

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 93 Number 29

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Smith, Markham and Livingston earn top honors

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Senior Honors Day on May 13 with an auditorium packed full of proud family members and friends of the Class of 2022.

Comprised of 67 students, 21 of whom will be graduating with Honors or High Honors, the Class of 2022 will accept their diplomas in commencement exercises at Frank McClure Memorial Stadium on Saturday, May 21, at 10 a.m.

And last Friday, resounding cheers and the click of camera shutters followed the impressive feats attached to each name as seniors dressed in Towns County blue robes strode across the stage in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium to reap the rewards of their labor.

"We're glad that you all

are here today," greeted Principal Roy Perren that morning, speaking to students and audience members alike.

Joseph Goble, presenting the Academic Excellence Scholarship on behalf of Advanced Digital Cable, offered moving words as well as some humor to highlight the bittersweet occasion of guardians seeing their children growing up.

"Parents with graduating students – yes, this day is real," Goble observed as a murmur went through the crowd. "Your days of talking back and clothes on the floor, dirty rooms and asking for money are soon to come to an end. Maybe.

"But we must remember the greatness that they have achieved and the journey of love that you have shared with them, and more importantly, now see the experience of a new level of life."

What followed was a

hefty presentation of scholarships that will lighten the load of many students' college tuition costs, with contributions by local organizations such as Chatuge Regional Hospital, Appalachian Shriner Society, Towns County Lions Club, Young Harris College and more.

With the presentation of Completion of 2022 and Honors, the Class of 2022 Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Historian were revealed respectively as Bazya Gabryelle Smith, Alison Paige Markham and Rylie Kate Livingston – the top three grade earners of their class.

Bazya Smith was previously recognized in February for her achievement as 2022's STAR Student, but being named the Valedictorian was something she had dreamed of ever since sixth grade.

"It's kind of like a symbol
See Senior Honors Day, Page 8A



Towns County High School Class of 2022 Valedictorian Bazya Smith, Historian Rylie Livingston and Salutatorian Alison Markham on Senior Honors Day May 13, with Principal Roy Perren.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Baccalaureate Service honors tradition ahead of graduation



TCHS Class of 2022 seniors are thrilled to be graduating on Saturday, pictured here in their Sunday Baccalaureate Service.
Photo by Jeremy Foster

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Inspiring feelings of accomplishment and faith were without a doubt present on Sunday, May 15, inside McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Hiwassee for the Towns

County High School Class of 2022 Baccalaureate Service.

The seniors, their parents, families and school staff all enjoyed the afternoon of celebration in a traditional setting filled with uplifting messages delivered by several church pastors giving the students key insights and advice to reflect on

as they prepare for the next leg of their journeys.

High School Principal Roy Perren was in attendance to honor his students, saying before the event that he was "extremely proud of this great group of kids."

"As this was not official
See Baccalaureate, Page 5A

County secures construction manager for renovations

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

At a special called meeting May 12, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Reeves-Young Construction Senior Vice President Chad McLeod signed a contract for the SPLOST-funded renovation and addition project of the Towns County Courthouse.

"We're excited to get started on this project," Bradshaw said.

Bradshaw also signed a contract with C.W. Matthews Contracting Co. Inc. of Marietta to supply asphalt for the courthouse project. The contract locks in the price of \$96.80 per ton until the end of 2022.

Following the special called meeting, Bradshaw, McLeod, several Reeves-Young officials, Kevin McOmber of design firm CPL, and Brent



Chad McLeod of Reeves-Young Construction shaking hands with Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw in the May 12 county meeting.
Photo by Mark Smith

Cody of Blake Rainwater & Associates assembled for the first preconstruction meeting of the project.

"Preconstruction is the efforts of the (construction manager at risk), which is Reeves-Young, to work with both the owner and the designer in a sort of three-way partnership to come up with a
See Renovation Project, Page 8A

Naomi Molina honored for winning statewide essay contest

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's not often that a fifth grader wins a school writing contest, let alone a state essay award. But that's exactly what Towns County Elementary School student Naomi Molina did this year by winning the Young Georgia Authors contest among all fifth-grade participants in the state.

At the May 9 regular meeting of the Towns County Board of Education, attending with her family, Molina was recognized for her outstanding essay that serves as an imaginative study of the consequences of not following the Golden Rule.

"The Golden Rule has reversed," said TCES Principal Shannon Moss, lamenting a trend he is increasingly observing in society today. "It is become much about 'do unto your neighbor before they do unto you.' And that is just wrong.

"(Naomi) wrote an essay titled 'The Vengeful Plum,' and it's very much about the opposite of what I was just talking about," he said, adding that her essay may be published commercially.

Indeed, Molina has exhibited a level of understanding in her work that transcends the ages.

"So, Naomi, I appreciate it," Moss said. "And it

very much points out that two wrongs do not ever make a right. I'm very proud of Naomi. I'm proud of the support she gets at home and the support she gets here at school."

During a budget public hearing that preceded the regularly scheduled meetings that evening, School Finance Director Myra Underwood updated board members on the proposed tentative General Fund budget of \$15.727 million, which is up \$1.2 million from the current budget.

The main reasons for the increase are the state-mandated \$2,000 salary increase for certified teachers, 75 cents per hour raise for non-certified employees, base salary STEP
See Naomi Molina, Page 8A

Special Olympics makes triumphant comeback in '22



The Towns County Special Olympics Team making a proud lap around Mike Colwell Field in Blairsville Thursday.
Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Preparations for the 2022 Special Olympics began early out on the Mike Colwell Memorial Field the morning of Thursday, May 12.

Thirty minutes before the Opening Ceremony, McConnell Memorial Baptist Church of Hiwassee was there setting up grills to prepare over 400 hot dogs, and Union County High School students, from sports players to club members, were helping to organize and set up chairs, tents, and prepare for the honored athletes they would be helping in a matter of minutes.

2022's Special Olympics was an unprecedented event, being at the grandest scale longtime organizer Becky Tracy had ever seen.

"We have 181 participants today," Tracy said, and that was only taking the athletes into account. "Frito Lay is donating the chips, and Aaron's Rent to Own in Murphy is donating our waters and Gatorades. The Kiwanis Club has made donations (of) tents and cornhole boards, so (it's) just the whole community coming together."

The most prominent change this year was that athletes came from three different counties. Union County's students and adults participated, as did the students of Towns County, but for the first time in the history of Blairsville's iteration of the competition, Rabun County students traveled over the mountain to get in on the fun.

Lynn Talley, a special education teacher from Rabun, said she and her team were "so grateful to be a part of what's

going on over here."

On behalf of her hometown, Talley was delighted for their inclusion in the Special Olympics, adding, "It is magnificent ... and their family is wonderful ... It was great, and we love seeing all the crowd here." It's very likely that they will return in future years.

Union County students represented their school in purple shirts, with Towns County in blue and Rabun in red, while the Masters Adult Division from Avita Community Partners sported burgundy.

Making up each of the school-aged teams were kids ranging from elementary to high school, with the oldest – high school seniors – getting ready to graduate in a few days. As for the divisions of the actual sports, there were four levels based on the amount of
See Special Olympics, Page 8A



L-R: TCES Fifth-Grader Naomi Molina, second from right, with family members Jim Dolens, Elaine Hutchings, Madison Molina and Jeff Hutchings in the May School Board meeting.
Photo by Mark Smith

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See Special Graduation Section Inside This Paper

The Towns County Election Results Newspaper will be available on Wednesday, May 25, after 10 a.m. See our Special Insert next week for details and results from the May 24 Elections. Also see www.townscountyherald.net.

Baccalaureate...from Page 1A

cially tied in with the school, the baccalaureate is always a unique and very close and personal way to have a faith-based sendoff for the students as they begin to take their next steps of their futures," he said.

Added Perren, "I know all of these kids will follow their dreams and achieve them, and I am so thankful for this community and the support we get from the people of Towns County."

The service began with a short sermon from School Resource Officer and Enotah Baptist Church Pastor Donnie Jarrard, whose message centered on following Jesus and having faith through any trials in life, as that will bring the most success after having come this far.

Jarrard then introduced the song and worship portion of the evening with McConnell Children's Pastor Steve Awtrej playing guitar and lead vocals, his wife Virginia as backup vocals, and Associate Pastor Danny Byers playing the bass.

When the music was over, Pastor Bradley Thomas of Macedonia Baptist Church shared an interactive sermon with a message to students to not wait around to get where they are wanting to go or there will be missed opportunities.

Illustrating his point, Thomas held up a Starbucks gift card and said, "Whoever wants this gift card, come up here and take it; that is all you have to do."

After a small hesitation, a student came up and simply accepted the free gift. Again, Thomas held up another gift card, saying whoever wanted



McConnell Baptist Church Student Pastor Jeremy Pearson addressed Class of 2022 seniors in their Baccalaureate Service May 15, offering a message about upholding Christian values as they make their way in life. Photo by Jeremy Foster

it could come up and take it.

Immediately, a student charged up there and took the envelope, only for it to be completely empty. His point? Do not simply wait around for your opportunity but chase it like you would your faith and relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Before Associate Pastor Byers gave his closing prayer and well wishes for the students, serving in his sixth baccalaureate, McConnell Student Pastor Jeremy Pearson touched on the importance of narrow-mindedness in the world.

Gaining his inspiration from Proverbs 3:5-6 and Matthew 7:13-14, Pearson said that the "Christian worldview is under attack because it is called 'narrowminded'; Jesus said, 'The way is narrow.' It is a difficult path to follow, but following it with God, he blesses that."

Speaking on his message afterward, Pearson said he wanted to remind the soon-to-be graduates to hold true to their values and their faith, which will lead them and guide them.

"This place is such a tight-knit community," Pearson said. "The students here have such an opportunity because this a place where everyone, from the schools to the churches, the judicial systems, and the Sheriff's Department and others, are so focused on the next generation. We are literally all in this together and for each other."

"It was such a blessing to come here tonight and see these wonderful kids, who I will miss if they do not stick around, and to come into the church and have that spiritual focus as a part of their graduation to prepare their hearts for the world."

Ladies Nite Out "Fun"-Raiser featuring Quarter Auction, Dinner, Soloist & Speaker

Where can you spend a maximum of eight quarters (\$2.00) and win a great gift? At a Quarter Auction! This "fun-raiser", delicious dinner and program, hosted by the Tri-County Women's Connection, Thursday, June 16, 6 - 8 PM. Doors open and check-in begins at 5:30 PM. The venue is the banquet room of the Community Center, 129 Union County Recreation Road, Blairsville overlooking spectacular views of the mountains and Butternut Creek Golf Course.

Quarter Auctions are a blast so be sure to bring lots of quarters. At check-in, auction participants will receive a numbered paddle and list of auction items. Items will be displayed so you can plan your bidding strategy in advance. Auctioneer will describe each item and required number of quarters - one, two, three or four. If you want to bid on an item, place your quarters in your table bin and raise your numbered paddle. Keep your "Paddle Up" until the auctioneer pulls the winning number. If the person with the winning number did not bid, then another number is pulled until there is a winner. The proceeds from the Quarter Auction will benefit Stonecroft, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that meets women "where they are, as they are" and connects them with their community and each other.

Upcoming Truett McConnell University freshman, soloist Rachel Reid has "the music in" her and brings it for our enjoyment. She loves writing, reading, studying, spending time with family and



Bob Saget & Debra Stipe

friends. Rachel plans to major in Global Studies.

Actress Debra Stipe will be talking all things inspiring...like pursuing your dreams, being your best self, and oh...Full House stories! Debra is a wife, mother, Airbnb Superhost, professional actress and coach. Originally from the Chicago area and a graduate of Northwestern University, she worked as an actress in Los Angeles for 8 years and now calls Atlanta home.

You may recognize Debra from the comedy series, Full House, the recurring character of Cindy, girlfriend of Danny Tanner. More recently she played NFL legend Terry Bradshaw's wife in the feature film Father Figures, with Owen Wilson & Ed Helms. She recurs as baby doctor Dr. Raston on Tyler Perry's drama series, If Loving You is Wrong, and recurred as Pat on In The Heat of The Night. She's worked with Julia-Louis-Dreyfus, (that's Elaine from Seinfeld)

Angela Lansbury, Bruce Willis and Ellen DeGeneres to name a few. She owns Stipe Studio where she trains students in on-camera acting and her hope today is to inspire you to Dare to Dream!

The \$25 ticket price covers dinner and program. Mail your check, payable to TCWC, to Jocelyn Bowers, 3324 Jones Creek Road, Blairsville, 30512. Checks must be received by Thursday, June 2 to reserve your seat. Sorry no cancellations after June 2. The dinner menu offers your choice of meat or vegetable lasagna, salad, vegetables, rolls, dessert, water, tea or coffee. If you have any questions, please call Jane at 706-838-5599.

For more than 35 years, the Tri-County Women's Connection in Blairsville has planned and hosted luncheons for women that provide a positive, upbeat time of fun, food and friendship. Our group is not a club or association, and no membership is required.

The Lake Chatuge Rotary Club meeting with Towns County High School Students of the Month



L-R: Hannah Wecker, Isaac Cartee, Emily Vargas, Bazya Smith, Rylie Livingston, Macy Brinson, Collin Crowder, and Dr. Kirk Vardeman



The Lake Chatuge Rotary Club met on May 10, 2022, at noon at Brasstown Valley Resort.

At the onset of the meeting, Rotarians were given ballots with which to vote for the "Citizen of the Year". This is the recognition of one person (who is not a Rotarian) from Towns or Clay Counties, that has gone above and beyond to make a difference in one

or both of those counties. The winner will be announced at the June 24 Rotary Crossover Dinner, and we will send that information to this Newspaper for publication.

The Rotary Club was pleased to have in attendance both the Principal of Towns County High School and the Superintendent of Towns County Schools. The main focus of this Rotary meeting was to recognize all of the Students of the Month from this past school year, and hear updates from those students as to what their plans would be

after graduation.

Pictured are the Students of the Month who could attend the meeting. The Lake Chatuge Rotary Club will offer scholarships to the Students of the Month, to help them further their education beyond high school.

The meeting closed with a quote from George Saunders: "Do all the other things, the ambitious things — travel, get rich, get famous, innovate, lead, fall in love ... but as you do, to the extent that you can, err in the direction of kindness." TMay18,F2)JH

Special Olympics...from Page 1A



Of the many activities available for students in the 2022 Special Olympics, the soccer kick was a particularly popular event. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

help an athlete needed to run a course or complete a task.

“Level 1 (is) for those who are completely independent and can do it on their own,” Tracy explained. “Level 2 means they might need somebody close by to keep an eye (out) in case they need a little assistance. Level 3, they might have somebody running next to them or helping them just a little bit. Level 4 would be full assistance from a peer or a parapro.”

But students and teachers weren’t the only ones cheering on athletes. From the grandstands, Union County students of varying ages slipped out of class for a time to root for their team, and some even made posters to hang up in celebration of their friends.

Parents also came out to support their children no matter the age. At 26, Tracy’s own son was part of Avita’s adult team, but his history with the event is extensive, with him having been a participating athlete since the age of 8.

To start the Opening Ceremony, Union County student Chad Jensen led athletes and guests alike in prayer before Joseph Ferris, a Union County High School senior, offered a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. Tracy herself led the athletes in repeating the Special Olympics Oath:

“Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

With that, the 2022 Special Olympics officially kicked off. Activities included racing, softball, soccer kicking and more, although athletes were free to wander the field and explore some of the tents on the periphery, like the bubble-blowing booth.

Parents and caretakers had the opportunity to check out “Not Your Average Autism Mom,” a supportive sisterhood that hosts podcasts and offers training, advocacy programs and “proven strategies and techniques to help you manage your own wellbeing along your autism parenting journey.”

Other volunteers stayed out in the sun, like the Interact Club, the members of which worked on painting faces – and arms.

“We wanted to serve our community, and we said, ‘Special Olympics are coming

held in about three years.

It was no secret that COVID-19 dampened the spirits of many. With no safe way to combat the restlessness that tends to grip people and especially kids around the onset of summer, many athletes and their caretakers faced personal challenges of endurance with no outlet for such restless energy.

Susan Reilly, an educator from Towns County, knows how important the event is to her students, adding to the overall positive, vibrant vibe with, “These kids have been waiting to do this, and they have such fun. I’m glad we’re able to open up and get back together as a family for these special events.”

Student John “Coy” Mull, 13, was excited to be back on the field to continue his five-year tradition of running the track. It was also a bonus that he was reunited with his friends, much like the case of Will Figg and Judah Makai Batyehurt, a duo of young Towns County students.

“I like soccer and running,” said Figg, with Batyehurt agreeing that his favorite activity to participate in was soccer.

Heading up the Avita line in the starting procession was Ben Gregory and his girlfriend, Sabrina, the latter of whom loves “being outside because I can get a little suntan ... I don’t like the rain. When you’re stuck in there, inside with no sun, you get white skin.”

But nobody was inside when, finally, in 2022, they were able to return to the field. In fact, to symbolize their triumphant return, the Special Olympics shirts featured art of a flexing bicep to show that trainers, coaches, parents, teachers and especially the participants themselves were back and stronger than ever.

Flexing their muscles and proving their mettle earned the participants some shiny medals to take home, too, with 65 earning Gold, 45 earning Silver, and 115 earning Bronze. At the end of the day, though, it wasn’t about the awards or the glory.

“It doesn’t matter if they win or lose,” observed Tracy, “they’re going to have the biggest smile on their face and have the best time. It’s their day to shine.”

Stanger agreed, smiling as she watched athletes race around the track. “I love watching them.”

Union County football player Jensen Goble, 16, walked away from the event having made new friends, like Rabun student Isabelle Adler, to whom he personally presented a bronze medal. After looking through a different lens for a day, he had a message for anyone in the community who might be thinking about participating in future Special Olympics.

“Just come out here and have fun and have a blast and love everything you can,” Goble said. “Bless everybody that you can.”

It should be noted that

Towns County High School Athletic Director and Assistant Principal Jim Melton, standing in for TCHS Principal Roy Perren, said the high school was also awarded a Future Engineer Grant through Project STEM.

Both the middle school and high school grants will be implemented next year.

Melton said it looks like there will be 67 high school students graduating this year. Graduation will be at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 21, on the football field. In case of inclement weather, graduation will be in the high school gym.

The 2022-23 TCHS Teacher of the Year, announced Melton, is Sabrina Garrett.

Resignations were accepted from Bus Driver Jacquelyn Yeomans, Special Ed Paraprofessional Craig Gienger, Preschool Special Ed Teacher Jessica Latty, and Math Teacher Wade Hodges.

New hires are Preschool/Kindergarten Special Ed Teacher Tammy Lott, Elementary Special Ed Teacher Teresa Davis, and Math Teacher Josiah Kough. Lott and Davis were recommended by Special Ed Director Michelle Pyrluk. Kough was recommended by Perren.

And finally, Heath Lee, Director of the Mountain Regional Library System, and Towns County Library Branch Manager Marlene Cannon introduced the new PLAY Card program. The acronym stands for Pines Library Access for Youth.

The PLAY Card program “gives students free access to fines-free public library materials and online resources to help them succeed in school and improve literacy skills.”

Goble and his teammates, along with volunteers from the Union County Softball and Baseball Teams, received special thanks from Tracy for their involvement.

Additionally, shout-outs went to the Union County Key Club, the Union County Main-

tenance Department, Union, Towns and Rabun Transportation, the Union County Recreation Department, Union County Schools Police, and, of course, all the staff, parents, and fans cheering on their loved ones from the sidelines.

The Special Olympics

are expected to return this fall around October and November, featuring indoor sports such as basketball and bowling.

For more information, call Becky Tracy at 706-835-4351 ext. 1546, email her at btracy@ucschools.org or visit parentmentors.org.

Senior Honors Day...from Page 1A



Seniors of the Towns County High Class of 2022 were celebrated for their performances in everything from academics to arts and athletics on Senior Honors Day last week.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

of all my hard work to me, personally, because it took a lot of work, I’m not going to lie,” said Smith, noting how grateful she feels to have earned the position she has hoped for and worked toward for years.

Being named Valedictorian, Smith serves as the face of her class, and she wants to recognize the hard work of her classmates when she delivers her Valedictory Address to her fellow graduates Saturday morning.

“I’m a little nervous about the speech,” Smith said. “I want to be able to make everybody feel connected to the school.”

Despite a passion for art and experience in cross country and soccer, Smith has been inspired by her parents’ work at Serendipity Clinic and wants to pursue the study of dermatology starting with a pre-med degree from Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus in Savannah.

For her part, Alison Markham said she wasn’t expecting to be named Salutatorian. In fact, when she was pulled into Perren’s office for the good news, she assumed she was in trouble.

But now that she’s been recognized, Markham is nevertheless affording herself some satisfaction, describing the accomplishment as “cool,” “fun” and making “my family proud.”

Although Markham said she isn’t fond of public speaking, her grasp of humor works in her favor as a very natural charm and will undoubtedly aid her come graduation speech time.

In just a matter of months, Markham will be at Young Harris College, starting on a path that will lead her to a major in marketing. She mentioned already running her own business, having practiced her love of photography on the sidelines of her academic career.

“As soon as I figured out that I might be able to run in college, I pretty much put everything into running,” she said, adding that her two passions of cross country and photography will fuel her pursuit of a career as a sports photographer.

Towns County is one of the few schools around that recognizes the third-ranked graduating senior as Class Historian, who is tasked with documenting class achievements.

Before being named Historian, Rylie Livingston served as the captain of the Towns County Lady Indians Soccer Team and was designated the top female athlete among her peers.

“I think that my biggest role is to honor my class’ past and talk about all our good memories together,” Livingston said. “It’s a big thing. Most of us have been together for a really long time.”

“We’ve been making memories since Day One, and this is a time where we’re reflecting on the past and looking back. And I think in my speech, I really want to highlight all the good things we’ve done together.”

Added Livingston, “Even though our school is small, we’re all really close. I think my grade (is composed of) very selfless, good people.”

For her own future, Livingston looks forward to attending the University of Georgia and majoring in journalism and thanks to her love of reading and writing.

“I’m hoping to be an editor of some kind or work at a publishing place – I think that’d be nice,” she said.

Naomi Molina...from Page 1A

increases, teacher certification upgrades dictating pay increases, and costs for utilities, fuel, energy and shipping.

Underwood presented the proposed budget along with the fact that, depending on the amount of tax revenues to be generated, the ending General Fund equity will range from \$6.7 million to \$7 million, leaving the school system in a great position to weather any downturn in the economy.

The board voted to advertise the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Towns County Board of Education Tentative Budget in the county’s legal organ, the Towns County Herald, with adoption of the budget anticipated in the June 6 regular meeting.

Board members approved the March 2022 Financial Statements as well, with Underwood saying that tax receipts continued to be high compared to this time last year.

The board also approved a policy revision reflecting that “any bid” instead of “any project” over \$100,000 must be a closed bid through a general contractor/construction manager.

School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berong said the change in policy language would enable the system to self-bid small projects with individual bids below \$100,000, thereby saving the schools from having to incur construction manager fees in a closed-bid process.

Moving along, the board discussed and approved the increase in breakfast and lunch prices for adult and student meals. This is in anticipation of

the state discontinuing the pandemic-related state subsidized free nutrition program for next school year.

“With the prices of everything going up and with the possibility that we will no longer have free lunches and breakfasts for all students next year, prices are going to go up for adults and for students,” Berong said. “Breakfast price for adults will go to \$2.50, visitors \$3; lunch will be \$4.50, visitors \$5. Breakfast for students will be \$2 and lunch for students will be \$2.50.”

Underwood urged parents of students who qualify for the pre-pandemic free nutrition program to get their paperwork in before the start of the next school year so they will not experience any hardship.

Moving along, Principal Moss said that the Elementary School Teacher of the Year had been chosen, but he has elected not to make the announcement just yet. All else, he said, is going very well.

Towns County Middle School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs said TCMS had received an Amazon Future Engineer Grant through Project STEM, which is a “comprehensive childhood-to-career program aimed at increasing access to computer science education for children and young adults from underserved and underrepresented communities.”

For more information on this program, go to www.projectstem.org/amazon#about.

Hobbs also announced that the 2022-23 TCMS Teacher of the Year had been awarded to Sheena Kendall.