plans to deliver challenge coins to employees of Towns County EMS as well.

"This is a thank you from our family to them, because they've got a thankless job," said Lee Troy, who is very proud of his daughter. "With the military, if you see a vet, you should shake his hand and tell him thank you. The fire department, they rarely get that."

Added Winnie Troy: "We want to let them know that they're appreciated."

When it came to Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland, Winnie set aside a special challenge coin just for him.

The chief's coin featured St. Florian, the patron saint of firefighters, on one side, and on the reverse, the image of firefighters raising the American flag at Ground Zero in commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

For his part, Chief Copeland said that Winnie and her father were heroes for recognizing their local first responders.



Winnie Troy, 14, attends Towns County Middle School. Here she is showing her appreciation with a hug for Lt. Justin Ledford of Towns County Fire Rescue. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

The chief also shared his appreciation for Lee Troy having signed up as a volunteer firefighter in Towns County several years ago, even though a back surgery prevented him from moving past the application stage.

"You're a hero, in my opinion, when you put your name on the application," said Chief Copeland. "Everything else, we're just doing our job. People like this - this is what we do it for. This is the heart of the job."

The firefighters who were on hand at Station No. 1 that day enjoyed meeting Winnie and her father, and they accepted the coins as tokens of appreciation for what they do day-in and day-out.

"It's a big-hearted thing to do," said Lt. Blake Taylor. "At times, we can have a really thankless job, but we

just appreciate it, especially somebody as young as she is, we just appreciate when people do something really nice like this."

For the firefighters and other first responders of Towns County, the men and women who enter dangerous situations whenever duty calls, normal interactions with their community is an important part of the job.

Chief Copeland, for example, loves it when residents stop in to the fire stations with their kids, and he gets to see the amazement on their faces as they tour the station and see all the equipment and big trucks.

Taken with that, the chief loves to hear about the community giving back to his firefighters.

"It makes our jobs worthwhile - it's what we thrive on," said Chief Copeland.

Nicholson...from Page 1A



Towns County Historical Society members listened to Dr. Nicholson on Monday, May 8, as he went through the history of medicine in Towns County. Photo/Lily Avery

with the Towns County Historical Society during its monthly meeting on Monday, May 8.

Dr. Nicholson was born and raised in Hiwassee, moving away only for schooling at Emory University and a residency in Macon before making his way back to Towns County.

Before all of that, before Dr. Nicholson received his license to practice or even came into the world, medicine in Appalachia was based largely on home remedies and doctors were scarcely found.

"Most of the people lived off the land," said Dr. Nicholson. "There were no phones, no electricity and medicine was pretty antique at that time also. A lot of people used home remedies made up of herbs and whatever people could find to boil in a little water and mix a little corn whiskey with it."

"That's what people treated sickness with most of the time. There wasn't a whole lot of medical care back then."

After the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II, the need for doctors became more prevalent, leading to several physicians in the area to treat basic illnesses and deliver babies.

While home remedies and herbal medicine still played a role in treating patients, stronger substances such as morphine and cocaine moved in to treat pain and infections, until penicillin made its breakthrough in the early 1940s.

Through the changes in medicinal concoctions, Towns County's very own Hooper Drug Store took care of it all. Founded in 1914, the store underwent several name changes and owners before becoming what is now known as the Rite Aid in Hiwassee.

Not long after penicillin appeared on the scene, and the creation of Lake Chatuge brought more business, came the proposition for a hospital in Hiwassee. Since Gainesville, Murphy, North Carolina and Franklin, North Carolina each

already had a hospital of its own, it seemed only fitting that Towns County do the same.

"Back in August of 1944, a bunch of business men got together to discuss how to develop a hospital in Towns County," said Dr. Nicholson. "They got looking into it and found that they had to have a hospital authority and it had to be appointed by the ordinary, or what's called the commissioner now."

"The authority was a group of citizens who were interested in the county and the city affairs."

After a \$5,000 donation that same year to begin the hospital fund, the authority named the hospital the Lee M. Happ Jr. Memorial Hospital and construction planning began.

Two years later in 1946, the United States Congress enacted the Hill-Burton Act, which gave hospitals and care facilities grants and loans for construction and modernization. The Towns County Hospital Authority took full advantage of the act and applied for the federal grant.

"In September of 1947, a \$20,000 bond issue was voted on and passed by 90 percent," said Dr. Nicholson. "So, the authority hired an architect and they started the building. The initial building was a wood frame with brick veneers."

"Then, the hospital was dedicated on Nov. 4, 1951."

Both private and semi-private rooms made up the 13-bed hospital, each costing under \$20 a night for patients. Lee M. Happ Jr. Memorial Hospital was a full-service hospital when it opened, complete with an emergency room, laboratories, a delivery room and an operating room.

In 1960, the Johnson Wing was added to the hospital and the name was changed to the Towns County Hospital - a year before Dr. Nicholson joined the hospital staff as a full-time physician.

After being open for only 16 years, the hospital experienced a tragedy when the attic caught fire in 1967. Almost

40 percent of the hospital was destroyed from the flames and all patients had to be moved to Andrews, North Carolina or Blairsville, where doctors were given temporary privileges to continue providing care at either hospital.

"The fire really brought about some of the best community spirit you'll ever see," said Dr. Nicholson. "We had groups from Towns, Union and Clay County come out in force to help clean up the damage and clean up the water damage and the mess that we had."

"Somehow, in four days we were back in operation. A lot of stuff was in temporary quarters. The emergency room became the delivery room, we had beds in the hall with curtains around them and we got by."

After the fire, with the combination of grants, insurance money and donations, the hospital was able to rebuild, plus some, bringing the total number of beds to 42. Along with the hospital renovations, a 30-bed nursing home was built, first opening in October 1971.

In the years that followed, several more renovations and constructions were made to both the hospital and the nursing home to account for the increased population of the county.

Until the 1990s, the hospital continued to prosper until the high number of Medicaid and Medicare patients rendered financial problems for the hospital. In 1994, the hospital underwent one final name change to the Lake Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home before finally being acquired by Union General Hospital in 1999.

After decades of helping the people of Towns County, Dr. Nicholson retired in the summer of 1999.

"I couldn't think of anything else I'd enjoy doing," said Dr. Nicholson. "Hiwassee was good to me and Towns County was good to me. I certainly don't regret coming back here to practice."

White...from Page 1A

solving crossword puzzles and word searches, and staying in touch with her friends, like recently retired Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, whom she thought of as a sister.

Banister Funeral Home was in charge of White's arrangements, which occurred

over the weekend.

White is survived by her sons and daughters-in-law; Clevey and Nenita White, and Stacey and Audrie White, all of Hiwassee; sister, Janice Davenport; grandson, Dylan White; and great grandson, Jax White.

Pallbearers for White included Nathan Edwards, Dylan White, Carl Grizzle, Kevin Grizzle, Randy Warne and Dale Penland, with Honorary Pallbearers being Byron Davis, Michael Phillips and Matthew Phillips.

Walls...from Page 1A

In 1996, Walls left the sheriff's office to join the Hiwassee Police Department, where he would assume the role of acting police chief some 20 years later, following the December 2015 death of Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright.

Walls became the official police chief of Hiwassee PD in the May 2016 Hiwassee City Council meeting, when he was hired among a pool of several qualified candidates.

He served that position faithfully until mid-March of this year, when he became ill and took some time off to recover.

On March 24, then Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis authorized HPD Lt. Paul Smith to serve as acting police chief for the city, and following Walls' retirement, Smith will stay on as acting police chief until the position is filled.

The city plans to do its due diligence in accepting applications for the job, though Ordiales did say that Walls recommended Smith to fill his position as chief.

"Paul has been doing a

great job of stepping up and being the acting police chief," said Ordiales. "He will continue to be the acting police chief until we determine who the next police chief is going to be."

Continued Ordiales: "Paul is a strong internal candidate for that position, but I am going to put an ad in the paper for resumes to be submitted to see what we have, and we will take it from there."

As previously reported, Acting Chief Smith said he's ready for the job.

"Arvel and I have been trying to share as many responsibilities as we could so that I would be prepared when he decided to retire," said Smith. "So, we've been kind of building up to this."

Smith graduated Towns County High School in 2003, and went on to study criminal justice at Kennesaw State University.

While in Kennesaw, Smith joined the Cobb County Police Department in 2006, finishing top of his class at the police academy there.

He stayed with Cobb County for three years before

moving back to Towns County in 2009 to be closer to home.

It was in 2009 that Smith went to work for the Towns County Sheriff's Office, though Chief Wright hired him in 2010 to work for Hiwassee PD, where he's been ever since.

Over the last seven years, Smith has moved up in rank several times, first under Chief Wright, who promoted him from officer to corporal, then sergeant, and then under Chief Walls, who promoted him to lieutenant.

Now, as acting police chief, Smith has vowed to build upon the work of his predecessors, which has been apparent in the police department's higher number of drug arrests year to date.

Smith has said that it's not so much that crime is up, but that he and his fellow officers have made it a priority to go after drugs this year.

HPD Acting Chief Smith, Sgt. Tracy James and Officer Jordan Guffey have been joined by two new hires.

Brandon Barrett is now working as a full-time officer for the city, and Tony Verdone is taking on a dual role as the city's new code enforcement officer and as part-time police officer.